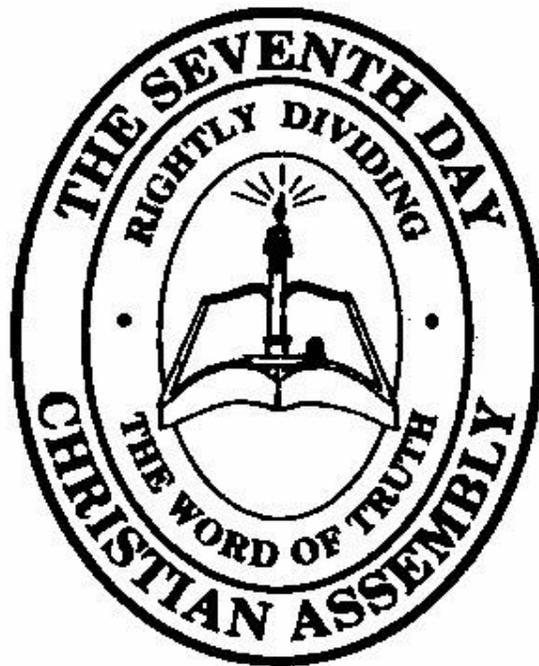


Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Spirit and Truth

A Magazine for Understanding God's Truth

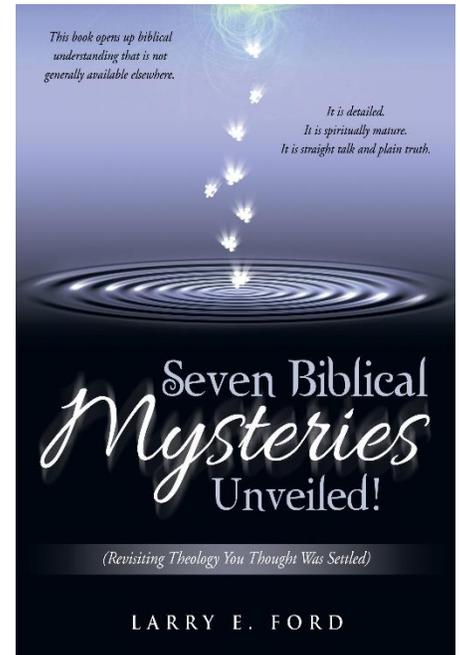
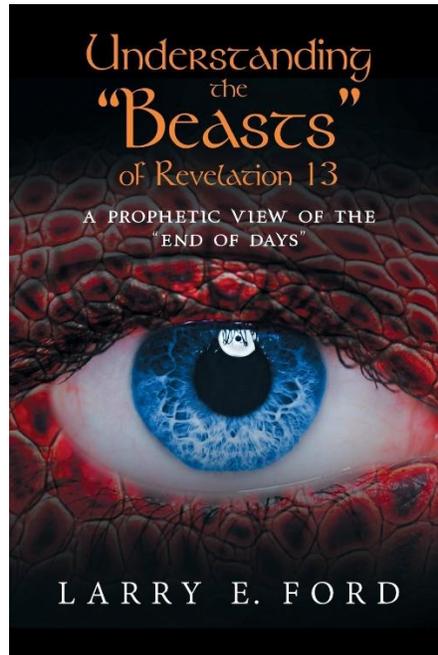
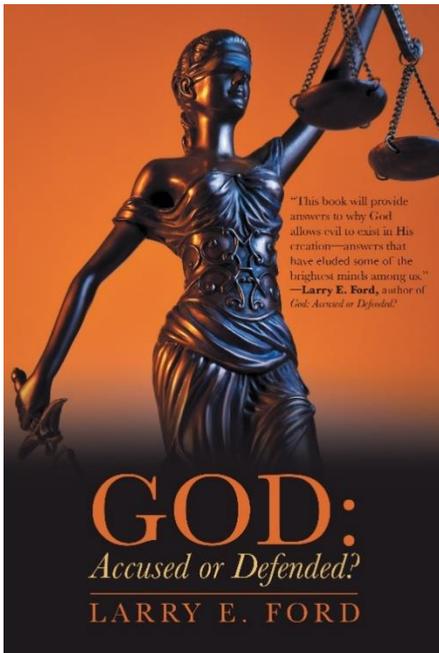


Straight Talk Plain Truth

Who are God's "Children"?

January – June 2019

Three Books That Challenge What You Thought Was Settled Theology



“In ...*God: Accused or Defended? Solving the Unsolvable Paradox*, ...Ford’s studies into linguistics mean many of his answers include part translation, part definition and part interpretation. His argument and approach ... are intriguing.” Pacific Book Review

“What’s best about *Understanding the “Beasts” of Revelation 13*, is the way Ford attempts to look at these prophecies from many different angles. He doesn’t write with an authoritative tone, but more as a fellow explorer just trying to find the truth. He has a lot of experience studying these trails, and just wants to help fellow travelers, if you will. If you’ve never delved into Bible prophecy, Ford’s book might just be a fine starting point. And if you read it, you’ll likely never read about current events in the newspaper the same way again.” Pacific Book Review

“The objective in presenting the *Seven Biblical Mysteries* is to focus the reader’s attention on the difference between what appears to be settled theology and what God’s Word actually teaches us. The difference between the two should encourage the reader to rethink traditional views and to study the Bible in more depth with the hope and expectation that God will reveal the meanings of His mysteries in his or her faith.” Larry E. Ford, Author

The books are available on Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.com.

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From the Desk of ... the Pastor

It is a strange thing that God has not chosen to reveal His truth to everyone who ventures to read it (1 Cor. 2:6-16; Matt. 13:10-17). Frankly, most people would be shocked that anyone would even make such a statement because they will walk away from their studies believing that *they* have learned something. The greater question is: Have they learned that which conforms to God's *truth*? Read John 4:23, 24; 6:44, 65; 8:31, 32. It appears that those who understand God's *truth* will be those who have been drawn to it by God. What happens to those who are *not* drawn to it? How could God take such an approach if His primary interest is to "save" us?

This is what is properly referred to as a *paradox*: a statement that appears at face value to be contradictory or false, but is, nevertheless, true. In general, people do not handle paradoxes very well because they claim not to go by "appearances" alone. Most anything that "seems" right is generally given a "pass" ... even if it is *nearly* true or *half* true. Yet, God warns us in His word that there is such a thing that *seems right*, but leads to death (Prov. 14:12). That is an apt description of how a *paradox* works.

This can be demonstrated by a few examples from God's word. Lexicons and other reference books cite almost 100 scriptures that deal specifically with "spiritual blindness." A sampling will suffice to make the point intended. Most of the references point the attentive reader to the basic, underlying reasons why the spiritual blindness *has been imposed* upon the spiritually "deaf" and "blind." It does not mean that the people involved are not good people. It does not mean that they are irreligious. Read Matthew 15:1-9 for another viewpoint. Carefully read these following examples and see if you can discern the reasons.

Read the specific statement in Deuteronomy 29:4. Why had the Lord God withheld *understanding* from Israel? Now, read the entire chapter. What was the problem? *Self-righteousness*. Is *self-righteousness* religious? In most cases, it is. Whom does self-righteousness *really* worship? God or self? Now read

a description of Israel in Deuteronomy 32:28. Why was Israel *void of understanding* to the point of not knowing how to get out of the messes into which they continually fell? Now read the entire chapter. What was their problem? In Judges 16:20, why did Samson *not know* that God had departed from him? Read the entire story. Now read Judges 21:25. What is the problem?

Read the following scriptures and try to explain them to yourself:

Proverbs 4:19: "The way of the wicked is darkness: they do not know at what they stumble" (KJV).

Proverbs 17:16: "It is senseless to pay tuition to educate a rebel who has no heart for truth" (Living Bible).

Proverbs 19:3: “When a man’s folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord” (RSV).

Isaiah 56:10: “His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber” (KJV).

Romans 1:21: “When they *knew God*, they did not glorify Him as God, neither were they thankful; but they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (KJV with author’s paraphrase).

Are you getting the picture yet? Some of the blindness is *self-imposed*; some of the blindness is *imposed by God* due to human self-righteousness and wickedness. Such is the basis for Paul’s comment in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 about not many being presently called out to understand. If God were to reveal His truth to the foolish of the world, and *they continued to pursue their own ideas and sinful ways*, it appears that He would be forced to utterly destroy them. Why? There would be no true repentance, no reason to give them the gift of the Holy Spirit, and no reason to give them eternal life as long as they continued to pursue the mixture of the knowledge of good and evil embedded in their minds and hearts (see Gen. 2:17).

They would *waste* (be “prodigal” with) a valuable resource from God.

That is part of my “straight talk ... plain truth” approach to explaining God’s word. There is no “sugar coating” or “warm and fuzzies.” I present God’s word “rightly divided” – not colored by denominational traditions and syncretization (mixing and mingling God’s word with things that patently oppose it; see Deut. 12:29-32 and Jer. 10:1-15). I challenge my audience to think long and hard about the simplicity of God’s truth.

At the outset of getting involved with the contents of this issue of *Spirit and Truth*, make room for earnest prayer and meditation about what you will read. Set your mind and heart to be in touch with the God and Father of Jesus Christ and boldly request that He will open *your* understanding to these most important mysteries. Be willing to repent of *self*-righteousness and to receive *God’s* righteousness. Don’t merely settle for doing what’s right in your own sight. This knowledge is precious in *God’s* sight.

In Christ’s Service,

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HEBREWS 4:12

FOR WHATEVER GOD SAYS TO US IS FULL OF LIVING POWER: IT IS SHARPER THAN THE SHARPEST DAGGER, CUTTING SWIFT AND DEEP INTO OUR INNERMOST THOUGHTS AND DESIRES WITH ALL THEIR PARTS, EXPOSING US FOR WHAT WE REALLY ARE. (LIVING BIBLE)

Humanism

Humanism is any system of thought based on the interests and ideals of *humanity*. While it focuses attention on the individualistic and critical spirit, it shifts attention from the *religious* to the *secular* in its apparent concern for the welfare of the *human being*. Watching for the intensification of *humanism* in political and social settings is necessary because of the *gradual twist* it will take in making what *humans* can conceive of, and subsequently accomplish, *proof* of some kind of *innate divinity*. This, under Satan's supervision, would amount to putting *God* off His throne and installing *humanity* in His place. In effect, Satan as the *god* of this world system will have achieved his long-held goal of becoming the Most High God (Isa. 14:12-14).

In today's political climate, it is crucial that one should pay attention to the goals and promises of the "politicians" who want to influence governance over us. In our most current political contests, there is much conversation about "one payer" medical insurance, free benefits in higher education and welfare – whether they are there legally or not – and giving local, State, and national governments more and more control over our lives. We need to understand the underlying dangers of such thoughts and ways.

The following four articles on Humanism, Globalism, The New World Order, and The Implementation Process are excerpted from my recent book *Understanding the "Beasts" of Revelation 13*. They provide information that is essential in understanding many of today's social and political movements. I have added some comments in order to "flesh out" the articles for fuller understanding.

Pioneers of Humanism

One pioneer in this philosophy was John Dewey (1859-1952). He was influenced by Darwin's work on the theory of evolution. Dewey did not believe in *immutable absolutes* or *universals* like "God" and "truth." He believed that *humans* can control their own affairs because they have it within their power to work toward a more satisfying life (Howard A. Ozmon and Samuel M. Craver, *Philosophical Foundations of Education*; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall; 2003; pp. 135, 136).

William James (1842-1910) believed that *truth* is not absolute and immutable. His work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), has been influential in philosophical and theological thought. It was probably an influence in the concept that all religions are simply different paths to the same goal. His philosophy also was, no doubt, influential in the "situation ethics" movement that grew in popularity during the 1960s and 1970s. The main point of that movement was that it is the *situation* in which one finds oneself that

dictates any "truth" involved. "Situation ethics" flows from the same philosophy that says that "truth" is not absolute or immutable – that is, it is not *unchanging* (Ibid; p. 135).

Dewey had a similar, though not as important, work: *A Common Faith* (1934). He maintained that being "religious" does not mean that you *have* to accept the existence of the *supernatural*. As a matter of fact, he posited that most organized religions tend to *separate* and *classify* people, which has a negative effect in a democratic society. And, he rejected any moral theory based on cause/effect, theory, logic, or divine precept, instead of experience. He believed that an individual's moral theory comes as a result of one's participation in his social milieu and cultural heritage, or by learning it through experience and reflective inquiry (Ibid.).

Thus, we can see the expression bound up in the definition of *humanism*: "a philosophy that rejects supernaturalism, regards man as a natural object [that is, as opposed to having been created by a divine being], and asserts the essential dignity and worth of man

and his capacity to achieve self-realization through the use of reason and scientific experimentation.” In other words, you can be “religious” or “spiritual,” but you do not have to believe in “God.” Think back on John Lennon’s song “Imagine”: no God, no heaven, and no religion. You will get the idea. Most *humanists* that I have met used that term, instead of *atheist*, to identify themselves.

One might legitimately understand, then, why much of past and present educational philosophy has focused on math and science and art and sports. Why is there such a *veneer* of true religion in the world (see Hos. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:4, 5; and Rom. 1:28)? Why are students *not* encouraged to retain “God” in their knowledge? In short, the idea is that being the best that you can be does not mean that you need *God’s* help to achieve it.

One of the first humans to take a similar philosophical path was Nimrod. He was born about 1,822 years after Adam’s creation. Two British historians of the 1850s estimate his lifespan to have been between 248 years (Clinton) and 333 years (Layard). Using Bishop Ussher’s dating of the creation at 4004 BC *merely as a superficial reference point*, he would have lived 2182-1934 BC (Clinton) or 2182-1849 BC (Layard).

He is described in Genesis 10:8, 9 as being the world’s first *despot* (Moffatt; *Modern Language*) or *potentate* (*The Jerusalem Bible*). Essentially, he was the first *absolute ruler* on earth who was a *tyrant in opposition to God*. He was the founder of Babylon, and he built the Tower of Babel (Gen. 10:10-14; 11:1-9; see also Rev. 16:19b; Rev. 18).

The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, wrote in his *Antiquities of the Jews* that Nimrod excited the people in the post-Flood world to rebel against God by openly insulting Him with their contempt. Why? How? God had commanded them to move out into the wider world after the flood in order to settle it, to populate it, and to enjoy the plentiful fruits they could derive from cultivating the earth. Josephus says that they were so ill-instructed in the thoughts and ways of God that they did not obey Him (Book I, Chapter IV, 1-3).

When they fell into calamities that were the natural result of their disobedience, God again admonished them to spread out all over the earth and do what He had planned for them to do about having dominion over the entire earth (see Gen. 1:26-28). They came to two conclusions:

(a) The prosperity they enjoyed was *not* derived from anything *God* had done for them; it was something they had done by their own ingenuity and power; and

(b) The only reason God wanted them to spread out was so that He could more easily *oppress* them. Nimrod taught them that God was actually their *adversary*, and they would be base, senseless cowards to submit to Him (Ibid.).

How did Nimrod become such a tyrant? Josephus says that he was a man of great strength and power of persuasion. He taught the people that their own courage was what would help them acquire the wealth and happiness they desired. He trained young men to be warriors. And, he saved mankind from the ravages of an exploding animal population after the Flood (Ibid.).

Josephus makes an interesting comment that demonstrates my point about *humanism*:

[Nimrod] gradually changed the government into *tyranny* ... seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into constant dependence upon *his* power. He also said that he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! [sic] and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers! (Ibid; para. 2; emphasis added).

It is not uncommon among the politicians of the world to tell their people that they are great people capable of overcoming any calamities that befall them and achieving great things. The invocation of *God’s* name, if there is one, is usually in vague, general terms. It is also not uncommon for governments to provide “bread and circuses” (*panem et circenses*) to ingratiate their citizens to them and to keep their discontent at the lowest level possible. Such practices ultimately make the people *irrevocably* dependent on the government for their general welfare. Such a practice is *subjugation of the masses by stealth* (read Rev. 13:16, 17).

Globalism

Malachi Martin provides us with a fitting description of the term *globalism* in his book *Windswept House*. Pay close attention because Martin's work is a *historical fiction*, which means that he uses historical facts in order to give his work a more realistic appeal:

Globalism—at least as he [Gibson Appleyard] thought of the term—meant the fashioning of a global village in which, come Hell or high water, no one would be *different* from anyone else. There would be one frame for everything, and everything in one frame. The element globalists *did not insist on* was the one element that made Roman Catholicism so valuable in a volatile world: *the stability of a cohesive moral underpinning as the basis of personal and community life* (p. 557; emphases added).

Much of the conversation in the United States about immigration, legal or illegal, is founded on either the acceptance or the rejection of the *globalist* philosophy. Illegal immigrants, who are allowed to pour over the southern border, claim asylum (real or not), and fail to show up for their asylum hearings, are supported in “sanctuary cities/states” and allowed to receive driver’s licenses, Medicaid, free education, *et cetera, et cetera*. What is the danger of this *man-made* attempt to make void all *national* borders?

The Homogenization of Humanity

Look up Kurt Vonnegut’s satirical short story, “Harrison Bergeron,” for an idea about the ridiculous extent to which people will go to try to make everyone “equal.” What do you suppose is behind “political correctness”? If the founder of a successful national business runs his business on *Christian* principles and does not *religiously* agree with same-sex marriage, he is pilloried in the public square and threatened with everything from sanctions to death. Why? Because he has dared to strike a difference between acceptable and unacceptable “marriage.” Such events mark the difference between a *secular* view and a *religious* view.

Such was the case with the founder of the Chick-fil-a company in 2012. Some mayors of major U.S. cities threatened to block expansion of that company’s business in their cities because of his comments. However, following October 30, 2012, Chick-fil-a has been doing a banner business.

One person in my area wrote to a local newspaper seeking to justify homosexuality in today’s world by

saying that we understand homosexuality more and better today than they did in Moses’ day. *Really?* Who gave Moses the commandments in Leviticus 18-20? The answer to that question is most important.

If you read the Old Testament accounts in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, it was not *Moses* who commanded these restrictions; it was *the Lord God* (read 18:1 and 20:1). This *Lord God* is the one who came in the flesh as Jesus Christ. Is a Christian *backward* and *out-of-touch* with present belief and practice when he believes that *God* created man and woman and the “marriage” relationship between them and ... that He also *proscribed* homosexual relationships? Does the modern person who accepts same-sex marriages know, more than *God Himself*, what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior? Why should the true believer fall in line with anti-Christ/God philosophies and practices?

The *homogenization* of the human race is the objective of *globalism*. It advocates the abdication of national sovereignties. It seeks to make the divisiveness of organized religion and national spirit to disappear

so that the people of the world can create a new, cooperative world.

As Martin so factually points out, Elihu Root (who was a 1912 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Secretary of War for Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, and Secretary of State for Theodore Roosevelt) was the one who conceived the process by which 20th Century globalism could be implemented. It is described in text as being a truly one-world economic and financial governing system through which all nations can share the riches of the earth. Martin further describes it as a concept under the control of “master engineers” who believe that it is the inherent destiny of nations to become: “A human *family!* A new and all-embracing *holy* family” (Ibid; pp. 80, 81; emphases added). It is alive and making gains in modern U.S.A. Pay close attention to news sources.

Out of the mouths of his characters, Martin explicitly defines its purpose as being “the cultural, political, social and economic *homogenization* of all the nations of the earth” (Ibid; p. 81; emphasis added). For this reason, according to his plot, *the absolute authority of the Papacy would have to be eliminated ...* but, the worldwide *religious* influence of the Roman Catholic Church would have to be harnessed with the *temporal* power of the European Union (Ibid; p. 82).

Will Globalism Ultimately Prevail?

Without getting into a long, drawn out discussion about the history of globalism and the whats, whys, and maybes, let’s focus on the scriptural answer to the question about whether or not globalism will ultimately prevail among the earth’s human governments. It is important to understand what God has done in His plan for the Kingdom of God to ultimately rule the earth. The important focal point of that government is that it will be one-world government ... not a bunch of individual sovereign nations. Let’s understand how that will work ... and how it is different from the one-world government of globalism.

Once sin entered the human population (Gen. 3), the Lord God made a decision about how to use the

situation as a learning experience for humans. His main interest was not to destroy sinful mankind, but to eventually bring them around to His way of thinking.

It is plain in Romans 1:18-32 that mankind was in no right frame of mind to yield to God’s thoughts and ways. He penned a similar piece to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31. His point was simple: Humans prefer to have their own way about things in opposition to God’s thoughts and ways (see Isa. 55:6-11). That constitutes sin, and the penalty for sin is death (Gen. 2:17; 3:19, 22; Rom. 6:23; 1 John 3:4).

Read Romans 8:20, 21. What is the key fact, point, or idea to be remembered here? In v. 20, the Greek term from which vanity is translated is mataiotes, which BAG defines as being “emptiness, futility, purposelessness, transitoriness.” In v. 21, he uses the expression bondage to corruption, which means that the creation will degenerate into evil until it destroys itself ... unless something is done to stop it (Matt. 24:21, 22). That is the point of the book of Ecclesiastes and Paul’s remarks in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28 about God turning the world over to the consequences of its sins. No single human government or world government will be able to stop it.

Skipping to the end of the matter, we can read about the intervention of Jesus Christ in Daniel 2 and 7 and Zechariah 14. You can also read Revelation 6-19. What do you see? You see the overwhelming, convincing power of the Lord God waging the final battle for the control of the government over His creation. Revelation 11:15 agrees with Zechariah 14:8: Jesus Christ will be the King over all creation and no human government will ever wrestle that control away from Him. Nor will He tolerate human opposition to the completion of the plan He devised before the creation of the orderly universe to bring humans into the Family of God (Isa. 2:1-5; 65:17-25; Dan. 7:13-27; Zech. 14:16-21; Rev. 21, 22).

So, you might very well understand that humanism, globalism, and the new world order will ultimately fail and come to nothing. Why? Read the last part of Zechariah 4:6. They have neither the power nor spirit of God. Without it, they are mere human realms.

Read Deuteronomy 12:29-32 and Jeremiah 10:1-10

The “New World Order”

The “New World Order” concept is driven by the idea that *nationalism* [defined as being: devotion to one’s nation; patriotism; the advocacy of national independence], *protectionism*, and *religious conflict* persistently and constantly divide the world. Look at the two great attempts to form a *one-world* concept during the 20th Century: The League of Nations and the United Nations. We can ask the Dr. Phil question: How has that worked for you? Let’s understand the true nature of the “new world order” concept in order to compare it to what God’s ultimate will is with regard to it.

Manufacturing a “Cooperative” Spirit

The League of Nations was dismantled more quickly than it was organized. The United Nations has done more to *disunite* the nations of the world than to unite them – mainly because it has become a stage upon which nationalistic fervor and divided political philosophies can be expressed. And, let’s not even talk about the wild variety of economic and political concepts that drive apart the nations of the world (just think of North Korea, Iran, Venezuela, and Cuba as merely minor impediments to international unity). Under what specific conditions can *all* nations be persuaded to give up their national sovereignties?

Even “Christianity” has managed to segregate itself into 32,000+ different, squabbling denominations that teach different, opposing doctrines. Add to that mix all of the various religions in the world and include all of the anti-religion elements. How would you solve the enmity among Christians, Jews, and Muslims, which are largely recognized as the three major world religions? Is it *humanly* possible to do so? Is it as simple as overcoming nationalism and religious conflict with a cooperative spirit that suppresses such

divisive forces? In his novel, *Windswept House*, Malachi Martin puts it into the mouth of the Papal Secretary of State that eliminating all of the divisive forces in the world would produce a new and cooperative spirit (Ibid; p. 78). *The same thing could be accomplished if everyone would simply obey the Ten Commandments!*

How easily would all of the different religions of the world be convinced to agree on the basic questions of divorce, abortion, homosexuality, contraception, and fetal engineering? Is it at all possible to return almost 7,000,000,000 people over the vast expanse of the earth to what was called by Plato *the original one spherical body*? Martin cites Plato’s Symposium as the source for such an idea. An evil demigod supposedly sliced it in two (Ibid; p. 220). This mythological concept supposes that the two halves have been *desperately* trying ever since to get back to their *original unity*.

For the true believer in biblical history, however, Genesis 11:1-9 explains why and how the division occurred. The Lord God *imposed* it for His own reasons. It would stand to reason, then, that the One who *divided* it is the only One who can *reunite* it. Man’s *insistence* that all religions are merely different paths to the

same goal does not in any way *unite* them. That idea, in and of itself, is a sham religious concept.

The “one spherical body” concept is merely a rhetorical device that superimposes a *religious veneer* over the extraordinary problem of religious division among mankind. In 1 Corinthians 10:16-22 and 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, Paul draws a sharp contrast between the true religion that he preached and the pagan religions. For example, what real *commonality* do you find between true Christianity and African/Caribbean voodoo? How about the pagan concept of *animism*? Take any religion that binds itself to sacrifices of innocents to appease their god(s). Are they in any way the same thing as what the Judeo-Christian religion espouses?

If all religions really were true avenues to spiritual salvation, they would be more *similar* in nature rather than so radically and conflictingly different. Saying that they are *equally* true avenues (that is, part of the same “body”) to spiritual salvation is a dangerous rhetorical device – a gross deception. For the most part, the “true avenues” idea is derived from the common pagan concept of man either *being an immortal soul* that has to indwell a human body until it can be re-educated for its ascent back to heaven, or that man *has* an immortal soul component that makes him a type of developing *deity*: a *demigod* ultimately capable of transcending the flesh to become a full-blown “God.”

Faulty Presuppositions

The “New World Order” concept presupposes that humanity will eventually find its way back to its *original divine* state, but not because of any plan or assistance from any outside Divine Being. Plato taught that the immortal soul was “ungenerated” (that is, not a *created* being [which suggests that “God” was not instrumental in its existence]) and *eternally coexistent* with whatever he considered “God” to be. This is akin to what Alvin Boyd Kuhn posits in his book, *Who is This King of Glory?*:

The purpose of life in the flesh is to force souls who have come here from the empyrean [“the true and ultimate heavenly paradise”] to exert themselves against pressure, stress, and strain in order to develop their greater potential divinity. It needs to be said in clarion tones for the benefit of overweening piety

and uncritical faith, that any influence which in the least degree diminishes *the individual’s conviction of the necessity of reliance upon his own hidden divinity* must inexorably be calamitous for his progress. The image of Jesus the man and the theological teaching of his power to save us *intrude* to break the force of *the knowledge that our only savior is with-in* (Elizabeth, NJ: Academy Press; 1944; pp. 43, 44; emphases added).

Kuhn, as you might well figure out, is a *religious* person. However, he is an avid advocate for *paganism*. He demands that “Christianity” should admit its pagan roots. By doing so, he claims that it would become the largest and most important *pagan* religion ever:

Only by acknowledging and regaining its parenthood in that sublime pagan [that is: Egyptianism] source will Christianity rise at last to its true nobility and splendor (Ibid; p. x).

His claim that “The entire body of Christian doctrinism is now seen to be nothing but revamped and terribly mutilated *Egyptianism*” (Ibid; p. ix; emphases added) is a gross admission that Christianity is nothing more than a *shill* for paganism ... like Baalism and the worship of the Sun God Mithra – who are commonly derived from the same common pagan “parent.”

Conclusion

In summary, *humanism*, *globalism*, and the “New World Order” will be concepts that are more and more used to slowly and surely condition mankind to move governments toward a *homogenization* of social, religious, political, and educational theory and practice. I am not saying that the “engineers” will be successful. They will not be. I am saying that there will be a *more concerted effort* to execute these philosophies among the nations of the earth in order to *attempt* to create the “New World Order.” Indeed, this is the type of social engineering to which you should pay very close attention. It is “snowballing” very rapidly before our very eyes. You must not be ignorant of this movement! I cannot say that it is the “mark of the beast.” Not yet.

What God Planned

In this article from Chapter Six of my book *God: Accused or Defended?*, I will discuss a basic aspect of Elohim's creation: what God (Elohim) planned prior to the creation of man. It is reasonable and logical to include this element in this discussion, especially with regard to what God is up to and why. If the attempt to resolve the *unresolved paradox of theodicy* (that is: why a perfect God allows *the existence of natural and moral evils in His creation*) goes no further than merely trying to eliminate or restrict one or more of the several attributes that man has assigned to God, then the paradox will either be only superficially resolved or will remain unresolved.

What, exactly, did God have in mind when He decided to create the earth and its animal and human inhabitants? Was it merely a "wound up clock" that was to be left to wind down and disappear? Or ... was it intended to last forever and achieve some great *divine* purpose? It is important for you to know and understand what God planned and why. You need to understand the great potential that He has created for your own personal existence.

Changing God's Truth into a Lie

Kenneth Cauthen presents an excellent example of what could be the result of ignoring or changing the personal attributes of the God who created all that exists and watches over it as He guides it to His intended result. Take seriously Cauthen's suggestion to change the primary characteristics of God (omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, omnibenevolence) in order to get the kind of God he needs to worship:

My own conclusion is that the traditional responses [to God's attributes] are inadequate. I propose that we must limit the power of God in order to preserve the goodness of God and reluctantly accept the consequences of compromising omnipotence. I believe that the reason that God does not prevent or overcome evil is that God *cannot*. Only a Suffer-

ing, Struggling, Limited God will do. I have developed a doctrine of God along these lines ("Theodicy"; www.frontiernet.net; p. 2; emphases added).

In this article, we will ask whether or not God *needs* our intervention to preserve His goodness or any other of His thoughts and ways. Perhaps He would reply with Popeye's famous quip: "I yam what I yam [so deal with it]!" Let's see what God reveals.

Knowing what Elohim planned prior to the creation of man is essential to understanding the nature of the problem of the existence of evil. Please remember this: We can see in Genesis 3:22 that Elohim admitted to knowing good and evil, and they did not want man to know it (thus, the basis for warning them not to eat from that particular tree). This demonstrates the existence of good and evil before man was created. We also have seen that the Lord God explicitly told Adam that the consequence for partaking of the fruit of the

knowledge of good and evil would be his permanent death.

At this point, consider this: for man (not God) to know good and evil would be like putting an insidious virus (like a computer virus) into the human milieu. We have no indication about how long Elohim had known good and evil, but we will see that it reared its ugly face long before mankind was created. Knowing of its existence long before the creation of mankind took place certainly would have allowed Elohim sufficient time to make provisions for it in their plan for mankind.

The existence of good and evil before the creation of man presupposes that there must have been contingency plans for dealing with it should it infect mankind. A contingency plan poses this question: If such-and-such happens, what shall be done about it? It suggests that Elohim, before they set about creating anything, anticipated possible problems and answers to the possibilities, but not the minute details.

I recently read an article that suggested that God knew all of the possible choices that could be made by all of the possible players who might possibly enter the stream of actual history. The author suggested that eliminations are made at the point at which a possible choice is actually made. I find that theory to be incredible.

Chosen in Jesus Christ

Let's begin with Ephesians 1:4-14. Paul, being inspired by God as he wrote this letter, laid out the basic framework of God's plan. Verse 4 reveals a choice made by God (Paul is referring to the "Father" God in this verse): He chose "us" in Christ before the orderly universe was created. If we go by the "Big Bang" theory, that would have been almost 14 Billion years ago. The "us" involved in this choice would be expected to "be holy and without blame before Him in love" (v. 4).

Some say that the Bible is intended for Christians only. That would mean that "us" refers only to Christians, and "in Christ" would indicate that to be the case. If we allow a bit of liberality to invade our thinking, we could allow for "us" to also mean mankind in general. In either case, mankind ultimately would have to become what God planned for him to be "in Christ." So, what is the role of Christ in this plan?

Verse 5 says that God planned for "us" to be adopt-

ed as God's children by [through] Jesus Christ. The idea implicit in this verse is that God planned to have "us" placed into the legal position of "sonship," which is a position that is just as legally firmly fixed as the birth of a natural-born son. Since He would have to create mankind, it would not even be a sonship like, say, Jesus Christ's. In other words, the "Father" does not have a female spirit "Mother" consort with whom to engender natural-born children.

The accounts in Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-56 show that Jesus was born as the result of God's Holy Spirit effecting a pregnancy in a virgin named Mary. Somehow, the Word God became "flesh" in order for that to happen. "Holy Spirit" is a power, not a personage. If it were a personage, then the Holy Spirit is Jesus' father instead of the one known as "the Father." If that were the case, then prior to His crucifixion Jesus would have been praying to the wrong "Father" (for example, read John 17). John 1:1-3, 14 shows that Jesus pre-existed alongside the one known as the "Father" and that He became flesh and dwelt among us as the only begotten son (only in the sense of being begotten in the manner described in Matt. 1:18-23 and Luke 1:26-35).

Philippians 2 shows that Jesus, in His original God-state, was equal to His Companion in every respect, but He chose, for the purpose of carrying out the plan they had made for bringing "us" into "sonship," to submit Himself to the one who became the "Father" by effecting that pregnancy in Mary (see also 1 Cor. 15:24-28). When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He taught them to address His heavenly Companion as "Father" because of their plan to also cause "us" to become "sons" (see Matt. 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4). This adoption, when completed, would bring about something that will supersede (be superior to and replace) the original state in which man was to be created.

Ephesians 1:6-8 refers to a gracious act. How and why is it a gracious act? The Greek term Paul uses is charis. From this term, we get our English word charity. This word means "favor, grace, gracious care or help, goodwill" (BAG, p.885). Grace, in biblical terms, is often defined as being something that is not deserved, cannot be earned, and cannot be repaid. It is that kind of thing of which Paul speaks here. How and why is it gracious?

Read Paul's statement fully:

He has *made* us acceptable in the beloved [see Matt. 3:16, 17]: in whom we have *redemption* through His blood, the *forgiveness* of sins, according to the riches of His *grace* [*charis*]; wherein He has abounded toward us [*lavished upon us*; RSV] in all wisdom and prudence (emphases added).

What Paul was describing here is a contingency plan that was sensible, sound, and foresighted. God planned for the possibility that the independent mind of man might lead him to do things that would disqualify him from being adopted as “sons.” He anticipated that things might not go “according to Hoyle” (an allusion to the rules set by the famous playing card manufacturer). That disqualification would cause mankind to suffer serious consequences during his lifetime. If that happened, what would they do about it? They would *make* “us” acceptable through the blood of Jesus Christ. They would *redeem* “us.” They would *forgive* “us.” This act would be something that “us” would not deserve, could not earn, and could not repay.

It is implicit that all of this would be contingent on “us” returning, by repentance, to the original plan of “us” being “holy and without blame before Him in love.” It is implicit that those who do not do so will be *disqualified* and not allowed to move on to what ever supersedes our original flesh-and-blood state-of-being.

Now comes the part that should make us take careful notice. Verse 9 speaks of “the mystery of God’s will.” *Mystery*, in this case, refers to a religious truth that is known only by revelation. It suggests that it is beyond understanding unless it is revealed. ***Consequently, one should not expect every Tom, Dick, and Mary to understand it.*** Once it is revealed, it is not a mystery to the one to whom it is revealed! It would be possible for the person to whom it is revealed to tell others, only to have them *not* understand it.

For example: John 6:44 quotes Jesus Christ as saying: “No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me *draw* him” (emphasis added). Matthew 11:27 is another statement from Jesus Christ: “No man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will *reveal* him” (emphases added). Would it be unusual, then, that theodicies would abound but *solutions* to the *unresolved paradox* would

not? Does it suggest that not being *allowed* to understand the unresolved paradox could cause some to lose faith and quit, or to devise some *human* solution that suits them?

Paul told the Corinthians that God’s true representatives “speak the wisdom of God in a *mystery*, even the *hidden wisdom* which God ordained before the world unto our glory [for our glorification; RSV]” (1 Cor. 2:7; emphasis added). Apparently, God decided to make His plan known to those who choose to *cooperate* with Him; all others need not apply. The result of this revelation was planned “before the ages began” (RSV). Those who choose to *cooperate* with Him will be brought to *glory* (Greek = *doxa*), which will be our state-of-being in the *next* life that will supersede our present physical condition (BAG; p. 202, 203; emphases added).

Life Beyond Flesh-and-Blood

Please make special note that God’s plan included something that *supersedes* our original state-of-being: life ... beyond the original flesh-and-blood life. Is His attitude toward those who do not choose to cooperate with Him too harsh for, or contradictory to, an all-loving, all-benevolent God? No. Why should He be expected to contend with the unholy, blamable, and unloving if they persist in those attitudes? Why should He perpetuate that kind of attitude beyond the flesh into eternity? It would set up an eternal wrestling match that would not go well for a divine family. There would always be conflict and chaos. It would not solve the problems inherent in evil. It would perpetuate them. Evil would be perpetuated *forever*.

How does anyone ever learn the truth of the mystery? Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 to explain that the things not seen by the eyes and not heard by the ears, in fact, things that have not even entered into the heart of man, are revealed to “us” by God’s Holy Spirit.

God uses the power of His Holy Spirit to make “us” aware of His secret plans by helping “us” to compare what is spiritual (that is, the characteristics of spiritual mindedness) with what is spiritual (1 Cor. 2:13; Gal. 5:22-26). Those not of “us” do not have that spiritual comprehension. Only those of “us” who have the mind of Christ have it (see Phil. 2:5-11).

This is part and parcel to the “job” of the Holy Spirit as described in John 14:16, 17; 15:15; and

16:12-15. It reveals this mystery to “us” by leading “us” into knowledge and understanding that God simply does not choose to share with each and every Tom, Dick, and Mary. As a matter of fact, God Himself will cause those who refuse to obey Him to become spiritually blind and deaf (see Isa., Matt. 13:1-17, and Rom. 11:7-10). “Us” is made privy to it because they have become *friends* (a very special social and spiritual relationship) of Jesus Christ by obeying His commands (see John 15:14). In other words, they cooperate with His desired outcome that they should be “holy and blameless before Him in love.”

Back to Ephesians 1:10-14. Paul, speaking millennia after the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden, shows that there exists in God’s plan something called “the dispensation of the fullness of times.” Very simply put, this means that there is *a terminus point* – a final goal toward which His plan is headed. God had no intention for this present life to go on *ad infinitum*.

There is a point in time, called by some “the end of the ages,” when He will unite all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth in Christ. That implies that any who are not willing to be united in Christ by the time that terminus point is reached will be left out. How is that determined? By the choices made by the independent minds. In other words, you can choose yourself into exclusion.

Verses 11 and 12 explain that one’s inclusion constitutes a predetermined inheritance made possible by being united with God through Christ. In this, Paul is still pursuing the theme of *adoption*. Those who are included will have heard the word of truth, the good news about how we can be saved out of this present situation. Evidently, then, God’s contingency plan includes a means by which wayward man can be informed about a way to avoid that death from which there is no recovery.

That was the prophetic message that the Holy Spirit led Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, to speak in Luke 1:67-75. Zacharias proclaimed that God “has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David; as [God] spoke by the mouths of His holy prophets, which have been *since the world began*” (vv. 69, 70; emphases added).

So, God must have begun putting His contingency plan into effect when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil and were sentenced to death.

Now we are made privy to a most extraordinary

action on God’s part. Ephesians 1:13, 14 tell us something of major importance. Those who believe this message of salvation are *sealed* with the Holy Spirit. What does that mean? The Greek term translated into English as *sealed* is *sphragizo*. In this case, it describes something that is used as a means of *identification* that carries with it the protection of the owner (BAG, p. 804). As long as that seal remains intact (unadulterated), the contents of the “package” are guaranteed by the owner.

The seal is that portion of Holy Spirit given by God so that the individual can begin the process of understanding God’s mystery. The individual can *quench* it (1 Thessalonians 5:19), *grieve* it (Ephesians 4:30), *suppress* it (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14), and *cast it aside* (Hebrews 6:4-8). Or, s/he can *cause it to increase* (2 Peter 3:18). Paul says that those who do not have it do not belong to Christ because they are guided by “the flesh” as opposed to being guided by “the Spirit” (Rom. 8:9; see also Gal. 5:19-26).

Other than helping the individual to understand God’s mystery, what benefit does the seal of the Holy Spirit provide? Verse 14 says that it is God’s downpayment on our inheritance, which means that it is God’s personal guarantee of that which *supersedes* our original flesh-and-blood existence. When the time has come for Him to make good on His plan, He will *redeem* the individual who was purchased by a great price (see 1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

Romans 8:23 describes the adoption as being the *redemption of the body*. This marks that terminus point that is described in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58: the point at which the living and dead in Christ undergo *a change in body composition* by which the mortal will become immortal, which means that the *flesh* will become *spirit*. This is when the superseding of the original state-of-being will occur. As mentioned before, 1 John 3:1, 2 says that we shall be like Him in appearance at that time because of our status as sons of God.

Be warned, however, that the Lord’s own brother, Jude, was inspired to write that some can be rescued from eternal death by a compassionate word and some only by snatching them back from the fire (Jude 22, 23). Note this translation from the *Revised Standard Version*: “Convince some, who doubt; save some, by snatching them out of the fire; on some, have mercy with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” *The Living Bible* interprets the last part of v. 23

to read: “And as for others, help them find the Lord by being kind to them, but be careful that you yourselves aren’t pulled along into their sins”. That is a warning about the insidious nature of evil.

What about the Angels?

Now, let’s take a brief look at Hebrews 1 and 2 because they reveal more information about what God planned. Hebrews 1:5 says that God *never* planned or entertained the possibility that any of the *angels* should be “sons” in the way described above. Nor did He *ever* plan or entertain the possibility that any of the *angels* should be co-rulers with Him over His creation ... or rule the world to come (2:5).

So, this plan of adoption applies only to mankind and never has, even remotely, applied to the angels. Verses 10-12 address the temporary nature of the world that presently exists. But ... God’s plan includes a *change* from what we presently see to something else. Indeed, He inspired Isaiah and the Apostle John to prophesy a “*new* heaven and *new* earth” (see Isa. 65:17 and Rev. 21:1). Paul, in Hebrews 1:12, says that the present heaven and earth will grow old and need to be changed like a person changing soiled or worn-out garments.

Hebrews 2:5 says that God *never* planned or entertained the possibility of allowing the *angels* to rule over the world to come. Then Paul used Psalm 8 as a launching platform for describing God’s *plan for mankind*. Hebrews 2:10 explains two crucial parts of that plan: (a) Jesus Christ would bring *many* sons to *glory* (remember the definition for *glory* given above); and (b) the *captain* [*pioneer* (Barkley’s *Daily Study Bible*; *The Anchor Bible*; RSV)] of their salvation would suffer in order for Him to overcome the *limitations* involved in the earthly existence. Paul used the Greek term *teleios* to describe that (BAG; p. 817).

The Anchor Bible: To the Hebrews makes this comment:

Depending on the context, [*teleios*] means to perfect, accomplish, fulfill, complete, or become mature. In a religious context, it usually describes a person who was fully cleansed from sin, qualified for full membership in a religious order, or one who observed rigorously all the rules required by the group (William Foxwell Albright and David Noel

Freedman; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.; 1978; vol. 36; p. 31).

Presumably, then, mankind, after the sin of Adam and Eve, also has certain *earthly limitations* to overcome by obeying all the rules required for being in the group who are to fulfill the desired outcome. The earthly limitations will expose the human to pain and suffering (see Rom. 8:17, 18). In Ephesians 1:14, Paul uses the term *redemption* to explain how the earthly limitations are to be overcome.

That term comes from the Greek term *apolutrosis*, which means that the individual who has been given the down-payment of the Holy spirit will be forgiven of all sins and given the power to overcome all earthly limitations. What does that mean? Read John 3:1-8 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-54. What do you see happening? Does the expression *born again* give you a hint (John 3:3, 7)? How about the statements in 1 Corinthians 15:53 that “this *corruption* must put on *incorruption*, and this *mortal* must put on *immortality*” (emphases added)? When we are changed from flesh to spirit, our limitations of the flesh will be a thing of the past (see also 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Jesus Christ: the *Archegos*

The English term *captain* is translated from the Greek term *archegos*, which means that Jesus is the *originator* or *founder* of our salvation (BAG, p. 112). Barclay, *The Anchor Bible*, and RSV translate it to mean *pioneer*. Take special note of William Barclay’s commentary about this term:

An *archegos* is some one [sic] who begins something in order that others may enter into it. He begins a family that some day [sic] others may be born into the family; he founds a city in order that others may some day [sic] dwell in that city; he founds a philosophic school that others may follow him into the truth and peace that he himself has discovered; he is the author of blessings, or of penalties, into which others will also enter. An *archegos* is one who blazes the trail for others to follow. ... That is what the writer of Hebrews means when he says that Jesus is the *archegos* of our salvation. Jesus was the pioneer who blazed the trail to God for us to

follow (The Letter to the Hebrews; Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press; 1963; pp. 18, 19).

There is much that can be said, then, in response to Paul's revelation that Jesus Christ was the *first* to be raised from the dead (see Acts 26:23 and 1 Cor. 15:20).

In addition to His primary goal of being the sin sacrifice (see John 1:29), He evidently came to show mankind how God planned to effect salvation through a resurrection from the dead (or, by simply changing those who are still alive at His coming; see also 1 Thes. 4:13-18) by which the body of flesh would become spirit.

He, in fact, was the *pioneer* of the process. After all, Jesus Christ told Nicodemus that the path that supersedes the original state-of-being is that of being *born again* into a spirit state-of-being (see John 3:1-8). Only those who are *born again* can be admitted into the "God" family (vv. 3, 5; 1 Cor. 15:50). In that conversation, Jesus was not speaking of a spiritual conversion of the *mind*. He was speaking of a fundamental change of the individual's body composition.

Thus, the plan of Elohim was laid out whereby

they would create a sentient being capable of feelings, emotions, and independent thinking. That sentient being would be brought into the "God" family through a process of training and discipline (see Heb. 12:1-13; 2 Pet. 1:2-4). In order for that sentient being to qualify for the desired outcome, he would have to build the characteristics of Elohim in his mind and heart, that is, become holy and blameless before them in love. His refusal to willingly cooperate in that expectation would not only progressively put him at odds with his Creator, it also would eliminate him *forever* from inclusion in Elohim's plan. Such individuals ultimately will be destroyed.

In order to avoid having to completely destroy all of their creation, they provided a "failsafe" contingency plan whereby humans can be rescued from that fate. This "failsafe" was created due to the expected difference between the sentient being's mental and spiritual capabilities and Elohim's (see again Isa. 55:8, 9).

It is vitally important to understand this concept because it will be useful in the next article about who God's "children" are.

Meaning of Nephilim

- The word "Nephilim" means "Fallen Ones."
- Jewish scholars in 250 BC who translated the Old Testament into Greek used the term "gigantes," which means "Titans" to describe them.
- This implies they were **part god/higher being and part human- half-breeds like the Titans in Greek mythology**. The scholars picked a term that the Greeks would readily understand.

HALF-GODS

- Part human and part god
- had a type of power that was related to the god
- Many gods had demi-god sons and daughters

Courtesy of <https://www.bing.com/images> (see Genesis 6:4)

Who are God's "Children"?

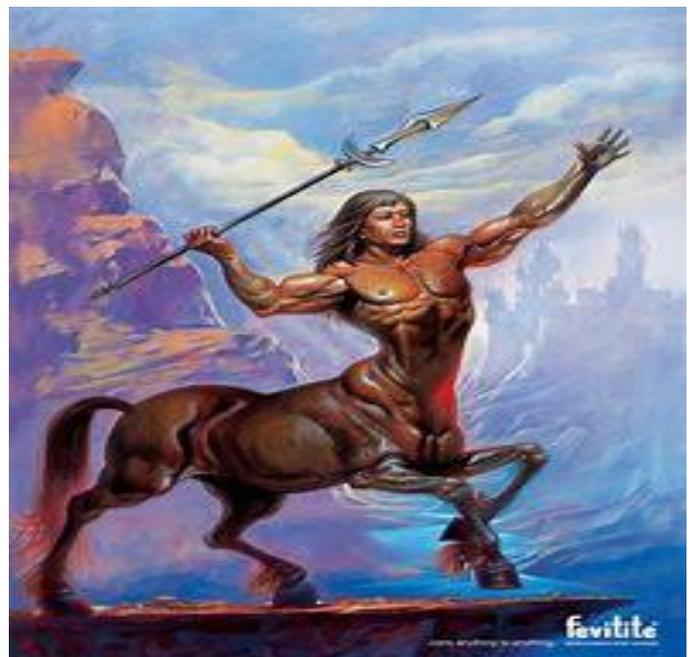
In a recent discussion about savage knife and machete attacks by members of the notorious gang MS13, President Trump referred to them as being "animals." In that statement, President Trump was referring to the gang's *brutish* and *inhumane* behavior whereby they attacked fellow human beings with an animal-like ferocity and disregard for their existence. He was expressing his observation that such acts are not acceptable or worthy *human* characteristics – they were heartless, cruel, and *inhuman*. He was excoriated by the press and fellow politicians for calling "God's children" animals.

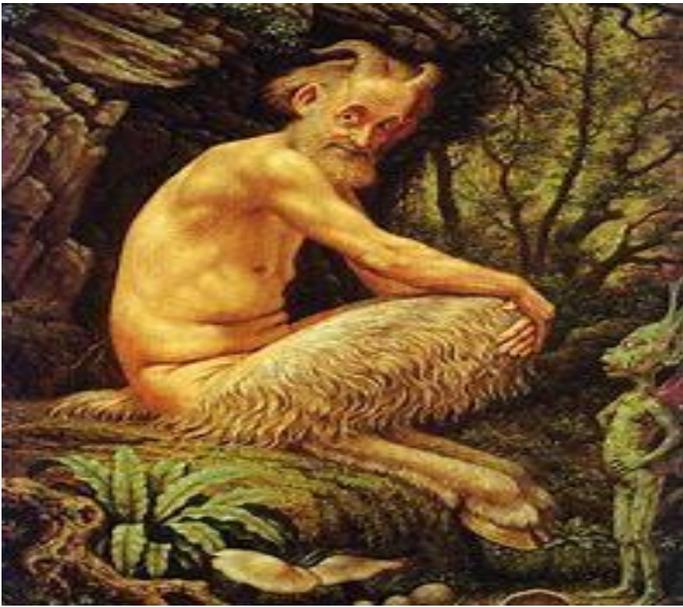
In many religious statements by people of "faith," they generally refer to all fellow humans as being "God's children." While it seems spiritually generous and righteous and holy to do so, the ubiquitous application of that name to *all* humans can be called into question *in Scripture*. It can be shown to be a flagrant disregard for the Third Commandment that warns people not to take God's name in vain. How far can we delve into Scripture in order to solve this seeming paradox? That question is the objective of this study. Study it very carefully.

The Problem with Demigods

How can we know that the True God, at any time, wanted to have His own children? You have probably read about the gods and goddesses in paganism seducing humans in order to procreate with them. Such concepts became normalized as mankind re-belled against God from the time of the rebellion in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3-6). Despite the universal flood, they continued to make "God" in their own image (Rom. 1:21-32). Part of their religious concepts was rendered in art forms. This art continues today in various forms ... and has become accepted as a normal part of man's vain imaginations about the ubiquitous "divine" personage called "God."

Some of the various art forms by which mankind has illustrated the mythological pagan past are shown in the following examples (also from the Bing source cited above):





The term *demigod* has as one of its definitions the idea that a demigod is the offspring of a *god or divine being* (like an angel) and a *human*. This was achieved by a *sexual* act. Other definitions allow for there to have been offspring from a god and an *animal*. A well-known example that is used in modernity is to the “god of medicine”: *Asclepius* (shown below).



Wikipedia offers the following information:

Asclepius: according to *D'Aulaires* [sic] *book of Greek Myth*, Asclepius was a son of Apollo who achieved divine status after death. He became such a great healer, that he could bring back the dead. Zeus killed him for this, but raised him from the dead as the god of healing and medicine. (Note: I did not say that the mythology had to make sense.)

The following image is provided by <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asclepius>.

The artwork below is referred to as being “the rod of Asclepius, the god of medicine.” You might very well remember seeing it on the sides of emergency vehicles.



The U. S. Army Medical Corps plaque shown below is recognized as a *mistake* because it substitutes the *caduceus* of Hermes for the rod of Asclepius. According to Wikipedia:

The adoption, in 1902, of the caduceus for US Army medical officer uniforms popularized the erroneous use of the symbol throughout the medical field in the United States. The two-snake caduceus design has ancient and consistent associations with trade, eloquence, negotiation, alchemy, wisdom, and [,] controversially, thievery, lying, and the passage into the underworld (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caduceus_as_a_symbol_of_medicine).



Caduceus

Is this the kind of thing God had in mind in Genesis 1:27 when it declares that "...God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them"? *No*. Even the maternal conception of Jesus Christ was not a matter of God having had sexual intercourse with the young virgin woman Mary.

The Underlying Principles

Matthew 1:18-23 gives us some of the particulars. Two things should be noted here: (1) The pure, innocent, and sinless conception in Mary was caused by the action of God's Holy Spirit – that is: His active Spirit power to exert His will in creation (vv. 18, 20), and (2) the child named Jesus Christ was to be known as "God with us" because He was to become a mixture of the divine and the human. That notwithstanding, there is no indication in Scripture that Jesus Christ was considered to be a demigod like the pagans imagined such half-god/half humans to be. But ... *there is more that you should know about how the human birth of Jesus Christ took place.*

John 1:1-3 shows that there were two Divine Beings who partnered with one another "in the beginning". John does not indicate that one was the superior of the other. One was known as the Word [of] God (Greek = Logos – the Spokesman); the other was known simply as God. John shows that both were "God" (Hebrew = elohiym – sometimes used as a plural noun ... as, some suggest, in Genesis 1:1

through 2:3; a collective noun like family, group, team, *et cetera*);. Exodus 15:2 is an example of the usage of the singular form el, which refers to the Lord God as "my God (el) [and] my father's God (el)." But, because of the following discussion about the Word, I am not sure that elohiym ("God") in Genesis 1:1 through 2:3 is used as a plural. It could be a reference to the Word as the Creator.

As you should be able to understand from the context of John 1:1-3, both of them were "God." Why does one of them have the distinctive power to be the Spokesman? Before we go down the path of that discussion, let's take a side trip to lay the groundwork for the underlying principle involved.

There are mentions in Scripture of activities that took place "in the beginning" that we should investigate. Genesis 1:1 is one of them. John 1:1-3 is another. Genesis 1:1 is not what I refer to as being the most distant beginning. For that, we have to investigate Ephesians 1:1-14; Philippians 2:5-11, and 1 Peter 1:18-20. Why? Because these are some of the several scriptural references to a time before the creation of the orderly universe.

John 1:1-3 also fits this description because it does not refer to the actual act of creating the heavens and earth as does Genesis 1:1. The most distant beginning involves the eternity before the actual creation of the heavens and earth began as stated in Genesis 1:1.

I have already discussed Ephesians 1:1-14 in the article above about "What God Planned" (pp. 11-16). So, I will concentrate more on 1 Peter 1:18-20 and Philippians 2:5-11 ... along with some Scriptures that support my claims. Please study this thoroughly because your objective is to be set free from falsehoods as you discover God's truth (John 8:31, 32). You need to know the process by which that is accomplished. God's word gives reliable guidance to God's truth if you make the proper connections.

Paul's claim in Ephesians 1:3, 4 is that the "God and Father of Jesus Christ" had a plan ... before the creation of the orderly universe ... to create humans and adopt them into His Family. From that information, you should be able to perceive the underlying questions:

- (1) How does "God" (John 1:1) gain superiority over "the Word" in order to become both His "God" and "Father"?

(2) What is the role of the adoption process whereby humans can become part of the “God” family?

(3) How did the Word God become a flesh-and-blood human and Spokesman for “God” (in the sense of the plural form of the word elohiym)?

First, let’s consider 1 Peter 1:18-20. After you have read those three verses, can you understand what happened that is significant for our discussion? Find the term redeemed in v. 18 (KJV). What relationship does it have to v. 19? To what is it attached in v. 20? Ponder that for a moment and get it straight in your mind.

Here is the summary of Peter’s instruction: Jesus Christ was foreordained ... before the creation of the orderly universe ... to be the sacrifice for mankind’s sin. In these three brief verses, Peter capsulizes a single spiritual truth: Even before the creation of the heavens and earth, two Divine Beings anticipated the possibility of sin among the humans in their coming creation (Eph. 1:1-14; Gen. 1:26-28). The one who became Jesus Christ was set aside for holy purposes to become the redeeming sacrifice that would be the ransom by which sinning humans could be saved from destruction (see 1 John 3:4; Rom. 6:23; Gen. 2:17; 3:19, 22, 23). With that in mind, now read 1 Peter 1:3-25.

In this matter, you should be able to understand that humans were going to be created in order for God to expand the God Family. That physical creation was absolutely not going to be the result of some kind of sexual exploit by God that would produce a litter of demigods such as the pagans worship. It was the beginning of a spiritual process by which mankind was to be trained to be holy, blameless, and loving (Eph. 1:4; Heb. 12; 1 Pet. 1:14-16) – as stipulated in Genesis 1:26: “in the image of God.”

The Hebrew word for “image” is tselem, which means to have a resemblance to something or somebody. That term is translated as idol in some contexts (Psa. 106:19). However, in the context of Genesis 1:26 and 2:7, it means that mankind was intended to be a living, breathing, mortal copy of God in a temporary, physical body (for example: physical features), thoughts, and ways (see Isa. 55:6-13). This was not going to be the “finished” product.

The Lord God began His creation of the human with the body of flesh ... but with the plan that mankind will have the potential of transitioning from flesh to spirit at an appointed time (Job 14:1-4; John 3:1-8; 1 Cor. 15:23, 50-54). Once that transformation occurs, it will be irreversible. That is the true meaning of being born again. It is called eternal life (John 3:3, 16; 1 Cor. 15:50-54). It will be self-existing, spirit life that is not dependent on any other source for its existence. Read John 17:5 and 1 John 3:1-3. Mankind was not created as an immortal, eternal being.

How did God become a Human?

Now, how did the Word become the human being Jesus Christ? Paul writes an astounding revelation in Philippians 2:5-11. It begins as an encouragement to Christians to be self-effacing, obedient, and humble because those are godly character traits like those that Jesus Christ has. If you pay close attention, you will see that Paul is revealing something that happened before the creation of the orderly universe – in about the same context as 1 Peter 1:18-20. This explains the relationship of two Divine Beings who had partnered with one another throughout the past eternity (John 1:1-3).

Philippians 2:6, 7 explain that Jesus Christ, before He became a human being, was, in fact, “God.” At the end of v. 6, Paul explains, ever so briefly, that He was equal to the “God” with whom He companied. That means that neither was more powerful than the other. Verses 7, 8 explain that He gave up His equality with His Divine Partner in order to become a human being who would be used by God as a redeeming sacrifice for the possible (perhaps, inevitable) sins that mankind might commit after their creation.

In this explanation, Paul is giving the underlying principle for his and Peter’s expression: “the God and Father of Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3; emphases added). When the Word relinquished His equality to His Partner, His Partner became the superior of the two, that is: He became higher in authority than the Word. He is called “the Ancient of Days” in Dan. 7:13, 14. In John 14:28, Jesus Christ admits that: “The Father is greater than I.”

The Hebrew term for “God” is elohiym. That term is used in Scripture to also identify divine appointees to godly service. The meaning is determined by the scriptural context. Psalm 82 addresses such human

divine appointees – pay close attention to v. 6. Verse 8 is a reference to Yahweh Elohim, who became Jesus Christ (see also Psa. 83:18).

For example, we can see in Exodus 4:16 and 7:1 that the term elohiym is used of Moses relative to his divine appointment to lead Israel out of Egypt. He was given the Lord God’s authority over both Aaron and the Pharaoh. In that role, he is called their “god” (elohiym).

When the Word surrendered His divine equality to His Partner, that action gave His Partner divine authority over Him. His Partner, thereby, became His elohiym – His “God.” In response, the Word’s Divine Partner made an astounding move to which few pay attention or understand because of their trinitarian beliefs. That belief blinds them to this truth.

Read Philippians 2:9-11. Pay close attention to v. 9 and note the reciprocity involved: “Wherefore [that is: In response to this] God highly exalted Him [the Word] and gave Him a name which is above every name.”

Paul told the Corinthians that this action amounted to:

... [God] ha[ving] put all things under [the Word’s] feet. But when [God] says that all things have been put under the authority of [the Word], it is plainly understood that it does not include God Himself (1 Cor. 15:27; author’s paraphrase).

Paul told the Colossians (1:19) that God put the full power of the Godhead under the control of the Word (that is: Jesus Christ). That singular move made the Word to be the Lord God. We know this is in reference to Jesus Christ because of what He says in Matthew 28:18: “All power is given to me in heaven and on earth.” Paul agrees with that in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 and Philippians 2:10, 11. So, what is important about the name Lord?

The first use of that term in Scripture is found in Genesis 2:4. The Hebrew term is Yahweh (YHWH). Some use the term Jehovah – a pronunciation that was unknown until 1520 AD (*The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon*, p. 218). Yahweh is widely recognized in theological circles as the Redeemer and Savior name of deity. In that vein, Scriptures in the Old Testament have to be understood, essentially, with reference to the Lord God’s relationship to Israel.

Yahweh Elohim (Yahweh indicates which of the two is being referenced) was the “God” of Israel – the Divine Representative who entered into a “marriage” covenant with her (Ex. 19:5, 6). He is her only Lord and Redeemer and Savior and “Husband” (see Deut 6:4). Its meaning is given in Exodus 3:11-15: “I am that I am.” The meaning of the term “God” in those verses is further clarified in vv. 16-18 by the term “Lord God.”

Lordship is the dominating power over a given territory: a domain or kingdom (Col. 1:12, 13; Heb. 1:8-10; Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 11:15). Psalm 24 is useful for understanding this definition. So is Isaiah 43 through 45. It is also useful in understanding Peter’s reference to Isaiah 43:11 (see Acts 4:5-12). In other words, the most high God (“Ancient of Days” in Dan. 7:13, 14) made the Word the CEO over their plan to create humans and adopt them into the God Family. It is this Lord who is specifically referenced beginning in Genesis 2:4 – note especially v. 7. In all of Scripture, Yahweh Elohim is the Creator God.

Now consider Colossians 1:12-19. You should note in v. 16 that all things were created by the Word (the one who became Jesus Christ; John 1:3), and ... they were created for Him. How so? Hebrews 11:2 says that He spoke them into existence. That is why He is called the Word of the God Family: He is the Logos ... the Spokesman (Mark 1:14, 15; 2:27, 28; John 1:1-3). The underlying principle of Genesis 1:1 through 2:3 is that “God” said something ... and it came into existence. That is why I said earlier that I am not sure that the term elohiym in Genesis 1:1 through 2:3 is intended to be plural. Who did the speaking? The answer should provide clarity.

In the Old Testament, the Lord God is often referred to as being the “most high” God (for example: see Gen. 14:18-22). In the New Testament, demons refer to Jesus Christ as being the “Son of the most high God” (see also Mark 5:7; Luke 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48-50; 16:17; emphases added). It is not at all antithetical (that is: contradictory; against proper reason) for God the Father to also be referred to as being a Lord God. He retained a dominating power over His own territory and domain (read Heb. 1 to understand this more fully – especially vv. 8, 13).

In Luke 1:30-35, the young virgin girl Mary is told that the child she will conceive will be “great and shall be called the Son of the Highest.” In v. 35, she is told that “the power of the Highest shall overshadow you”

in order to effect the conception (emphases added). The term *overshadow* is from the Greek term *episkiazo*. It is descriptive of the power of God coming upon Mary to cause her to become pregnant. It can mean that Mary was enveloped with a haze of brilliance as the conception was caused. It was beyond what is normal; it was *supernaturally* induced. In that moment, it was as though the Word was reduced to a *spermatozoon* and given access to Mary's *ovum*.

How did "God" become the "Father" of Jesus Christ

The above having been said, *how did God become the "Father" of Jesus Christ?* I could answer with one Scripture, but I think that it is better to be more thorough so that you can become familiar with the broader picture. So, let's begin with another Scripture that goes back to the "most distant beginning." That will be Hebrews 10:5.

Hebrews 10 is about the efficacy of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Paul begins by showing that the *animal* sacrifices, at best, dealt with a *temporary* solution to sin (v. 3). Such a repetitive sacrifice is not efficacious – *it does not achieve the full solution for the problem it addresses* (v. 1-4). That being the case, the answer for the problem turns into a discussion about Jesus Christ becoming the *human* sacrifice as settled upon in 1 Peter 1:1-20 ... *before the creation of the orderly universe*. Hebrews 10:5 is part of the discussions in 1 Peter 1:18-20 and Philippians 2:5-11.

Before we get to Hebrews 10:5, let's understand Hebrews 2:6-18. Read the entire piece. My focus in this discussion will center on vv. 14-18. Here is the essence of these verses: The Word *chose* to become a *flesh-and-blood human* in order to be the most holy sacrifice that could be chosen from among sinful humans. Why? Ezekiel 18:4, 20 explains this very well: *The individual who commits the sin is the one who dies*. That death results in the individual's eternal destruction. That is the sense of Genesis 2:17; 3:19; and Isaiah 65:17. *When God forgets that you ever existed, then you will have been destroyed*.

Before the creation of the orderly universe, the Word *volunteered* to be the *substitute* sacrifice because "God's" blood is more efficacious than ordinary man or animal. He did not choose to become an *angel* (vv. 16, 17) – contrary to the teachings of some

"Christian" denominations that claim that He was the Archangel Lucifer's *brother* – supposedly, Michael the Archangel. Hebrews 1:5, 13 declare that God never, at any time, planned to offer this kind of sonship to any angel. Hebrews 2:5 declares that God never entertained the idea of making any of the angels the rulers of the world to come. That said, it is difficult to imagine God putting the present world under the dominion of the angels (see Gen. 1:26-28).

Hebrews 10:5 reveals that the Divine Partners agreed that a *human body* would be prepared for the Word when the period of time for the sacrifice had arrived. Verse 9 shows that the sacrifice of the *human* Jesus Christ *replaced* the sacrifice of the animals. In that way, the *efficacy* of that holy sacrifice produced the desired result (see John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:9). Read Hebrews 10:12-14. This is descriptive of the desired result of this redeeming sacrifice: *one* all-encompassing sacrifice for all sins for all times.

I do not know of any Scripture that gets into the *exact* explanation of how the Word God became flesh. The description we have in John 1:14 is not overly detailed. We can go back to Genesis 3:15 to see the prophecy that set into motion the concept that a "Savior Seed" would eventually come to eradicate sin. Genesis 3:21 is a *shadow* of the blood sacrifice that would be offered for mankind's sins (see Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:16, 17). Genesis 4:3-5 shows that *Abel* regularly offered the correct kind of sacrifice that *typified* the coming sacrifice of the "Savior Seed" (see also Heb. 11:4).

Isaiah 9:6, 7 was prophesied centuries later. It demonstrates that a *male* human child would be born among the *Israelites*. That child would have the government of God upon His shoulders and would establish an *eternal* Kingdom of God founded upon justice, judgment, and peace (see Isa. 2:1-5).

Compare Isaiah 7:14 to Matthew 1:18-23. In both prophetic cases, the child was to be born to a *virgin* among the *Israelites*. Matthew 1:18-23 reveals three important factors: (1) the *conception* would be caused by the action of Holy Spirit – the power that God possesses for accomplishing His will (*omnipotence*); (2) the child was to be named *Jesus* – a marginal reference translates that name to mean *Savior* – which identifies Him with Genesis 3:15 *et al*; and (3) He was to also be known as *Emmanuel* (Isaiah 7:14 spells it *Immanuel*): "God with us."

How did this pure, innocent, sinless conception occur in this young Jewish virgin? The simple answer is that she had to have been impregnated. The typical process with sperm/ovum pregnancies is that there must be a spermatozoon that penetrates an ovum. An atypical process would be the implantation of a fetus into the female womb. Scripture calls this young virgin's pregnancy a conception (v. 20), not an implantation. This conception took place in Mary's uterus; she became pregnant in the fullest sense of the term as it relates to humans.

We could speculate endlessly about this situation, but what it boils down to is that the Word was, apparently, reduced to a spermatozoon and brought into contact with Mary's ovum. It was not a matter of sexual intercourse between Mary and God. In this sense, the Word's Divine Partner became His "Father" because He executed the means by which the conception occurred to produce the "body" that was prepared in order for the Word to come into existence as a human being. That power/ability is part and parcel to His omnipotence. His creative power allowed Him to reduce the Word to a spermatozoon and bring it into contact with Mary's ovum. From that point, nature, as it applies to human pregnancies, took its course.

There is another sense in which Jesus Christ became the "Son of God." This is revealed by Paul in Romans 1:1-4: "by the resurrection from the dead" (v. 4). This was necessary because He had become a human. When He died on the cross, the only way He could be recovered from the grave was by resurrection: being raised from the dead to life. That is also the only way any dead person can be brought back to life in any form.

It is possible to raise dead humans out of the death state back to human life (Matt. 27:52, 53; John 11:1-44; Heb. 11:35). The "better resurrection" mentioned in Hebrews 11:35 is the one by which flesh-and-blood are replaced with eternal, self-perpetuating spirit as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (see also John 5:21-29; 1 Cor. 15:20, 42-49). The resurrection to spirit composition is the point at which the human actually joins the God Family (John 3:3; 1 Cor. 15:50).

Jesus Christ's objective was to be reborn from the human state to the glory He had with His Divine Partner before the creation of the orderly universe (see John 17:5). From the moment He became a human being, resurrection or spontaneous change were the only

two possible and viable routes to again becoming spirit in the God Family. Otherwise, He would have turned to the dust of the earth to which the human is otherwise destined to become after death (Gen. 3:19; Eccles. 3:18-22; 12:7; Job 14:1-15). In that regard, He was like all other human beings (see Heb. 2:14, 17, 18).

He was baptized (read Matt. 3) and given the Holy Spirit (v. 16; see also Acts 2:38). If you follow the example given by Paul in Romans 6, baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit are necessary for a future resurrection like that of Jesus Christ. Baptism (full immersion) is symbolic of a death, burial, and spirit resurrection from the dead that lies in the future for God's "children."

Paul says in Acts 26:19-23 that Moses and the Prophets proclaimed that Jesus Christ was to be the first human to be raised from the dead to eternal life. He set the example and proved that it can be done (remember the discussion above on pp. 16, 17 about His having been the archegos [captain] of our salvation). The term author in Hebrews 5:9 and 12:2 regarding our eternal salvation are also from archegos and mean the same thing in those contexts.

The "Begettal" Process

True Christians do not become God's children by the same method as Jesus Christ's conception and birth. Nevertheless, Scripture discusses a "begettal" process through which humans must go in order to be considered for their ultimate adoption (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5). In order to properly understand the term "begettal" toward the adoption, we must study through John 3:1-8 and Ephesians 1:3-14. Other Scriptures must also be involved in this investigation of God's word in order to get a more complete idea about how one is eventually born again into the Elohim Family.

Let's begin with John 1:12:

As many as received Jesus Christ [as Lord and Savior], to them, God the Father gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on the name of Jesus Christ (author's paraphrase; emphases added).

Notice that the power to become a child of God is inextricably linked to believing in Jesus Christ and

accepting Him as Lord and Savior. The upshot of that revelation is simple ... relative to the term power. The Greek term is exousia, which has to do with ability, capability, might, and power. Which of those four possible definitions apply here?

The context of the verse indicates that the human's inclusion in the "sonship" offer is based upon the individual's choice to accept the terms of the offer. The term exousia, in this case, does not indicate any power or authority of a human to turn oneself into a son of God. God the Father is explicit in His revelation that those who do not choose to accept the terms of the offer will not be included in His Family (John 3:16-21).

There are six Scriptures that refer to Jesus Christ as being the only begotten son of God (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Heb, 11:17; and 1 John 4:9). That term means that He is utterly unique in all of creation (Greek = monogenes). We have discussed that above. No other "child" of God will be produced in the same manner as Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, John 1:12 explains that humans have an open path to become a child of God through Jesus Christ (see Eph. 1:6). John 3:3-8 explains that process as being a rebirth – that is: being "born again." Note well the particulars of the process as addressed by Jesus Christ.

In John 3:3, He says that humans have to be born again in order to attain the status of a child in the God Family. The simple meaning of His expression is that the human has to be delivered in birth a second time. There is no hint at all that this is simply a spiritual conversion of the mind – even though such a thing is required (see Rom. 12:1, 2). The context clearly explains that it is not a divine "sperm/ovum" situation. It is a matter of a spiritual process that moves the flesh-and-blood human to become a spirit being ... in the fullest sense of the image of God.

In order to effect the ultimate born again state-of-being, the human must undergo a regeneration: that is, s/he must undergo a creation process again. The Greek term in Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5 is paliggenesia (palingenesis). They have to undergo a re-creation. In their sinful state, they are not in the "image of God." They are not His people/children.

Since they already exist as humans who were supposed to be in the image of God, something must be done to remove them from among the sinful who are bound for destruction. Paul captures the idea of regeneration in 2 Corinthians 5:17 ... where he declares

that, in Jesus Christ, the individual is totally forgiven of all past sins and counted as being a new creation. From that point on, the individual is expected to submit to the training needed to become a truly born-again child of God through the agency of Jesus Christ and all that pertains to that agency.

John 3:4 indicates that Nicodemus understood Jesus Christ's expression "born again" because he is quoted as asking whether or not the person would have to enter the mother's womb again in order to be born a second time. Nicodemus was not being flippant or comical. In vv. 3, 4, the expression born is indicative of the female's role in delivering a child in birth. Born in v. 4 (2x) is descriptive of a woman bearing a child. In the begettal process, the emphasis is on the male's role in delivering the "seed" to the ovum. In being born again, there is no such godly "sperm" going to a human "ovum."

Psalm 82 is addressed to the children of Israel who had not been serving the purpose for which they were created: that is, being the Lord God's "wife" and producing children for God (see Hebrews 2:10-13). Notice the use of the term "gods" in vv. 1, 6. Jesus refers to this psalm in John 10:22-36. He is speaking to the Israelites at the time. So, the idea of God producing children after His own kind can be traced all the way back to Genesis 1:26-28 ... and more specifically to Exodus 19:5, 6. Focus your attention on Psalm 82:6: "...you are children of the most high God."

That covers the initial creation of mankind in the image of God. However. The first man is confronted with a spiritual element in Genesis 2:15-17 that involves a choice. After Adam and Eve fail that spiritual requirement by the Lord God, there is a period of time during which there is a divide between the "sons of God" and the "sons of men." Abel and Cain are the fountainheads of those two groups.

After Abel's death, Adam and Eve have a third son named Seth (Gen. 4:25, 26). The Lord God chose Seth's lineage to be the one that would ultimately produce the Children of Israel (follow the remainder of the book of Genesis to understand that statement). Notice the pre-Flood milieu with which the Lord God had to deal (Gen. 6:1-6). Notice the spiritual divide between the "sons of God" and the "sons of men." Then read Genesis 6:8. Noah represents a "son of God." Verse 9 explains why.

All of this creates the question about how mankind becomes the "children" of God. In John 3:5, Jesus ex-

plains the *begettal* process through *baptism* and *the gift of the Holy Spirit*. The Greek term is *gennao*. There is a *figurative* definition that applies to this process. Paul uses *gennao* in that sense in 1 Corinthians 4:15 when he claims to be the “father” of those whom he instructs. There is no sense in which Paul will be the “father” of God’s children. He is saying, in essence, that he had a *spiritual influence* on the Corinthians. Those whom he taught became members of a certain class of people (*gennao*; BAG) relative to Jesus Christ.

Surely Paul knew of the warning by Jesus Christ in Matthew 23:8-12: “...Call no man your father upon the earth.” From whom does God’s true, *spiritual* influence emanate? The Holy Spirit of God through His Christ. It is Paul’s intention to use the Greek term *pater* in its *figurative* sense: “the prototype of a group; the founder of a movement; the proper example of behavior and belief” (BAG). He demonstrates such a usage in Romans 4:11, 12 when he refers to Abraham as “the father of all them that believe ... the father of circumcision.”

Some use the human *conception* and *gestation* as *types* or *examples* of this “begettal” process. They *figuratively* interpret the “deposit” of Holy Spirit as being the divine “sperm” and the human mind (“spirit”; Job 32:8) as being the “ovum.” It is a strained analogy, to say the least. I understand such imagery, but I believe that it falls short of what Jesus Christ is teaching in John 3:3-8.

When you couple John 1:12 with 3:3-8, you should get a sense of the “open door” that God presents to mankind by which a *personal decision* must be made to become part of His Family (John 3:16-19; Rom. 12:1, 2). Jesus Christ plainly shows in John 6:44, 65 and Matthew 20:1-16 and 22:1-14 that there is a “drawing” process and an “invitation” process” by God to which the individual involved is expected to respond. *Many* are presented with the personal choice, but *few* actually respond positively.

In the human model, neither the sperm nor the ovum has such an *invitation* or *choice*. As they say: “Nature takes its course.” Paul demonstrates in Hebrews 6:4-8 and 10:26, 27 that an individual can *choose* to opt out of his/her initial choice to be included. There is a point at which one’s refusal to accept the invitation *forever* closes the possibility (Matt. 22:7, 13).

Acts 2:38 explains the “begettal” process. The receipt of the Holy Spirit is the point at which the individual begins the journey of spiritual growth and development. Romans 6 explains the significance of the baptism (“water”) part of the process. It is a *symbolic* death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus Christ. In that sense, it is *prophetic* ... a picture of what will be the *ultimate* outcome relative to your spiritual growth and development. Second Corinthians 5:17 says that it is the point at which God *completely forgives* the invitee of all his/her sins and considers him/her to exist *as though* s/he were *freshly created*. That is grace (Rom. 4:1-5; 6:1, 2).

The difference between the human and Jesus Christ is that the human had no “glory” with the Father before the creation of the orderly universe (see John 17:5). *Man is but dust* (Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Job 4:15-21; Ps. 15:22, 29; 30:9; Eccles. 3:20; 12:7). He did not exist in “spirit” before his creation. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, was returned to His *former glory* by the Father’s power to resurrect Him from the human death and change His flesh-and-blood composition back to eternal, self-sustaining spirit. What is the upshot of that information?

In Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; and Ephesians 1:5, Paul shows that mankind has to be *placed* (that is: put into a particular position and/or condition) as a child of God by *adoption* through Jesus Christ. And ... Paul specifically reveals what constitutes the *adoption* itself. It is called “the *redemption* of the body” in Romans 8:23.

Paul shows in Ephesians 1:13, 14 that a *portion* of God’s Holy Spirit is given to the repentant, baptized human being as a *down-payment* to secure his/her ultimate *redemption*. *None of Paul’s descriptions is couched in any kind of sexual language*. It is instruction about how the true believer’s *placement* as a child takes place.

The key information in this process of redemption is given in the Greek word *apolutrosis*. This word means that the individual is set free: (1) from the consequences of sins committed and (2) from the limitations of the flesh (see 1 Cor. 6:19, 20). That process is what Paul affirms in Romans 8:23 as being “the redemption of the body.” Notice that Paul uses that definition in relationship to *adoption*. In Ephesians 1:4, 5, he asserts that this was the plan *before the creation of the orderly universe*.

So, you must focus on the fact that the Word and His divine companion knew that the first stage of this figurative “begettal” process would be the creation of the human from the dust of the earth. From that point, it would be necessary for the Lord God to provide the spiritual process by which the creature from the dust of the earth could become spiritually compatible with the Elohim kind ... and subsequently changed from flesh to spirit. Paul gives us a not-so-subtle hint about this in Philippians 2:5 and 2 Corinthians 5:17.

In Philippians 2:5 and other places, he speaks of the individual developing the mind of Jesus Christ (see also Rom. 12:1, 2; John 13:15; Gal. 2:20; 3:23-27; Col. 1:27). This is, figuratively speaking, the spiritual begettal and spiritual gestation process. It is the process by which you come to have the same mind in you as Jesus Christ has.

There is absolutely no comparison between that divine spiritual process and the human sexual process of “birthing” children. I understand the strained explanation of this process in the human sexual example; but ... such a comparison significantly dims the divine process of developing in the human the mind of God (see 1 Cor. 2:6-16; Isa. 55:8, 9). Even when we become members of the God Family, our individual uniqueness will be buttressed by our total spiritual unity with the God kind (see John 10:30; 17:11-26; Eph. 4:3-16). As Paul points out in Romans 8:9, 15: “If anyone does not have the Spirit of God in them, then they do not belong to God ... you have received the Spirit of adoption by which you call God your Father”

Conclusion: What is in a Name?

It is interesting that God has cast some human empires in the roles of “beasts.” In Daniel 7, He identifies Babylon (a lion with eagle’s wings; v. 4), Medo-Persia (a bear; v. 5), Greco-Macedonia (v. 6; a leopard with four wings and four heads), and Rome (v. 7; identified only as being dreadful, terrible, exceedingly strong) empires as being “beasts.” These “beasts” will control world governments until Jesus Christ is sent to destroy them and establish the Kingdom of God (Dan. 2:44, 45; 7:13, 14; Rev. 13). They are ultimately to be utterly destroyed in the coming “lake of fire” with their “father,” Satan the Devil (John 8:31-47; Rev. 20:10).

So, was President Trump committing an unforgiveable transgression against God when he referred

to the murderous MS13 gang member as animals? No more than the Lord God was doing when He referred to these four great empires that have influenced world affairs in ways that oppose God as “beasts.” The Lord God was not treating that succession of empires as though they were merely four-footed animals. He was showing how they would act with gross brutality against other nations and peoples in the world around them. He was showing that such empires deserve to be destroyed because they do not serve God’s purposes in His creation. They are not His people.

Read John 8 in its entirety in order to understand the following comments. Verse 16 is the point at which the Father God is brought into the conversation between Jesus Christ and the Pharisees who challenged His claim about being the Son of God. Focus on vv. 16-32. He turns the conversation toward those who believed on Him (vv. 31, 32) in order to point out the difference between them and the contentious Pharisees. In v. 33, the Pharisees claim to be the “seed” of Abraham. In vv. 34, 35, Jesus explains the difference between those of Abraham’s “seed” who are sinners and those who are true “sons” of Abraham. This is the point at which He shows what is in a name.

Now read down to the last part of v. 39: “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.” Continue reading the running argument down to vv. 44-47. Let me highlight Jesus’s reasoning as He discriminates between those who belong to God and those who do not:

You are of your father the devil, and you will do whatever your father wants you to do. He was a murderer in the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there was no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own [mind]: because he is a liar and the father of the lie. Because of this, you do not believe me when I tell you the truth. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell you the truth, why do you not believe me? He that is of God hears God’s words: You, therefore, do not hear God’s words because you are not of God (author’s paraphrase; emphases added).

Those kept in God’s name are those who think and act like God. We must not take His name for vain purposes (Ex. 20:7) if we claim to be His children. His “children” are led by His Spirit.



Romans 8:9, 12-17, 23

You [God's true people] are not carnally minded, but spiritually minded, if the Spirit of God dwells in you. *If anyone does not have the Spirit of God in them, then they do not belong to God.*

If we live according to the carnal mind, we will die. If we, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, put to death the carnal deeds of the body, we shall live.

...We are not debtors to the flesh so that we have to live according to the carnal mind.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

You have not received the spirit of bondage that causes blind dependence on and dread of a taskmaster, but you have received the Spirit of adoption by which you call God your Father.

The Spirit [of adoption] itself communicates with our own spirit to bear witness that we are the children of God.

If we are children, then we are also heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ: If, in fact, we suffer with Him in order to also be glorified with Him.

We who have the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit, even we groan within ourselves as we wait for the adoption, that is to say: for the redemption of our body (author's paraphrase; emphases added).



The Mystery of the Gospel

The term *gospel* is applied to several aspects of the message of the Bible. There are two Greek words that are translated *gospel* in the New Testament: *evaggelizo* and *evaggelion* (the double “g” uses the “ng” sound: *evangelizo* and *evangelion*). It is from these words that we derive the anglicized terms *evangelical*, *evangelist*, and *evangelize*. The definitions are, on the surface, interesting:

1. *evangelical*: bringing “good news” according to the New Testament; those Protestant churches that emphasize salvation by faith in Jesus Christ;
2. *evangelist*: one of the four men who wrote the first four books of the New Testament; a minister who preaches revivals; a preacher who holds large, public services in various cities; and
3. *evangelize*: to convert people to Christianity; to preach the gospel.

It is interesting that *evangelical* is the only term that puts forth anything remotely related to what the content of the *gospel* is: the “good news” about *salvation by faith in Jesus Christ*. The third definition mentions preaching the *gospel*, but it does not define to which “gospel” it refers. One might reasonably assume that all three definitions are “New Testament” terms that involve “salvation” by faith in Jesus Christ.

We will now explore whether or not the “gospel” is merely a *New Testament* phenomenon ... and if it is only about salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. If that is how you have generally believed it, then you might be surprised by what Scripture reveals.

The following is based on an excerpt from my recent book: *Seven Biblical Mysteries Unveiled! (Revisiting Theology You Thought was Settled)*.

Defining *Evaggelizo* and *Evaggelion*

Let me first explain the definitions of *evaggelizo* and *evaggelion*. There are two basic definitions: (1) generally speaking, it means “to bring or announce good news,” but (2) it “most specifically” refers to proclaiming or preaching “the divine message of salvation, the Messianic proclamation, the gospel” (*BAG*; pp. 317, 318). For example: In Luke 1:5-19, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias to tell him about the upcoming miraculous birth of his and his wife’s son, John. In v. 19, Gabriel uses the sense of the term *evaggelizo* in the first definition (note: “*speak* unto

you and show to you these *glad tidings*”). Trust me: It was *good news* to Zacharias and Elizabeth because they had been unable to have children. But ... this “good news” had nothing *directly* to do with a message about salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. It would be *associated* with it later in the sense that John would be the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5, 6 (see Luke 1:15-17) as an “Elijah” forerunner who would prepare the way for the Christ.

In Luke 1:26-55, Gabriel also brought “good news” to the young virgin girl, Mary. The “good news” she received was quite a bit different from what her cousin Elizabeth had received six months earlier

because it *did* contain information about “salvation” through Jesus Christ (see vv. 31-33). Mary understood, no doubt, what had been told her based on what Elizabeth had been told about John. Mary and Elizabeth, apparently, were not ignorant of the scriptural (Old Testament) implications.

It is here that we come to understand better the connection that the “gospel” has to the *Old* Testament. Whatever else you have been led to believe about “New Testament” Christianity, understand this: “New Testament” Christianity was presupposed in the Old Testament in the sense that the “New Covenant” was required and/or implied based on prophecies regarding the future Christ/Messiah (read 2 Cor. 3 ... especially vv. 7-13). Whether or not you recognize the validity of this point, I have already shown you its existence in previous chapters.

Such validity is confirmed in Jesus’ statement in John 5:45-47. Moses’ writings are in Genesis through Deuteronomy. Moses communicated with and wrote down history and laws given to him by *Yahweh Elohim*, the one who became *Jesus Christ*. You also can get a sense of the Old Testament connection from Acts 8:26-40. The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53:7, 8 (vv. 32, 33) and wanted Philip to explain it to him. Verse 35 says that Philip “began at the same Scripture and preached unto him Jesus.” We are not made privy to the exact preachments Philip made to the eunuch. “Preached unto him Jesus” is an expression that implies a very broad area of discussion that goes back to the book of Genesis.

Genesis 3:15 is the first indication of a “Savior Seed” that would be born to an appropriate mother. The remainder of the Old Testament (Law and Prophets) follows suit in this expectation of a ruling “Savior Seed” who would rescue mankind from sin and the tempter *in order to establish the Kingdom that God had originally intended to establish on the earth* (see Gen. 1:26-28 and Matt. 25:34).

You can get the idea behind this in Psalm 24. David points out three very important factors in this psalm: (1) The earth belongs to the Lord (*Yahweh Elohim*); (2) The Lord is the one who created the earth; and (3) *Yahweh Elohim* is the King of glory. *In short, the one who became Jesus Christ had created His own inheritance and will be the one who rules over it in the eternity ahead.*

Read Isaiah 9:6, 7. What do you know about who this “child” is to be when this prophecy is fulfilled?

What does Isaiah mean that the *government* shall be on His shoulders? What relationship can you find in v. 7 to what Mary was told in Luke 1:31-33? Does Isaiah 9:7 prophesy an eternal *kingdom* and *throne*? Would you say that this is an *Old Testament* reference to the “good news” of the Kingdom of God over which Jesus Christ will reign? Now read Daniel 2:44, 45 and 7:13-27. Would you agree, then, that *Moses* and the *Prophets* foretold the “good news” of *Jesus Christ* ruling over the coming Kingdom of God?

That validity is also confirmed in Matthew 5:17-19 where Jesus proclaimed that He did not come to *destroy* (that is, annul or rescind) the Law (Moses) or the Prophets, like Malachi, Daniel, and Isaiah, but to bring to reality the purpose and intent of what is revealed in them.

Paul shows in Romans 13:8-10 that “fulfilling” the Law *does not do away* with the Law. *Love* fulfills (that is, meets the demands of) the Law (see John 14:15, Rom. 8:1-4, and 1 John 2:3-5; 3:4). He says in 1 Corinthians 13:13 that love *abides*, which means that it endures in perpetuity. He also shows in Romans 3:31 that *faith* (and, of necessity, *grace* ... because it is the epitome of *love*) upholds and perpetuates the Law, rather than rescinding it and making it unworthy of discussion in “New” Testament theology.

As far as the “gospel” is concerned, you can no more do away with Moses and the Prophets (which includes the Psalms – see Luke 24:44) than you can the purpose and intent of the New Testament writings – which are heavily based on and derived from the Old Testament writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms! Paul’s statement in 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 also confirms that validity because the only Scripture Paul had was the Old Testament. Put the pieces together to see the whole picture here!

Is the Gospel Merely a Message about Salvation?

In Ephesians 1:13, Paul speaks of the “gospel of your salvation.” Many such remarks are “proof” that the “good news” is both a divine message and that it is about salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is “gospel.” It is undeniable that such a message is part and parcel to the “New” Testament (covenant). However, what we must understand is whether or not “salvation” is the primary “good news” that should be

preached to the nations of the world. It is one thing to desire the *salvation* intended; it is quite another to accept in faith all of the *concomitant parts* of that salvation.

Many who use the term “gospel” generally associate it with the “good news” about salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. And ... they make *that* the primary focus of their *evangelistic* efforts. They emphasize the need for “salvation” so that the individual can ultimately go to *heaven* for his/her eternal reward. Some believe that it is immediately realized upon death; others believe that the immortal soul and the body must be re-united when Jesus Christ returns (the soul goes to heaven upon death and the body lies in the grave). Few teach that entrance into *the Kingdom of God on the earth* is the *real* reward of the “saved” (see John 3:1-8 and 1 Cor. 15:50-58). How does God’s *truth* figure into this?

In the *Nave’s Topical Bible*, I think they express very well the “good news” aspect of the topic “gospel” because they list numerous things they think should be counted as “good news.” Note the listing of subjects they relate to “gospel”:

1. Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 4:23; 24:14)
2. Gospel of God (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 1 Thes. 2:8; 1 Tim. 1:11; 1 Pet. 4:17)
3. Gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1)
4. Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 9:12, 18; Gal. 1:7; Phil. 1:27)
5. The Dispensation of the Grace of God (Eph. 3:2)
6. The Grace of God (Acts 20:24)
7. Gospel of Salvation (Eph. 1:13)
8. Gospel of Peace (Eph. 6:15)
9. The Kingdom of God (Luke 16:16)
10. Glorious Gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4)
11. Preaching of Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:25)

12. Mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4) (*Nave’s Topical Bible: A Digest of the Holy Scriptures*; Nashville: The Southwestern Company; 1962; p. 518).

There are 11 more subjects listed there ... all of which are considered to be “gospels.” However, the most prevalent idea among “Christianity” about the “gospel” is that it is either the “good news” *about* Jesus Christ Himself, or it is the “good news” about salvation so you can go to *heaven* when you die. What is generally missed is that all of that constitutes *parts* of a larger “gospel” that includes some of them as lesser parts of the whole. In other words, the Christ, salvation, grace, peace, et cetera are parts of a larger idea. Why do you think that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are referred to as the four *gospels*? What is the supreme, larger concept to which all others are connected? What is the one event in “salvation history” that would bring about the need for the Christ, salvation, grace, peace, *et cetera*?

The establishment of the Kingdom of God on this earth! All else notwithstanding, the establishment of the *Kingdom of God* on this earth is the *primary* focus of God’s “good news.” Yet, many claim that the “kingdom” is merely a feeling or a conviction established *within your heart and mind* to submit to God’s rule through faith in Jesus Christ. I have shown you one voice who says that it really makes no difference whether or not you believe in *a literal, visible kingdom on the earth* (Hobbs; pp. 98, 99). In the chapter above on the mystery of the Kingdom of God, I demonstrated to you that the Kingdom was the *primary* thought in God’s pre-creation plan.

Matthew 25:34 shows that the idea of the Kingdom was conceived *before the creation of the orderly universe*. Ephesians 1:4 shows that the creation of humans was also conceived before the creation of the orderly universe *in relationship to Jesus Christ* because He would make it possible for them to become members of the “God” family (which is itself a “kingdom”).

First Peter 1:18-25 shows that the Christ was anointed to that office at the same time and would make it possible for humans to be *changed from flesh to spirit* in order to enter that family (compare vv. 23-25 to John 3:1-8 and 1 Cor. 15:36-58) – that is, to be “born again.” It should be understood that the *Kingdom* was the *primary* idea that included various as-

pects like the occupants, the territory, and the legal underpinnings. To insure the absolute success of the plan, there had to be a means by which humans could be rescued from destruction should they fail to always be holy, blameless, and loving. That's where the concept of a "savior" or "Christ" came into existence.

What does this information tell us? It tells us that the "good news" (that is, the gospel) is primarily about the Kingdom of God. How to become a part of it through Jesus Christ is a concomitant part of that "good news."

What Kind of "Gospel" did Jesus Preach and Teach?

After His baptism and the temptation by Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 3:1-4:11), Jesus took up His role as an evangelist (an individual who brings God's "good news" to others). In numerous places in the four "gospels," Jesus makes it plain that He represents the Father, speaks the things the Father has sent Him to speak, and does the works the Father has commissioned Him to perform. So, His teachings and His works represent the "proof" that the Kingdom exists and that its power among mankind is demonstrated in order to turn them away from being unholy, blamable, and unloving so that they can, in fact, gain entrance into the future Kingdom (Matt. 12:28; Luke 10:9; Mark 12:28-34). That Kingdom power presently working among humankind is merely a sample of what shall be when the Kingdom is fully in power among mankind. It does not belong to flesh-and-blood (John 3:3; 1 Cor. 15:50).

Matthew 4:17 says: "From that time [after His baptism and temptation by Satan] Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent [that is, change your life from being in opposition to God's plan and will]: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Mark 1:14, 15 explains the same thing ... except Mark calls it the Kingdom of God. There is no difference between the two. Matthew is not suggesting that the "gospel" is about going to heaven when you die. BAG points out that the Greek expressions *basileia tou theou* (kingdom of God) and *basileia ton ouranon* (kingdom of heaven):

...Have essentially the same mng., since the Jews used *ouranos* (-oi) as well as other circumlocutions [that is, expressions used to

avoid saying the name of God; ex. = *Adonai*] for *theos* (Mt 19:23[, 24]) ... the latter term [*ouranon*] may also emphasize the heavenly origin and nature of the kgdm.... (BAG; p. 134).

That being said, Matthew and Mark are talking about the same thing. In Mark's comments in v. 15, he quotes Jesus as saying that the gospel of the Kingdom of God is something to be believed. The Greek term from which this is translated is *pisteuo*, which has to do with the kind of belief/trust that emphasizes God's power and nearness to help. It has to do with believing that God exists and that what He reveals to us is true (Ibid; pp. 666, 667). So, when Jesus Christ says "believe the gospel," He is not making belief in the Kingdom of God optional. Nothing that God reveals to us through His Christ, His prophets, His Laws, et cetera is optional because it is all part and parcel to His truth (Isa. 8:20). This is the meaning behind John 4:23, 24; 8:31, 32; and 17:17. *You are not free to pick and choose the parts of God's truth that you like and neglect/ignore other parts that you do not like.*

To mark the importance of the Kingdom-on-the-earth concept in what Jesus taught and preached, please be reminded that it was He who taught us to pray to the Father: "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10, 13; emphases added) ... as well as: "Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33; emphases added).

Wherever you find mention of God's Kingdom in Scripture, there you have witnesses that this Kingdom on the earth is that in which you are to believe and to which you are to look forward. What do you think is the point of Zechariah 14:9 and Revelation 5:10? If it is not allowed for humans (flesh-and-blood) to inherit the Kingdom of God, would you agree that they would have to have a special bodily composition in order to do so (see 1 Cor. 15:51-54)?

It would make sense, then, that the "gospel of Christ" has as much to do with the gospel He preached and taught as it would with Him as a personage. In other words, the "gospel of the Kingdom" is about the Kingdom that God wills to be established on the earth by Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus was given all power in heaven and on earth (Phil. 2:11): He is responsible for taking care of everything that is necessary to bring it to reality and make it work ... including providing

the sacrifice necessary to save sinful mankind from destruction and make possible their participation in that Kingdom (see again the first part of Heb. 1:3 re: “upholding all things by the word of His power”).

While it is necessary to talk about *faith* in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, salvation, grace, mercy, love, repentance, Holy Spirit, forgiveness, *et cetera*, all of that is relative to the “good news” about God’s will that His *Kingdom* should be established and that humans should be given the opportunity to be subjects of the Kingdom rule – with the ultimate opportunity, through Jesus Christ and all that is involved with His work and responsibilities, of being adopted into the Elohim family, which, of necessity, *must* involve being given eternal life (John 3:1-8, 16; 1 Cor. 15:52-54; 2 Cor. 4:3-5:10; Eph. 1:4-14; 1 Thes. 4:13-18).

Conclusion

I would like to close this discussion about the “gospel” of the Kingdom with some salient points made by John Bright in his book, *The Kingdom of God*. I will paraphrase these points ... followed by my own closing comments:

1. The concept of the Kingdom of God is the total message of the Bible (p. 7).
2. There is a unifying theme throughout the Bible that was not artificially imposed upon it: God’s intention to call out a people for Himself for the creation of the Kingdom of God (p. 10). Israel is an example. The Church is another.
3. The central message with which Jesus Christ was concerned was the announcement of the coming of the Kingdom of God—that message was constantly on His lips as a matter of great importance (p. 17).
4. The initial realization of a people called to live under the rule of God began with Israel ... and with it came the notion of the Kingdom of God. This is part and parcel to Israel being summoned to enter into a covenant with the Lord God (p. 28). [Choosing *Israel* out of all other nations is as much an election of a “remnant” of humanity by grace as

choosing the *Church* was an election by grace of a remnant out of Israel (Isa. 1:9; Rom. 11:5).]

5. The Old and New Testaments are inextricably linked because “all biblical theology is made to hang together.” The hope of Israel was the exaltation of God’s people under the ruling Messiah (pp. 7, 10, 17, 28, 190, 191).

In the “faith” chapter (Hebrews 11), Paul shows that the father of faith, Abraham, by faith and covenant expectation “looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (v. 10). For what was Abraham looking? *The Kingdom of God on the earth with Jesus Christ as its ruler in Jerusalem*. In Hebrews 6:13-20, Paul shows how *immutable* was the covenant agreement between the Lord God and Abraham (see Genesis 15). Notice in Genesis 15:18-21 what the boundaries of the territory on the earth will be. Physical Israel never occupied that much territory, but Spiritual Israel will. Be aware also that the Gentiles will be grafted into Spiritual Israel (that “holy root” remnant by the election of God’s grace) so they can inherit with Israel (Rom. 11:16-27; Gal. 3:8, 9, 26-29). They will thereafter be counted as “Israelites.”

Finally, the New Testament (Covenant) created by Jesus Christ during His final Passover feast with His disciples (Matt. 26:26-28) is the same covenant spoken of by Jeremiah 31:31-34 and cited twice by Paul in Hebrews 8:6-13 and 10:16-18. The Old Covenant was flawed because of the *people*, not because of the *covenant* of the covenant (Heb. 8:8).

The Lord God did not make the Holy Spirit generally available to Israel because of their unbelief. In the New Covenant, that Holy Spirit is made more available so that the hearts and minds of mankind can be more easily attuned to God’s thoughts and ways. The intent of God’s Laws and Prophecies has not been changed (Matt. 5:17-19) – they were not the problem.

Why have a *covenant*? Exodus 19:5, 6 explains that the Lord God was creating for Himself “a peculiar treasure ... above all people ... a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.” This was a “marriage covenant.”

Read Deuteronomy 4:1-20 in order to understand that Israel was to be that “city upon a hill” (see also Matt. 5:13-16) that was to be used by the Lord God to attract other nations to His truth and subsequent salvation. He warned them not to be like the other nations

and sink into idolatry and falsehood. Peter used this same idea in 1 Peter 2:1-12 to express the “marriage covenant” that exists between Jesus Christ and the new “Israel” being formed in the Church Jesus Christ is building to be His bride. ***All of this has to do with the gospel that Jesus taught and preached ... the primary focus of His earthly ministry.***

He is presently creating a holy nation of judges, priests, and kings in preparation for setting up that Kingdom at His return (see Dan. 7:13-27 and Rev. 20:4-6). The Bride of Jesus Christ will be the ruling family in that Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:50) that will work as *co-heirs* with Him (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26-29) to establish that Kingdom on the earth and complete the

ministry of reconciliation of all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth to the Father during the first 1,000 years of its existence (see 1 Cor. 15:24-28, Phil. 2:10, and Rev. 20:4). In Luke 12:31, 32, Jesus tells His disciples to seek the Kingdom of God *first* in their lives because “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” ***That is the “good news” of the Kingdom of God ... the mystery of the true gospel.*** It is sad that there are those who call themselves “Christian” but preach *another* Jesus, *another* gospel, and *another* spirit (see Matt. 24:4, 5; 7:21-23; and 2 Cor. 11:4, 13-15) instead of the gospel of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.



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Larry E. Ford, Pastor



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“What's Past is Prologue”

“What's past is prologue” is a quotation from Shakespeare’s play “The Tempest,” Act 2, Scene I:

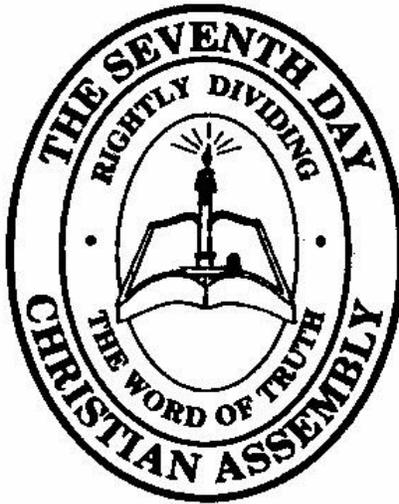
We all were sea-swallow'd, though some cast again, and by that destiny to perform an act whereof what's past is prologue, what to come in your and my discharge (W. G. Clark and W. Aldis Wright, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, New York: Nelson Doubleday, Inc., [no publication date given]; p. 980).

In that statement, Antonio suggests to Sebastian that all that has happened in the "past" – much of it having been things that could have ended their lives ... or done differently – has led Sebastian and himself to the present opportunity to commit murder ... or make another choice. Whether it has been a matter of fate or destiny, their present decisions would provide another step where the past serves as prologue: an introduction of a new line of the “past” that, presumably, casts the future anew and either continues the same pattern of outrageous misfortune ... or resets the future to be, in whatever manner, new and different for good or ill.

If you listen closely to commentators of news panels, they will often use this quote from Shakespeare to point out that all that has gone on in the past has put us all in the present political situations we face. While it is true that governments and the people who construct them provide the roller coaster rides that get us to the present, it should be soberly understood that part of what comes in the future is not always in the hands of mankind. Just as soberly should it be understood that what comes can absolutely cause us to be “swallow’d up,” but ... not necessarily “cast again” and set free to continue making the past the prologue.

God’s word teaches us that there is a *terminus point* toward which we are moving with great speed and force (see 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Heb. 9:27; 1 Pet. 4). It is a foolish presumption for man to live as though what is to come lies solely in his own hands. Only in Jesus Christ is the past truly the prologue of good things to come (Rev. 11:15; Dan. 2:44, 45). We all need to put our future into the capable hands of God through Jesus Christ.

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Straight Talk Plain Truth

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