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# Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

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## Lesson Three: What is Man?



LARRY E. FORD

This lesson is about: (a) man's mortality, (b) how the concept of the immortality of the soul came into Christian belief, (c) some of the fallacies of the theory of evolution, and (d) why God is mindful of man. It is based on David's question in Psalm 8:4: "What is man, O God, that you should have any thought for him? Or, the son of man that you should visit him [with friendly or hostile intent]?" You will learn things in this study that you, perhaps, have not known or understood before.



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

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



## *Scriptural Admonitions*

**A**nd the Lord God formed man from the clods of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living, breathing creature. (Genesis 2:7)

**F**or that which befalls the sons of men befalls the beasts; even one thing befalls both of them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yes, all have the same breath, so that a man has no preeminence above a beast: ...All go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. (Ecclesiastes 3:19,20)

**W**hat is man, that you are mindful of him? And the son of man, that you visit him? (Psalm 8:4)



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# Introduction

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

The Apostle Paul says in Romans 1:19, 20:

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

Paul, in fact, is not saying that mankind does not believe in one sort of “God” or another. On the contrary! Mankind has amassed to themselves numerous “Gods” that are nothing more than the products of their own perverted concepts of what “God” really is and does. They worship all manner of “Gods” that are nothing more than the creations of *man’s* heart, mind, and hands (Rom. 1:23-25). Interestingly enough, many people attempt to justify the existence of such “Gods” by associating them with the God of the Bible and using the Bible’s descriptions and words when speaking of them (see especially Matthew 7:21-23; 24:4, 5).

The result of such an approach, according to Paul, is that mankind has:

- (a) suppressed the True God's proof of His existence through their unrighteousness (v. 18),
- (b) failed to acknowledge the True God when they knew Him (v. 21), and
- (c) worshiped the creature rather than the Creator (vv. 23-25).

It would be reasonable, then, to ask why such a condition should exist in the face of such great proof!

Our approach in this lesson is not to convince you of the existence of one "God" or another. Mankind generally accepts that premise – whether or not they worship the True God. Our question to you is this: Who or what is the *True God*? We ask this for one simple reason: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7; emphasis added). That commandment from the True God makes it necessary for the individual to not only believe in His existence, but to believe in the *True God* as He has revealed Himself to think and act – not according to the vain imaginations of mankind.

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

We will explore the fallacy of such thinking in the face of the existence of 32,000+ "Christian" denominations, along with the existence of the "Gods" of several hundred other religions. It should be readily apparent to the

thinking person that in such a collection of religious thoughts there are involved many different concepts about who/what “God” is and what “God” is up to regarding mankind and creation.

These concepts conflict with and contradict one another; so, the inevitable question looms large: Which religious concepts and which “God” are the correct ones? *They cannot all be the truth.* If not, which one is? Would the True God leave us in the dark about such an important piece of knowledge? Such is the objective of this lesson. We will deal with the biblical definition of “God,” as well as the difference between God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. You will learn how the concepts of monotheism and Trinitarianism have clouded the understanding of otherwise well-meaning seekers of God’s truth.

This is a basic primer in understanding the Bible’s explanation of how the True God has revealed Himself to mankind. Keep in the back of your mind as you study through this lesson that:

- (a) There are *pretenders* out there – regardless of what our multi-cultural, politically-correct world would have us think and believe (read 2 Peter 2; 1 John 4:1; and Jude).
- (b) They will use Jesus Christ’s name and teachings to try to validate their false teachings (read 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 13-15 and Galatians 1:6-9).
- (c) There is a deceptive, adversarial spirit loose who makes it his business to cloud your understanding in order to keep you from understanding God’s truth (read 2 Corinthians 4:1-4 and Revelation 12:9).

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

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

In Christ's Service,

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## Chapter One

# Man: A Biblical Definition

**D**avid's question in Psalm 8:4 is not so much a request for a definition of what man is as it is a question about why God would involve Himself with him. The second part of David's question is largely ignored for some unknown reason: "and the son of man, that you should visit him?" It appears that it is not enough for God to simply contemplate man and what he is doing and thinking. In addition, instead of God conducting His business with man from a distant heavenly throne, He actually comes to see man in order to comfort or help him, as well as to correct and/or punish him – either as an act of courtesy or in a "professional" capacity.

Apparently, He also comes at times to dwell with man as a guest. The definition of the Hebrew word *paqad* (visit) is very interesting: "to come to with friendly or hostile intent" (*Strong's Dictionary of the Hebrew Bible*, James Strong, 1890, p. 96). This is in total agreement with the English definition: "To come to or upon as a reward, affliction, or punishment" (*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, G. & C. Merriam Co., 1974; p. 774).

Consider one biblical example out of many possibilities. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18 is a perfect example. The Lord God appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre and enjoyed a meal with him. When He had

concluded His business with Abraham and Sarah (v. 10), He said this:

The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down [there] now [from this place], and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come to me; *if not, I will know it* [based on the information gathered during My visit]” (vv. 20, 21; emphases added).

In this one chapter, we find two excellent examples of David’s second question:

(a) The Lord God visited Abraham for a good reason – a blessing/reward, but

(b) He also visited Sodom and Gomorrah for a hostile reason – to destroy it with fire and brimstone.

So, this elicits the first question: Why should God get so personally involved?

This story also helps us to understand God’s *omniscience* – that is, whether He knows everything in advance of its occurrence in minute detail. *Omniscience* actually means: “the unlimited ability to know.” If the Lord God had to go to Sodom and Gomorrah to see if it was as bad as it had been reported, then He did not know everything in advance of His visit.

This observation is not a statement that *limits* His ability to know; it is an affirmation that he has unlimited ability to know what He wants to know ... when He wants to know it. It is evidence that He is a learning God with the ability to infinitely continue to expand His knowledge ... regardless of how full His knowledge already is.

Our objective in this lesson, therefore, is twofold:

1. We are going to get a biblical definition of what man is.
2. We are going to understand why God is concerned with man's thoughts and ways, how He visits him, and what He intends to do with regard to either rewarding or punishing him.

This lesson is a powerful piece of understanding. Be sure to read everything completely, write down the scriptures, and write down your answers to the questions. This study is well worth the effort!

### Is Man *Mortal* or *Immortal*?

*The Anchor Bible (TAB)* translates Genesis 2:7 to read “God Yahweh formed man from *the clods in the soil...*” because the Hebrew term *apar* (“dust”; *KJV*) stands for “lumps of earth, soil, dirt’ as well as the resulting particles of ‘dust.’” (“Genesis,” E. A. Speiser, Doubleday, vol. 1, 1964, pp. 14, 16; emphasis added). Perhaps this is the source of the expression where someone is called a “clod” for being a dull or insensitive person! And, it would have been difficult to find very much “dust” in that damp climate (see v. 6).

Notice that the Lord God took the clods of the soil and used them as the material from which to construct man. Once He had the exact image He wanted, He administered CPR – breathing into man's nostrils *the breath of life* – and man became “a living soul” (*KJV*).

Be careful how you think about that term *soul*; it is not what many think it is. The Hebrew term for “living soul” is *nephesh*. It is important to understand this term because it has many different applications to the life of the creatures

the Lord God created. The term itself means “a living, breathing creature.”

The same word is used in many places to refer to *animals* (for examples, see Genesis 1:21, 24; 2:19; 9:10, 12, 15, 16; Leviticus 11:46). So, man and animals are “living souls.” The same word is used to speak of *dead bodies* (Leviticus 19:28; 21:1; 22:4; Numbers 5:2; 6:11; 9:6, 7, 10). The “living soul” is also subject to *death* and *decay* (Genesis 2:17; Job 4:17; Ezekiel 18:4, 20). The “soul” can die!

It is called “breath of life” because it caused Adam to come to life. The Lord God *breathed* His own breath into Adam to cause him to live. It is merely breath; there is no sense in which an *immortal spirit*, *divine spark*, or *immortal soul* is involved. The Lord God exhaled *breath*, and man’s lungs were filled with it, causing him to become a living, breathing creature. No *immortality* was given to man in any shape, size, or quantity.

If you read Psalm 104 in its entirety, but focus on verses 29 and 30, you should be able to answer these two questions: Whose *breath* is taken away? How can you tell if this includes man and beast? Notice how the psalm refers to the Lord God’s creative acts (vv. 1-24). In v. 25, he begins to speak of *innumerable creatures, great and small*. These would be the *nephesh*. Verse 27 points out how dependent they are upon the Lord God for life and livelihood. Then come vv. 29, 30.

What happens to them when their *breath* is taken away? To what material do they return? If the *human* is among the *nephesh*, then it is apparent that the *human* dies in the same way that all *nephesh* die. If they die, then they putrefy, rot, and disintegrate back to dust. Since there is nothing *immortal* about them, including the human, then v. 30 explains that the only way they will ever continue to live thereafter is by being raised from their death back to life. This is called the *resurrection of the dead*.

Ecclesiastes 3:18-22 points out that the human *nephesh* has no advantage over the other *nephesh* with regard to life and death. Why? They die the *same* kind of death because they have the *same* kind of breath and are made from the clods of the earth. Subsequently, they will both return to the dust of the earth when they die.

Ecclesiastes 9:4, 5, 10 follow up on this discussion by explaining what happens to the dead when they return to the dust. Pay close attention to vv. 5, 10 because we will use this information more fully later on. Verse 5 says that the dead *know nothing*. Verse 10 says that there is “no work, no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave.”

This agrees with Psalm 30:9 where David says that his blood does not profit him in the grave ... and his dust cannot praise God nor declare His truth. In Psalm 88:10, the psalmist questions whether or not God can show wonders to the dead and have them rise to praise Him. In Psalm 115:17, the psalmist openly declares that *none* who go to the grave can or will praise God. In Isaiah 38:18, 19, the prophet, under the inspiration of the Lord God’s Spirit, draws a contrast between the dead and the living. The dead are without the ability to praise Him and hope in His truth. The living can. This would be the reason Jesus Christ told the Sadducees (who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead) that: “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” His point is that He intends to raise Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob from the dead ... a concept in which the Sadducees did not believe (see Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:17-19).

In Ecclesiastes 12:7, Solomon explains what happens to the human’s body and “spirit” when s/he dies. The term “breath of life” comes from the Hebrew term *ruach*. It is translated 28 times as “breath” (for examples, see Genesis 6:17; 7:15, 22; Lamentations 4:20) and 90 times as “wind” (for examples, see Genesis 8:1; 41:6; Exodus 10:13; Psalm 1:14). Ecclesiastes 3:21 and 12:7 are two examples where it is translated as “spirit.” Both man and beast have been

given the “breath of life,” and both return to the dust of the earth after death because both are *mortal* – that is, they are *capable of dying*. Once they die, that breath of life or “spirit” – *ruach* – returns to God who gave it. It has nothing to do with an *immortal spirit* indwelling man and leaving upon death.

All of this information prepares you for learning about the effects of what is called “original sin.” This is important because of what we learn in 1 John 3:4, Ezekiel 18:4, 20, and Romans 6:23. When and where was the “original sin” committed among mankind? That is the subject of Genesis 2:15-17 and Genesis 3.

### What was the “Original Sin”?

In Genesis 2:15-17, the Lord God places Adam in the Garden of Eden. His primary task is to keep the Garden from going to wreck and ruin. The Lord God has planted all manner of trees in the Garden from which mankind can freely eat ... with one exception. It is an oddity of scripture and an inexplicable notion of the Lord God that the tree of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil should be so *visible* and *accessible* to mankind. Yet, the Lord God commands Adam not to eat of that particular fruit. If he does, he will *die*.

Based on what you have learned so far, what does it mean for the human to *die*? The body will lose: (a) brain power, (b) perception of surroundings, (c) hope of returning to life, and (d) begin to disintegrate back to its dust. Unless and until God decides to retrieve the human from that state-of-being, s/he will literally become part of the landscape.

Genesis 3:1-7 sets the stage for the greatest test for newly created mankind. The problem is that a *tempter* begins to deceive Eve about the nature of the tree of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Neither she nor

Adam has ever had to confront such a test in their very short lives. Nothing in scripture indicates exactly when this temptation began or how long it took the tempter to get from A to Z. We are given the “bare bones” aspect of the temptation that is based on three premises:

1. God is a liar who does not want to share this knowledge with her.
2. The fruit of the knowledge of good and evil will give her knowledge, understanding and wisdom that is *equivalent* to the Lord God’s. In fact, the tempter convinced Eve that she would be “like gods, knowing good and evil” (v. 5).
3. The serpent also tells Eve in v. 4 that she “shall not surely die.”

Commentator Adam Clarke has an interesting opinion about that statement:

The tempter insinuates the *impossibility* of her dying, as if he had said, “God has created thee immortal; thy death, therefore, is impossible; and God knows this, for as thou livest *by the tree of life*, so shalt thou get increase of wisdom by the tree of knowledge” (Ralph Earle, ed., *Adam Clarke’s Commentary: One-volume Edition*, Baker Book House, 1967, p. 21d; emphases added).

In other words, Clarke opines that the serpent told Eve that she was *inherently immortal*. Also, the Hebrew term for “know” not only means to have an *understanding* about something, but also the ability to *experience* something in order to acquire that understanding. He told Eve that God did not want them to be like Him, so He was withholding

from them *knowledge* and *experience* about good and evil that would allow them to be like Him. In effect, he called God a liar. Clarke also says that the tempter *assumed* that Adam and Eve would continue to have access to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:19 raises two questions: (1) What would be the result of their “returning unto the ground [from which they were taken]”? and (2) Why would they return to the “dust”? The answers are simple: They would be returned to the dust out of which they were created because they were “dust” to which He had given life. Because they chose “death” instead of “life,” He said they would return to that from which they came. Here, “dust” is the preferred translation – not “clods.” Also note the finality with which the Lord God spoke.

In the argument about the doctrine of the immortal soul, few pay attention to Genesis 3:22-24. After the Lord God pronounced His judgment upon Adam and Eve, did He say that they would live *forever* in another state-of-being? Understand that man became like God only in the sense of *knowing* good and evil – not that man *became* immortal or anything like it.

The Lord banished them from the Garden so they would no longer have access to the Tree of Life, *which is a source of immortality*, but not necessarily of *self-sustaining, eternal life* (we’ll discuss this point later). The Lord God set in place the measures by which man’s *mortality* – that is, man’s ability to die – was enforced. There would be some other avenue by which man must obtain access to eternal life – and, some other time. Think about what is being said here.

### What is a “Soul”?

Norman H. Snaith, in discussing the fallacy of translating *Hebrew* thought with a *Greek* meaning, uses

the Greek word *psyche* as an example of how meanings can be changed and distorted from the original intent. For example, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the *Septuagint*) used the term *psyche* as the Greek translation of the Hebrew term *nephesh*. What would be wrong with that?

Snaith says that since the verb form, *psychein*, has to do with *breathing* (“that which is the clearest outward evidence of life”), the Greek meaning stands for a “breath-soul” and is used to describe that part of an individual that leaves the body upon death with the blood. So, *psyche* is used for “life” ... with some kind of relationship to a “soul” concept.

The term *psyche* was used by Homer and others to mean that part of man that *survives death* – that is, the *immortal soul*. However, Snaith then warns the reader that using *this* meaning puts a meaning to *nephesh* that is totally foreign to the original, intended Hebrew meaning (“The Language of the Old Testament,” *The Interpreter’s Bible*, Abingdon Press, vol. 1, 1952, p. 230).

Consider this definition of *psyche* as given in *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* (Unabridged), vol. II, H - R, G. & C. Merriam Co., 1966, p. 1832:

The vital principle of corporeal matter [of or relating to a person's body, especially as opposed to their spirit] that is a distinct mental or spiritual entity coextensive with but independent of body or soma.

This means that *psyche* is considered to be the *animating principle* of physical matter – that is, it makes physical matter capable of feeling and perception. It is separate from, but occupies the same space and time as, the body. It is also considered to be the *mind*. Apparently,

it is whatever makes up the mind and heart of a person that some consider as being *the immortal soul*.

*Webster's* adds that the *mind* is:

The totality of the *id* [the completely unconscious source of psychic energy derived from instinctual needs and drives], *ego* [the organized conscious mediator between the person and reality], and *superego* [that which functions to reward and punish through a system of moral attitudes, conscience, and a sense of guilt] including both conscious and unconscious components.

That certainly refers to the *totality* of the human *mind*!

In Job 32:8, does Elihu concede that there is a “spirit” in man? What might that “spirit” be? This is another reference to *ruach*. However, in this case, it has to do with man being endowed with *understanding* – that is, having the *power of mind* to perceive and contemplate ... to plan, create, and set goals. All of these things are the function of the *psyche*, or *mind*.

Elihu is not saying that there is any kind of distinct, separate immortal being occupying the same time and space as the body ... and which survives the body once the body's life-force has been terminated. When God gets involved (*inspiration*) by putting His spiritual component (that is: His thoughts) into man's mind, man has a completely different ability to understand spiritual matters – God's thoughts and ways. Let's understand how that works.

Consider what Paul says in Romans 8:16. – Can the “spirit in man” be communicated with by God's “spirit”? Does this seem like a “meeting of the *minds*”? If God's “Spirit” communicates with man's “spirit,” then knowledge and understanding is being passed on to man in a way that surpasses the communication of man to man. It is very

direct. It is very personal. It is a process of *revelation*. How does it work?

In 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, Paul explains how God uses His “spirit,” or mind-power, to teach true Christians things not known by the people of the “world.” Notice the comment about “the mind of the Lord” in v. 16 and compare that to Isaiah 55:8-11. Paul’s instruction is basically the same as Elihu’s: “The *inspiration* of the Almighty [that is: the placing of His “spiritual thoughts” into man’s mind] gives them *understanding*” (emphases added).

We should be aware of the fact that God gave mankind *ordinary* mind-power at creation. However, with the *partial* gift of the Holy Spirit (mind of God), man is able, at least in part (see Eph. 1:13, 14 and 1 Cor. 13:9, 12), to understand the things of God – something of which the ordinary person is incapable. It is *revealed* knowledge.

If this mental capacity completely ceases to operate at death, with what is man left? According to these verses, he is left with that euphemistic “sleep” – lying totally unaware of anything until he is called from the grave. As you read in John 5:28, 29, “...the hour is coming in which *all* that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of [new] life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

“Sleep” is a *euphemism* – the use of a less direct word or phrase for one that is considered to be offensive or repulsive. In the case of scripture, it is used to show that there is an *expectation* of being “awakened.” The term “death” does not carry with it that expectation.

In 1 Corinthians 15:23, Paul points out that there is an *order* to this matter of resurrection: Christ was the *first* to have been called from the grave (see also Acts 26:23); after Christ, those who are true Christians will be resurrected “at His coming”; finally, there will be at least one more

resurrection to physical life – not spiritual, “born again” life (see the parenthetical statement in Revelation 20:5). Snaith concludes his comments by saying:

Since the word ‘soul’ in the English translation stands for the Hebrew *nephesh*, *there is not one single instance in the Old Testament where the word ‘soul’ should be thought of as that which survives death*. When the Bible writer says ... that God ‘breathed into [man’s] nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul,’... he does not mean that God thereby gave to man an *immortal soul*. He means that God ... breathed into him His own life-giving breath, so that this shape of dust became alive. ... *If, therefore, the belief in the immortality of the human soul is held to be a Christian doctrine, then it should be realized that it is **not** a biblical doctrine*. The biblical doctrine is of a resurrection life [that is, of restoring life to the dead] for those who ‘have the spirit’ and are ‘in Christ’” (emphases added).

In effect, Snaith admits that there are differences between what the Bible says and what some “Christians” teach. Remember that because it will come in handy as you begin to orientate yourself to learning more about worshiping God in spirit and in truth (see John 4:23, 24)

## Review Questions

1. Genesis 2:7 – Of what material did the Lord God construct man?
2. How did the Lord God cause man to come to life after creating him?

3. Once man came to life, what kind of creature did he become?
4. Genesis 7:21, 22 – Do animals also have in them the “breath of life”? Would this indicate that the “breath of life” is merely breath?
5. Psalm 104:29 – Read the entire psalm, but focus on this verse: Whose breath is taken away? How can you tell if this includes man and beast?
6. What happens to them when that breath is taken away?
7. To what material do they return?
8. Ecclesiastes 3:18-22 – What advantage does the human have over the beasts? Why?
9. Of what are both made?
10. To what do man and beast turn when they die?
11. Ecclesiastes 9:4, 5, 10 – What happens to the dead when they return to the dust? Pay close attention to verses 5 and 10 because we will use this information more fully later on.
12. Ecclesiastes 12:7 – When man dies, what happens to his body and “spirit”?
13. Genesis 2:15-17 – Of what was man not to eat? Why?
14. Based on what you have learned so far, what does it mean that he will *die*?
15. Genesis 3:1-7 – What is the problem presented here?

16. What deception did the serpent present to Eve about the Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? Like what/whom did the serpent say she would become?

17. Genesis 3:22-24 – After the Lord God pronounced His judgment upon Adam and Eve, did He say that they would live *forever* in another state-of-being?

18. Refer back to Ecclesiastes 9:4, 5, 10 – Based on this scripture, was there any type of consciousness or memory or activity awaiting Adam and Eve in the dust? Why?

19. Job 32:8 – Does Job concede that there is a “spirit” in man? What is that “spirit”?

20. Romans 8:16 – How does God communicate with true Christians? Does this seem like a “meeting of the minds”?

21. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 – How does God use His “spirit,” or mind-power, to teach true Christians things not known by the people of the “world”? What does the term *revelation* mean? Have you ever had a moment when a confusing situation suddenly became clear in your mind? What do you think happened?

22. According to Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, does any and all mind-power cease to function at death?

23. What does Norman H. Snaith explain about the difference between the Greek term *psyche* and the Hebrew term *nephesh*?

24. Why would Snaith conclude that the doctrine of the immortal soul can be a *Christian* doctrine but not a *biblical* doctrine? Does this suggest to you that not all “Christians”

teach what the Bible *actually* reveals (see John 17:17 and 4:23, 24)? What is your reaction to this revelation?



## Chapter Two

# The Resurrection of the Dead

Let's define some terms before we get into the "meat" of this lesson. It is important to understand the meanings of *resurrection* and *death* relative to what God has planned for mankind in the future. The objective of this lesson is to demonstrate very plainly what God has revealed to us in scripture about what happens to humans *beyond death*. Is there hope for humans *beyond the grave*? Is our present existence all there is to "life"? What is required of us to meet God's expectations regarding anything we can experience beyond the grave?

### Defining "Death" and "Resurrection"

Use your own dictionary to look up the meanings of the terms stated above. Here's a basic explanation of what you will find ... and what you find should be reconciled with what God reveals in scripture. *Resurrection* is from the Latin term *resurgere*, which means "to rise again." The term is not specifically and only used in relationship to *death* ... even though that is the first definition given in my \$5.00 pocket dictionary. You can *resurrect* old memories, old clothing styles, old political notions, *et cetera*. Relative to our present discussion, *resurrection* means "to rise again from the *dead*."

Now, you must understand what *death* means. We have had a rather thorough discussion about that already; but, for the sake of relating *death* to *resurrection*, we need to

understand *death* from the scriptural point-of-view. My \$5.00 pocket dictionary says the following about the term *dead*: “no longer living; without life; without feeling, motion, or power; extinguished.” Those who believe in the immortal soul doctrine believe that only the *physical body* actually dies. They believe that the *immortal soul* does not – *cannot* – die. It is *immortal* ... capable of living forever.

Consider the following major Christian denomination’s explanation of what man is:

Man was made to live forever. It was after he had sinned that he became subject to death. However, for that reason man’s animal principle of life shall cease; his body shall return to the ground (Gen. 3:19). But *his soul, the **real person**, is immortal. It will never cease to be.* Man is two-fold in nature. He is both spirit and body. *Man is not a body and has a soul. **He is a soul and has a body.*** The body is mortal; the soul is immortal (Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, Nashville: Convention Press, 1971; p. 51; emphases added).

What does this tell you? Plainly, it declares that the *real person **is** an immortal soul* ... and the body is merely the animating force by which the immortal soul interacts with the “world.” Since the body *can* die, it will eventually die. Not so the immortal soul: *It will live **forever.***

If you have attended very many funerals, you have probably heard the presiding minister and others speak of the dead individual not inhabiting the dead body anymore because they have gone immediately to their heavenly reward. Is this what the Bible teaches? Let’s investigate.

My first question comes from the Lord God’s warning in Genesis 2:17: “In the day *you* eat of [the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil], *you* shall surely die.” If the *real person* is the immortal soul, how does it cease to live?

By the above definition, only the *body* will go back to its dust. The *real person* will immediately vacate the dead body and go to whatever awaits it beyond the death of the body. Is that the message from the Lord God to Adam about “*you*” dying? How would *death* have been a meaningful deterrent? Follow the reasoning very carefully.

We need to know because God demands that we live by His *truth* (John 4:23, 24; 8:31, 23; 17:17). If we are unwilling to search out His truth in His word, then we need not expect to understand His thoughts and ways. That is a fundamental mistake made by too many who claim to love His truth!

My second question comes from the *absence* of any mention in scripture that supports the doctrine of the immortal soul. In fact, we know that the concept was adopted from the *paganism* that goes all the way back to, at least, the Tower of Babel. We can also know what God expects of us by reading Deuteronomy 12:29-32 and Jeremiah 10:2. Notice the warning in Deuteronomy about *adding* to and *diminishing* from God’s word. Notice Jeremiah’s message that learning the way of the heathen is not acceptable to a holy God.

What is wrong with the statement: “It was *after he sinned* that he became subject to death” (Ibid.)? The assumption of that statement is that man would have otherwise *lived forever ... that he was created as an immortal being!* Let’s look at scripture to understand this better.

In 1 John 3:4, we get the definition of sin: “Sin is the transgression of God’s law.” Which law of God did Adam and Eve transgress? Genesis 2:17: “You *shall not eat* of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” To do so would have been a profanation of the name of God because Adam was the “child” of the Lord God by creation.

The first and greatest commandment is to love God supremely (Matt. 22:36-38). Romans 6:23 says: “The wages

of sin is *death*.” That is consistent with Genesis 2:17. Notice, however, that “the *gift* of God is eternal life.” If that is true, then the doctrine of the immortal soul is certainly called into question ... as well as whether or not mankind would have lived forever as flesh-and-blood *nephesh* had they not sinned.

As newly created sentient beings, Adam and Eve did not yet *know* good or evil (read Isa. 7:14-16 and Rom. 9:11). They had to be *taught* God’s thoughts and ways in order to know the good. Because they were *totally innocent* at this point, they had committed no sin for which they would be sentenced to death. Without an immortal soul being involved in this story, the Lord God *did plan* for them to live forever *if they would choose the good and not the evil*.

In Isaiah 55:11, we learn that God does not send forth His word in vain. It accomplishes the purpose for which He utters it. That being the case, His words in Genesis 1:26-28 were not uttered in vain: Mankind is to be created in His image ... failure is not an option. Paul writes in Romans 4:17 that God “calls those things *that do not presently exist* as though they do exist.” John says in 1 John 3:1-3 that we do not presently know what we shall be when we ultimately are “born again” in God’s image, but we will be like God is. David bears witness to this in Psalm 17:15: “As for me, I will behold your face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, *with your likeness*” (*KJV*; emphases added). This tells us that David anticipated his personal *resurrection from death*.

## Elohim’s Contingency Plan

If you understand Ephesians 1:4 and 1 Peter 1:18-20 correctly, then you know that the need for a “savior” was anticipated by *Elohim before* they had created anything in the orderly universe. They *anticipated* that giving the human an independent mind could give rise to a

*contingency*: a future event or circumstance that is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty. The independent mind is always confronted with *choices*. Sometimes a wrong choice (showing up at a formal dance wearing blue jeans and a tee-shirt, or making a wrong turn on the highway, for examples) is not sinful; it is a mistake. It is the choice that *violates God's will* that is a “sin unto death” (see Deut. 30:19, 20; Matt. 7:21-23; 1 John 5:16).

Ephesians 1:4 says that we were chosen in *Christ* (a “savior” name) before the creation of the orderly universe to be “holy and without blame before Him in love.” That is God’s will. *Choice* indicates that each independent human mind will have a variety of things from which to make choices. *Humans were not pre-programmed to always choose the good* (remember Isa. 7:14-16). The serpent’s temptation of Eve was a *contingency*. Ephesians 1:4 (“chose us in *Christ*”) and 1 Peter 1:18-20 demonstrate that God *anticipated* a possible *contingency* at some point in time after the creation of mankind. He knew that the independent mind could *choose not* to be holy, blameless, and loving.

Genesis 2:17 is about *choice*. Mankind could *freely* choose any fruit in the Garden *except* the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. This was a *limited* freedom. Mankind’s personal taste might favor one fruit above another. That would guide future selections – some being preferred above others ... some being left alone because the taste/flavor are not suitable. This was the fertile ground from which the *contingency* could arise (see Eccles. 9:11). The right choice of the good would have averted it.

This concept of *choice* is also demonstrated in Genesis 2:19, 20. The Lord God wanted to see what Adam would name the animals. There was no apparent guidance by the Lord God in this exercise. Adam was totally free to choose names as they suited him. The Lord God was apparently curious about how newly created Adam would exercise his

critical thinking skills and his creativity. Adam even named his wife (v. 23). There was no apparent contingency that could arise here.

Deuteronomy 30:19, 20 brings a brighter light to this conversation. Moses lays before the Israelites a *choice* that they are expected to make: the *choice* between “life” and “death.” This is no different from the choice Adam and Eve faced: the choice between the “tree of life” and the “tree” that brings death. The choice of “life” is a choice to receive blessings; but, the choice of “death” is a choice to receive curses (read Lev. 26 and Deut. 28).

Exodus 16:4 demonstrates this very graphically. The Lord God intends to rain down “manna” for the Israelites in order to feed them during their journey to the “promised land.” Why did He do this according to the instructions He gave them about gathering it? The surprising answer is in the last part of the verse: “That I might *prove* them [test them] to determine with certainty of what they are made [*to assay*; see Jer. 17:9, 10], [in order to learn] *whether or not they will walk in my laws*” (emphases added).

It should become clear to you that God does not interfere with your choices. It boils down to whether or not *you will freely choose* to be in His family without force ... or, if you are more satisfied with *self*-righteousness and doing things your own way. Your own way will not provide the *adoption* into the Family of God. You might enjoy your existence and personal lifestyle to the full. But ... it will not provide for life beyond the grave to which you are certainly bound in one form or another as dictated by the resurrection to which you will be assigned (see John 5:27-29).

This is where the *contingency plan* (a plan to deal with the unpredictable event or circumstance) was made when the Word chose to divest Himself of His equality with His divine partner in order to be a *redemptive sacrifice* for all of mankind (Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 10:5-14) We all have the

potential to make grievously wrong choices in thought and behavior (see Isa. 53:6).

This redemptive sacrifice would make it possible for mankind to survive the consequences of a death that would ultimately destroy them root and core (Mal. 4:1). It would also provide eventual survival of natural death for the finite human body. After all, if your natural death results in your returning to dust, where is the hope of life for the righteous after that happens? God's word provides the answer.

We have been shown in the previous chapter that God's word *does not teach* the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Why should we believe in something that God does *not* reveal to us? How do we come to understand His intention to revive us from our "dust" if we die before the establishment of His Kingdom? We must search His word for the answer.

Read Genesis 3:21. Why would the Lord God kill innocent animals in order to provide clothing for sinful mankind? Was that His only motive? Or, was there a *lesson* involved in that action? He has already pronounced judgment upon them in v. 19. Is there any relationship between that judgment and the killing of the animals?

Now read Genesis 4:3, 4. Is there any relationship between the sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel and the killing of the animals in 3:21? Is it in the mind of man to create such a sacrificial system ... or would such a thing come by *revelation* from God? Please be aware that any sacrificial system after this is either in keeping with the Lord God's revelation, or it is a perversion of what He has revealed (see Heb. 11:4).

Now read again 1 Peter 1:18-20. Verse 20 says that this idea of a sacrifice for human sin was developed before the creation of the orderly universe. It was "manifested" (plainly revealed) when the time was right to do so. Would you think that the right time would be when mankind had

sinned and been judged to return to the “dust” out of which they were created? This would be the time that Job’s famous question would linger in mankind’s mind and heart: “If a man die[s], will he live again?” (Job 14:14). If so, by what means shall he do so?

## How the Resurrection from the Dead Works

With that, we have several of the elements we need to pursue God’s answer to the problem. What solution has God provided for the *death* of man?

Genesis 22 is an interesting account about the Lord God testing Abraham’s faith. He tells Abraham to take his only legal heir to Moriah (see 2 Chron. 3:1) to offer him as a sacrifice. The modern site is believed by Muslims and Jews to be in the Old City of Jerusalem at the “Dome of the Rock” ... called the “Temple Mount” by the Jews and “Haram al-Sharif” by the Muslims.

The Muslims believe that Abraham attempted to sacrifice *Ishmael* there; scripture says that it was *Isaac*. The idea was that Abraham would slit Isaac’s throat to bleed him to death; then, he would lay Isaac on an altar to burn him to a black crisp. In so doing, Abraham’s only legal heir would be totally destroyed. *What, then, would happen to all that Isaac was supposed to inherit from Abraham (Gen. 18:15-21; 26:1-5)?* Israel is descended from Isaac.

Hebrews 11:17-19 tells us that Abraham was willing to do this because he believed that the Lord God would “raise him up, *even from the dead.*” Abraham had no concept of an immortal soul in his faith. He understood the consequences of doing what the Lord God told him to do. He was willing to do it because he believed that the Lord God had the power to restore life to the dead (Rom. 4:17).

That is the message of Jesus Christ in John 5:21. The *KJV* term *quicken* means “to revive.” It means that the Father and Christ can and will *return life to the dead*. Jesus

explains that in vv. 24-29. He points out that such a resurrection will be the execution of judgment ... by which one is given eternal *life* or eternal *death* (v. 29; Mal. 4:1). That eternal death is the complete destruction of the individual ... *not* the eternal roasting of an immortal soul in hellfire.

Hebrews 11:13, 39 plainly reveal that *none* have yet received the promises of eternal life that were made by God. Why? John 3:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 tell us that: (1) Flesh-and-blood *cannot* enter the Kingdom of God (that is: the *Elohim* Family) because (2) They have to be “born again.” Both Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul make it clear that the human *must be* “born again” into a *spirit* body that will have eternal life. Let’s understand how that is to come about.

First, read 1 Corinthians 15:12-20. This is a discussion Paul is having regarding those who do not believe in the resurrection of the dead. The opponents insist that Jesus Christ did not *actually* die and rise from the dead. The Jewish sect of the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead (Matt. 22:23). The Jewish sect of the Pharisees believed in it, but they also believed in the immortality of the soul and all that is in common with that belief ... a belief they adopted from the pagan Greeks.

Paul’s letter went to *Gentiles* who were converted from *paganism*, where they had learned about the immortality of the soul. So, Paul’s letter would cover many who spoke against the resurrection from the dead relative to Jesus Christ. You can read the rest of Paul’s comments in order to understand why he opposed them.

Paul’s proclamation is astounding ... and very relevant to our present discussion. He shows that Jesus Christ was *not exempt* from the death that is common to all human beings. He is asserting that Jesus Christ was fully human – even though He was known as “God with us.” John 1:1-3, 14 asserts that the Word was *God* and became *flesh*. In

sylogistic form, Paul argues: All men are mortal; Christ was a man; therefore, Christ was mortal. For that reason, He was subject to the one death assigned to mortals (Heb. 9:27) because He was mortal (*TAB*; vol. 32, pp. 325, 326).

Paul did not argue that Christ was special, or exceptional, because of His divine origin. Because He was human, He *could not escape* the common human destiny. In that argument, Paul posits that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, therefore, is an example of what will happen to *all* humans: Christ was a man; Christ rose from the dead; therefore, man rose from the dead; if it is possible for *one* man to rise from the dead, then it is possible for *all* men to rise from the dead (*Ibid.*).

*That was the terrible chance Jesus Christ took when He became flesh and dwelt among us* (Heb. 2:16-18; 10:5). At the appropriate time, the Father “fitted” Him with a *human* body. In fact, Jesus Christ Himself asserted that *all humans* will eventually be raised from the dead to be judged according to their works (John 5:24-29; Rev. 20:4-6, 11-13). Had the Father God *not* raised Him from the dead (Rom. 1:3, 4), He would have turned to dust and disappeared into the “sands” of time.

Notice the last part of 1 Corinthians 15:20 where Paul says that Jesus Christ was the “*firstfruits* of them that *slept*” (*KJV* emphases added). Remember the euphemism *slept*. The term *firstfruits* is an *ordinal* number, not a *cardinal* number. It means that *none were raised as spirit beings before Jesus Christ was*, but others will follow Him ... in their own order (v. 23).

Read Acts 26:22, 23 in order to get the idea I am presenting. If Jesus was the *first* to rise from the dead in spirit form, then *no one before Him has done so*. Jesus confirms this in John 3:13: *The only human to have ascended to heaven is Jesus Christ*. The dead do not go immediately to their eternal reward. They lie in the grave awaiting their final judgment. This *ordinal* number

confirms the fact that others may follow, but it does not say when they will follow.

In 1 Corinthians 15:21-23, Paul explains that the resurrection of the dead doctrine is confirmed by what happened to Jesus Christ. However, there is an *order* to the resurrections. In other words, there must be *secondfruits* ... and, possibly, others in their own order.

Indeed, we find in Revelation 20:5 that at least a *second resurrection* is planned for “the rest of the dead” after Jesus Christ has resurrected the “firstfruits” at His return (Rev. 20:6). We should not overlook those humans who will live beyond the great, climactic battle prophesied in Zechariah 14 (see v. 16 re: “survivors”). It is important for you to thoroughly understand this concept so that you are not led astray from God’s truth. Learn to take God at His word instead of falling for man’s faulty ideas and non-scriptural religious traditions (again: Matt.7:21-23).

Let’s turn our attention now to 1 Corinthians 15:35-45. Pay attention to Paul’s reasoning as he reveals the details. In v. 35 he asks two important questions: (1) How are the dead raised? and (2) With what kind of body will they be raised? Verses 36-45 are the finer details of the answer.

In v. 36, he says that your dead body is what is “sown” into the earth. He says that it is not returned to “life” until it “dies.” If you plant a seed that has not “died,” it will simply rot away. Try it! Take a fresh, juicy kernel of corn off the cob and plant it. See if it will germinate and produce a corn plant with new ears growing from it. However, if the corn kernel is dried (rendered inert), then it is “seed” that can be *reborn* into a new corn plant. Paul is using an agricultural principle to draw an analogy.

In v. 37, Paul inserts a “twist” to the analogy. He says that bare grain will produce whatever the seed is: corn, wheat, *et cetera*. With reference to the dead human “seed,” *you are not sowing the kind of body that will rise from the grave*. Then, in vv. 38-41, he discusses the various types of

“bodies” that God was pleased to create – giving each “seed” its own body type. He infers that God will give the human “seed” a type of body that pleases Him, not another *human* body of flesh-and-blood ... unless they are sentenced to *death* in the judgment.

He continues in v. 42 with the thought he expressed in v. 37 about the human “seed” that is sown not being the same as the “body” that will come out of the grave. The difference is this: The human body is sown in *corruption*. The Greek term is *phthora*: “ruin, destruction, dissolution, deterioration, corruption” (*BAG*, p. 865). In other words, it is capable of being *destroyed*. If the human body returns to its “dust,” then it is no longer a viable life-form. The only hope is that God will intervene and put “life” back into the “dust.”

Paul then says that the body is “raised in *incorruption*.” The prefix “in” means that it will become something that is *not* capable of being destroyed. He explains the ramifications of that statement in vv. 43-44. The *incorruption* is manifested in the *glory, power, and spirit-composition* of the resurrected body. That *incorruption* will be the state of God’s people in the coming “born again” life. In v. 45, he contrasts Adam and Jesus Christ – a kind of “before” and “after” illustration. Adam was made to be “a living, breathing being” (*nephesh*). Jesus Christ was made to be “a life-giving spirit.” Then Paul poses a caveat (a warning or proviso of specific stipulations, conditions, or limitations) that is largely ignored by mainstream Christian thought.

In v. 46, Paul says that the *natural* body came first. After that, the *spirit* body will come. The doctrine of the immortal soul is the exact opposite. That doctrine originally posited that the soul is an *uncreated* being that originally co-existed with God. Some believe that God has a “soul factory” designed to create souls to be implanted into human bodies when the humans are born – and that’s

why some have so many children: They believe they are responsible for providing the bodies for the souls!

In any case, the concept with which Paul is dealing is whether or not the “spirit” body exists *first*. His answer should be crystal clear. If the immortal soul is the *real person*, then Plato’s concept of the immortal soul is that it existed first. Paul argues against such a concept.

Verses 47-49 are his explanation of his point. The first man was made from the clods of earth and gave rise to an *earthy* body. As Jesus put it in John 3:6: “That which is born of flesh is flesh.” Paul says in v. 48: “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy.” Compare this to Paul’s comment in 2 Corinthians 4:7 and 5:1-4. It is the same thought. From Adam to present, all humans have perpetuated the “earthy” body because “earthy” gives birth to “earthy,” not spirit.

But ... Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:49: “As we have born the image of the earthy, we *shall also bear* the image of the heavenly” (emphases added). This is not a statement about going to heaven when you die. It is a statement about the kind of body you will have when God calls you *out of the grave* to give you eternal life. In v. 50, Paul makes it a point to say that “corruption” does not inherit “incorruption.” Verses 51-54 explain what he means. It is rather simple: Your earthy body has to be changed by Jesus Christ into a spirit body. Such a thing does not occur immediately as a consequence of your death.

Read these verses carefully. What do you notice about the *change* that is going to take place when the *different body* comes out of the grave? In v. 51, Paul says that we will not all die before the *change* comes. He told the Thessalonians that the living and the dead will be changed together (1 Thes. 4:16, 17). He told the Hebrews in Hebrews 11:39, 40 that *all* of God’s saints from the beginning to the end will receive the reward *together*.

You can go back at least to Abel (Heb. 11:4) and understand that there were many faithful believers who looked forward to the coming of the Christ to redeem the faithful from the grave. That was the nature of the prophesied “woman’s seed” in Genesis 3:15. The Old Testament saints held a concept of a true “Savior Seed” and worshiped Him accordingly in spirit and in truth. These Old Testament saints and others are still lying in their graves waiting to be called forth.

First Corinthians 15:52-54 describe what will happen when the firstfruits are changed from flesh to spirit at the return of Jesus Christ. It will be an instantaneous change at what is called the “last trump” (see Rev. 11:15 and 8:6). Note at the end of v. 52 that “the dead will be raised *incorruptible*, and we shall be *changed*.” Verse 53 says that the dead body “*must* put on incorruption” and the body that is capable of dying and rotting away “*must* put on immortality.” The reason is simple: If you are corruptible and mortal, you cannot be part of the Elohim Family! You cannot live for *eternity*! The *gift* of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:23). The corruptible mortal cannot live for eternity. You do not *put on* either incorruptibility or immortality if you are *really* an immortal soul! *You already have it!*

How does this agree with Snaith’s comment above? How does it agree with the Genesis account? How does it agree with the doctrinal statement on p. 22? Think very seriously about this!

## An Examination of Job 14

Job 14:14 is a staple among many ministers officiating at funerals. Generally, they use only the first part: “If a man die, shall he live again?” The problem that I have witnessed numerous times is that they launch into a discussion about the way the dead individual lived his/her

life relative to God, Jesus Christ, family, and fellow man. One of the first things they say is: “Sister/Brother so-and-so is no longer with us. This body that lies here is a mere shell. S/he has actually gone to be with Jesus in heaven.” They are saying, in fact, that the *real person* is the immortal soul.

I have never heard one say: “Sister/Brother so-and-so was a wicked individual and now roasts forever in hellfire.” Either way, they would be saying that the immortal soul had already been judged and is presently receiving its eternal reward or punishment. They are saying that there was no need for incorruption or immortality to be *put on* at the return of Jesus Christ.

Some, however, recognize an incongruity between that and the hope of the glorious resurrection of the dead. They make an attempt to hold on to the doctrine of the immortal soul and the doctrine the resurrection of the dead by blending them into a doctrine totally foreign to scriptural revelation. They say: “When Jesus returns, He will bring the souls with Him and reunite them with the glorified bodies resurrected from the grave.” Most in the audience uncritically nod in agreement and are satisfied that God’s word is vindicated by that mixture of pagan and Christian theology.

If Job 14 is *properly* read and understood, then no such misinformation will be spewed out at funerals in the name of the True God (John 4:23, 24; 8:31, 32). Indeed, we would be freed from our ignorance of God’s thoughts and ways and given entrance into God’s truth (John 17:17). The book of Job is God’s truth (see 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The only scripture available to Paul at that time was the Old Testament.

Read carefully and thoughtfully Job 14:1-5. What does Job mean when he describes man like this: (a) “of few days” (v. 1), (b) “continues not” (v. 2), and (c) “his days are determined, the number of his months are with You; You

have appointed his bounds that he cannot pass” (v. 5)? How does this compare with Genesis 6:3?

Some read Genesis 6:3 to mean that it would be only 120 years until the Lord God would bring the flood. Others read it to mean that the Lord God put a limitation on the lifespan of humans. By the time Joseph died a few centuries later, at the age of 110, the great ages to which men had been living had dwindled down to the 120-year limitation. It is very rare today to find anyone who surpasses 120 years.

Notice that Job 14:7-9 is a comparison to a tree that can sprout again when it is cut to the ground. Not all trees can do that, of course. Nevertheless, Job is speaking of those that can. He speaks of those whose roots are dead and useless being able to revive (come to life again) when water comes to them. He is using this as an example of resurrection. The dead tree is brought back to life even though the root has grown old and the trunk has died in the ground. In v. 7, he calls that the “hope of a tree.”

In vv. 10-12, he compares man to the tree. In the complete sense of the analogy, Job determines that man is ultimately like the tree he described: Under the right circumstances, man can die, decay, and dry up with no seeming hope for further life to be found in him. In effect, he will have returned to his “dust.”

“Gives up the ghost” means “to expire” – that is, to breathe out his last breath. This has nothing to do with a ghostly spirit surviving man when he dies. This is true wherever that expression is used in scripture (see other examples in Genesis 25:8, Matthew 27:50, Luke 23:46, and John 19:30).

Job says that:

As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decays and dries up” (v. 11)...“*[In that manner] man lies down, and does not rise; until the heavens*

*be no more, they shall **not** awake, **nor** be raised out of their sleep” (v. 12; emphases added).*

Can you imagine that being said at the typical funeral? Please do not insert the “yes, but...” idea about the immortal soul here. Job had no such concept in mind. Notice that the term *sleep* is used as a euphemism for *death*. A euphemism, as stated above, is a pleasant-sounding word substituted for an unpleasant one. *Sleep* sounds more pleasant than *death* because it implies an impending *awakening*.

Verse 13 has to do with an *order* in which to be raised from the dead. Job wanted to be hidden in the grave and kept secret. He asked for an *appointed time* when the Lord God will raise him from the dead. It is with that in mind that Job asks his question in v. 14.

He understands that he will have an *appointed time* to die and remain dead in his grave. He understands that he will have to *wait* until his *change* comes from the Lord – like the dead tree that waits for the water to come to revive it. In v. 15, he testifies his faith by saying that God will awaken him by calling to him to come out of the grave (see 1 Thes. 4:16). He says that he will answer Him because he realizes that the Lord God will have a desire to continue His work in his life – the reason for which he exists. His life is not an exercise in futility because it is important to God ... important enough for God to personally call him out of his death to new life.

Now read Job 19:25-27. What does Job expect to happen to him after the worms destroy the skin of his body? So, does he expect to live again after he dies? It is clear that Job believes in a resurrection from the dead, but it is not clear that he understands the *complete* concept of the resurrection. As one of the most righteous men on earth (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3), surely Job would qualify to be in the first resurrection and be changed from flesh to spirit. Job’s

humility would not allow him to be presumptuous about the order in which he will be raised ... *if he understood the complete truth about the resurrection of the dead.*

## Having “Eyes that See and Ears that Hear”

Matthew 13:10-17 is a testimony to Isaiah’s experience in Isaiah 6:8-13. Over 800 years later, Jesus tells His disciples that Isaiah’s prophecy is still valid. Why are some people able to understand Jesus’ parables, and others are unable to understand them? Read verse 15 carefully in order to understand the underlying problem with the people.

Verse 17 indicates that prophets and righteous men of times past did not always understand some of the things that we who are in Christ are privileged to understand. In Daniel 12:8-10, for an example, Daniel was told to go his way because the things of which Daniel wrote were “closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”

God does not always make prophets and angels privy to what He is doing ... and why He is doing it. Matthew 24:36 shows that even Jesus Christ has at least one piece of information withheld from Him! If that is true of prophets, angels, and Jesus Christ, why should not it be true for the rebellious and unfaithful?

First Corinthians 15:50-54 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 agree with Job’s concept about what happens to the dead. Norman H. Snaith says that in the New Testament *psyche* (“soul”/mind) does not survive death; *pneuma* (“spirit”) does. He says:

The New Testament follows the *Septuagint* and uses the word *psyche* as referring to something which is connected *to this life only*, and ***not*** with any life after death (*TIB*; emphases added).

John Short, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, wrote:

The Christian doctrine [of life-after-death] is not one of [innate, inherent] immortality but of resurrection. We shall do well to get this point clear. As expounded by the apostle Paul, man's hope of survival [beyond death] depends not on the inherent immortality of his soul, but on the act of God. His immortality is involved in his resurrection, not his resurrection in his immortality. *There is **nothing** in Paul's writings nor in the N.T. to suggest that the soul is inherently immortal* ("1 Corinthians Exposition," *The Interpreter's Bible*, Abingdon Press, vol. 10, 1952, p. 253; emphases added).

*Inherent* means that something belongs, by nature, as an indispensable part of one's being; it is intrinsic – that is, it belongs to the essential nature of something from its inception. If the soul is not *inherently* immortal, then it is reasonable to assume that immortality would have to be given to it – which is exactly Paul's point in these scriptures: Man is not *inherently* immortal; therefore, he has to put on immortality. Those who are "in Christ" will do that *when He returns*. Apply this understanding to the doctrinal statement referred to in the opening comments on p. 16.

In Ezekiel 18:4, 20, the Lord God tells Ezekiel that the soul (*nephesh*) that sins will surely die (Gen. 2:17). Applying all that you have learned thus far about what constitutes death, what does that mean? Does it mean that the *real person* is an immortal soul? Does it mean that man, in one way or another, is *inherently* immortal and cannot actually die?

Have your “eyes” and “ears” been opened to God’s truth? Are you acquiring knowledge and understanding that you did not have before? I sincerely hope that is the case.

(BSC 10 will be devoted strictly to the resurrections of the dead.)

## Review Questions

1. 1 Corinthians 15:42-49 – What is Paul describing in these verses? Remember that resurrection means “to recover from death; raising the dead to life again.” Also, remember the Bible's definition of death.
2. Write down the description of the resurrection process in the order in which each body type occurs – for example: v. 42 = corruption to incorruption. Now do the rest of the verses. Notice which is *first* and which is *second*. This is important in understanding the revealed process.
3. 1 Corinthians 15:46 – Of which material is man composed *first* – natural or spirit?
4. How does this agree with Snaith’s comment? How does it agree with the Genesis account? How does it agree with the doctrinal statement on p. 15?
5. Job 14:1-15 – What does Job mean when he describes man like this: “...of few days...” (v. 1), “...continues not...” (v. 2), and “...his days are determined, the number of his months are with You; You have appointed his bounds that he cannot pass...” (v. 5)?
6. Job 14:10 – What happens to man when he dies? Define the term *expire* relative to Job’s comment about “giving up the ghost.”

7. Job 14:12 – How long will it be before he is brought to life again (resurrected)? Explain the *euphemism* employed in that verse.

8. Job 14:14 – What does Job expect to happen to him when his “appointed time” is over?

9. Job 14:15 – How will God end Job’s “appointed time” in the grave?

10. Job 19:25-27 – What does Job expect to happen to him after the worms destroy the skin of his body? So, does he expect to live again after he dies?

11. Matthew 13:10-17 – Why are some people able to understand and others unable to understand? (Read verse 15 carefully.) Explain v. 17 and indicate why prophets and righteous men of times past did not always understand some of the things that we who are in Christ are privileged to understand? Using Matthew 24:36, does Jesus understand everything? Explain your answer. (See also Daniel 12:8-10 for an example.)

12. 1 Corinthians 15:50-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – How does Paul agree with Job’s concept about what happens to the dead? Be thorough.

13. Ezekiel 18:4, 20 – What does the Lord God tell Ezekiel about the “soul” (*nephesh*) that sins? Applying all that you have learned thus far about what constitutes *death*, what does that mean?

14. Daniel 12:2 – In what way does Daniel agree with Ecclesiastes, Job, Paul, John, and Jesus? Be thorough.

15. What does John Short say about the resurrection from the dead and the immortal soul?

16. Using the word *nephesh* (Gen. 2:7), write out an explanation for Ezekiel 18:4, 20. Read the entire chapter to get the essence of Ezekiel's prophecy.

17. Now read Daniel 12:2. In what way does Daniel agree with Ecclesiastes, Job, Paul, John, and Jesus? How would you apply Ezekiel 37 to what you have learned in this chapter?

## Chapter Three

# What Does *Born Again* Mean?

**M**any among the 32,000+ mainstream Christian denominations claim to already have been “born again” (John 3:1-8). They believe that their *conversion to the spiritual renewal of their minds* meets the standard of being “born again” as Jesus meant it in John 3:1-8. *Is it possible that Jesus actually meant something entirely different?* Does Nicodemus signal that he understood Jesus’ comment to mean an *actual* “second birth” (v. 4)? His comment about entering the *womb* for the *second time* certainly applies to a birth process. And ... Jesus’ reply in vv. 3, 7 about being “born *again*” has to do with being delivered in “birth” a *second time*. Was He speaking of a mere *spiritual conversion of the mind*? *Conversion* has to do with being *transformed* in the way you think and act (see Rom 12:1, 2). But ... does that mean that you have been *born* again? Can such an idea be supported in scripture?

### The Conversion Process

Study the following scriptures and compare the common message in them: (a) “The soul [Hebrew = *nephesh* – “living, breathing being”] that sins, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20); (b) “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23); and (c) “The wages of sin is death;

but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

You would be correct if you noted that they all have to do with sin and death. Now, in what three ways are they different from what is commonly taught? You would be correct if you noted that: (a) *soul* is defined as a living, breathing being that can die; (b) all humans (otherwise known as *souls: nephesh*) have sinned; and (c) all sinful humans (souls) are going to die unless they receive the *gift* of God through Jesus Christ: *eternal life*. Why should I ask you to pay attention to this?

This is a bare minimum outline of the realizations a person must go through when s/he wants to go from certain death to eternal life. John 3:18 says that all who have *not* believed in the name of Jesus Christ are already condemned. Unfortunately, that includes infants who die before they reach what is called the “age of accountability” (I will explain that in a later context – so do not let that thought bother you at this point).

It would be natural, then, for the question to arise: “Since I’m guilty, and eternal death is the sentence, how do I get out of this mess? What must I do to be saved?” God’s word comes back positively and full of hope:

You must seek the Eternal God while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts ... for *my* thoughts are not *your* thoughts, neither are *your* ways *my* ways, says the Eternal God (Isaiah 55:6-8; emphases added).

You must repent, and every one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

These are *required* actions that you must take on the road to true spiritual *conversion*. Remaining under the influence of the carnal mind is not an option (Rom. 8:5-9).

Make note of the “guts” of these two scriptures. The Lord God revealed to Isaiah that we must *abandon our* thoughts and ways in favor of His. This is what Peter calls *repentance*. Belief and budding faith should lead to repentance. Repentance should lead to baptism, and baptism should result in receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands by a true minister of God.

The gift of the Holy Spirit should lead to spiritual education (see John 14:26; 16:13). This should lead to greater faith and obedience. There is something to be done. Thus, God reveals to us that there is a *step-by-step process* that leads to salvation – a time for working out our salvation with fear and trembling (see Philippians 2:12). The individual must begin a process of changing attitudes and actions – moving from being sinful to being sinless. Is that acquired or learned in one fell swoop? Hardly!

The repentant individual moves into what is properly called *conversion* or *regeneration* – moving from one state of “inner spirit” to another. God does not simply zap you with a magic wand in order to make you spiritually mature! There is no spoozum dust thrown around to bewitch you into holiness! You will grow through experience! Be aware, though, that you can change your mind and kiss it off (see Heb. 6:1-4). How does this conversion take place?

Paul, in Romans 12:1-3, provides an interesting answer. First, he calls on each believer to become *a living sacrifice*. God does not want you to be a *dead* sacrifice because He is the God of the *living*. What does this mean? Simply put, Paul means that we must sacrifice our relationship to the world and begin living according to the will of God. In all that you do and think, you present it to God as a reasonable, logical sacrifice.

If we are to follow the example of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:21) and have His mind in us (1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Philippians 2:5), then we must take the same sacrificial approach to life that He took (compare Hebrews 10:5-7 with Matthew 7:21-23). We, too, must become sacrifices. Paul says that this is the only kind of worship that is truly spiritual (see John 4:23, 24).

The words Paul uses in v. 1 are very descriptive of this. The expression “reasonable service” in the *King James Version* is rendered “spiritual worship” in the *Revised Standard Version* and others. The Greek word *latreia* (noun) originally meant “to work for pay or hire” – you know, giving your strength to an employer or master for pay. It is not indicative of slavery; rather, it denotes voluntarily accepting the requirements of the job and doing them as required. The word came to mean “that to which a man gives his whole life.” In scripture, it is always used of service and worship voluntarily and wholeheartedly given to God as required. In order to do this, Paul says, one must make a radical change in the way he approaches life: becoming a living sacrifice. How do you effect such a radical change in your life?

The answer leads to the second thing Paul tells us is in Romans 12:2: You have to become “transformed by the renewing of your mind” (emphases added). This is necessary in order to prevent one from being conformed to the world. Here Paul uses two words that take a little bit of space to explain.

The word *conformed* comes from the Greek term *suschematiesthai*. In that complicated word is the root word *schema*, which essentially means “the outward form of something.” *Schema* is constantly changing. So, Paul warns against letting the constantly changing pattern of the world guide your life. Instead, he says that you must be transformed.

This term comes from the Greek term *metamorphousthai*, which contains the root word *morphe*. *Morphe* is the essential unchanging shape or element of something. So, Paul is saying that, in order for you to become a living sacrifice, you have to undergo a change, not of your *outward form*, but of your *inward personality* – of the very essence of your being. This is a spiritual metamorphosis to spiritual character that does not change. Is that possible in one single moment of time? Hardly! Then, how does it occur?

The term *renewing* is from the Greek term *anakainosis*. There are two words in Greek that translate as *new*: *neos* and *kainos*. A newly manufactured automobile is *neos*. A revival of some previous philosophy (for example: Platonism) is *neos* (therefore, we have *Neo-Platonism*). Both of these examples are new *in point of time*. *Kainos*, on the other hand, means *new in point of character and nature*. The New Testament is a *kainos* Testament – not a *neos* Testament (Matt. 26:26; Jer. 31:31-34).

So, Paul is pointing out that your *mind* has to be renewed in character and nature. It cannot continue to be tied to the ever-changing concepts of the world of carnal man. The center of your being has to be different; your motivations have to be different; you must now begin *acquiring* the mind of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5). Is that possible in one single moment of time by virtue of a single confession of faith in Him? **No**. It takes time for you to learn how to be dominated by the Holy Spirit – that is, by God's thoughts and ways.

The term *sanctification* (see John 17:17) does not merely mean “a process by which the repentant individual is set apart for the fulfilling of God’s purpose.” It includes growing toward moral and spiritual maturity through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Because we have been *sanctified*, we are to shun all things that would defile us and prevent us from attaining the salvation God has for us.

When Paul speaks of *renewing your mind*, he intends for you to understand that your mind must be spiritually

*cultivated* and *cared for* so that you can reach the fullest potential of the spiritual life. In Romans 8:9-14, he says that you must be dominated by the *Spirit* and not the *carnal mind*. If you do not have the Holy Spirit, then you do not belong to Christ. In fact, you have to put the carnal mind to death (mortify) by following the Spirit (read Rom. 8:5-14).

If you are led by the Spirit of God, then you belong to God. In 1 Corinthians 9, he demonstrates how he had not allowed himself to seek the earthly rewards as payment for his devotion to the gospel. The material realm must be made subservient to the spiritual realm so you won't *lose your crown*. In order to accomplish this, your mind must be disciplined/trained so that it will not frustrate the spiritual objectives.

Make no mistake about it, there is a tension between what Paul calls "flesh" and the "Spirit." He addresses this in Romans 7:14-25 when he discusses how sin is ever-present and leads him to do things he should not do. This is often explained in theological terms as the tension between the affirmation of what God has done to bring the new age of His Kingdom to fulfillment (*indicative*) and His exhortation to live your new life in the setting of the present evil world (*imperative*) – that is, the tension between what God requires (*indicative*) and what you are to do (*imperative*).

For example, the mercies of God in Romans 12:1 are *indicative*: what *God* has done. Look at the record of God's dealings with mankind in the past. Then look at what He has revealed about the glorious future He has planned and how we will get there from here (*indicative*). Becoming living sacrifices and renewing our minds in order to get there from here are *imperative*: what *you* are supposed to do. In the process, we have to shun the man-centered and prideful world in which we live.

Within the wrestling match of this tension, *God's will* must be proved (that is, discovered and shown to be true). This does not necessarily have anything to do with specific life situations – you know: "Shall I move to Nashville?" or "Does God want me to be a beautician or a town cop?" God

leaves many such life choices up to the individual and his abilities and desires. God's will in this case has to do with coming to grips with God's *redemptive purpose relating to mankind*. Paul says in Romans 12:2 that this is possible only by the renewal of your mind.

When Paul refers to your mind, he uses the Greek word *nous*, which designates man's *will*, not his emotions or intellectual and rational capacity. This *nous* is the knowledge, understanding, and judgment that belong to the person. It is what determines what kind of attitude s/he will take and how s/he will set her/his own mind and heart with regard to that attitude. God *wills* that you understand His plan of salvation. God *wills* that you achieve salvation (2 Pet. 3:9). Given the understanding and the power of His Holy Spirit to educate you about it, how will you set *your* will to accomplish it?

Colossians 3:9, 10 shows part of the answer. The *KJV* translation says that the new man "is *renewed* in *knowledge*" (emphasis added). The *Modern Language* and *Revised Standard Version* translate it to say "is *being* renewed" (emphasis added). The *Living Bible* is more interpretive: "is *constantly learning* more and more of what is right, and *trying constantly* to be more and more like Christ who created this new life within you" (emphasis added).

Unlike the *KJV*, these three show a *process of growth* that demonstrates that the putting on of the new mind does not designate a once-and-for-all event like a mere confession of faith. The Christian, in effect, belongs to the *coming* age of God's glorious Kingdom and the salvation it is bringing to mankind (indicative: what God is doing), and s/he is to live a new life that is expressive of that coming Kingdom (imperative: what s/he is doing). It involves a *required* process of spiritual growth and development. Please note what Peter says in 2 Peter 3:18: "grow in the grace ... and knowledge of ... Christ."

In Ephesians 4:15, Paul speaks of *growing up* into Christ in all things. That is a *process*. That means we must undergo a spiritual maturation process – which means that we have to be *educated* in God's thoughts and ways. Paul points out in

Ephesians 4:11-15 that God has called out and appointed various types of ministers to be the spiritual educators of God's True Church.

The expression "perfecting of the saints" (v. 12) means exactly that. God's true ministers are charged with the responsibility of giving His people the spiritual education they need to bring them to spiritual maturity – to prevent them from falling for the deceitful teachings of the deceivers who come in the name of Jesus Christ to take advantage of their spiritual immaturity (see v. 14; see also Matt. 24:4, 5).

So, after reading scriptures like these, it should be apparent that simply "believing" and "confessing" is not enough – something else must come into the picture: baptism and receipt of the Holy Spirit. Once these two very important required steps are taken, then God will begin a process of revealing various levels of His truth to you so you will be enabled to *grow* to spiritual maturity. This process is correctly referred to as conversion – which means to change, to transform, to move from one state-of-being to another. Many make the mistake of believing that this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Is it? Or, is it a lifelong process? It is necessary that you understand the answers to these questions.

There is a sense in which true conversion begins to take place at a definite point in time. But it is also true that conversion is a process by which gradual, spiritual growth and development take place. If we can believe Romans 8:9, then we know that a person without God's Holy Spirit is not a Christian. If the Holy Spirit is given after repentance and baptism, then unless and until the steps in Acts 2:38 are taken, true conversion *cannot* be said to be taking place. At the moment that the Holy Spirit is given, the individual begins the conversion process, but is not yet saved. So, the conversion process is not finished at repentance, baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit.

As cited above, Peter admonishes the Christian convert to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. But ... the old habits and attitudes do not automatically go away. There is a process of re-training – of re-education – that must take

place in the mind and heart of the convert so that s/he will be more like Jesus Christ.

Paul admonished Christians to let the mind of Jesus be developed in them (Philippians 2:5). He told the Corinthians that, after the Holy Spirit begins to do its work in revealing God's thoughts and ways to the convert, s/he would have the mind of Jesus Christ working in him (1 Corinthians 2:9-16).

Mark 13:13 is Mark's account of what Matthew wrote in 24:13: "He that endures *to the end*, the same shall be saved" (emphases added). The newly converted person has made a sincere about-face in his/her life. However, s/he must now maintain control over that mind and heart *for the rest of his/her life* – remembering that the converse of that statement is also true: "He that *does not* endure to the end *will not* be saved." If the person were already saved – and could never lose that salvation – why would Christ find it necessary to warn about *enduring to the end?*

The answer must lie in the fact that *conversion* – the process of re-training/re-education – is what we are experiencing this side of the resurrection of the dead! The Christian individual must develop the righteous character to choose good over evil, right over wrong, selflessness over selfishness. This is what is accomplished through the conversion experience *over the long haul*.

Paul was convinced that it is a great struggle. Romans 7:14-23 is a vivid description of the wrestling match that takes place between the flesh and the Spirit. John knew that along the way the individual can and will fall – stumble – and need to continue to repent ... thankfully, with Jesus Christ as our intermediary with God (1 John 1:5-2:2).

Always in the *lifelong process*, the convert can go to God and cry out for more help and more power to be more deeply converted (Hebrews 4:14-16). It is in this sense that we must understand that we are being converted *as we are being saved*. This is the process that scripture refers to as *becoming perfect* – that is: *becoming spiritually mature*. (From our free, downloadable book [2009]: *There's More to Salvation than Meets the Eye!*)

## The “Birth” Process

Read John 3:6. To what does *flesh* give birth? To what does *spirit* give birth? Does *flesh* give birth to *spirit*? “Spirit,” in this case, refers to the type of *body composition* one will possess once given birth by the Spirit (power) of God. It must be apparent to you by now that the term *spirit* has several different meanings with which you must become familiar.

In 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22, 45, 50, how does Paul support the statement made by Jesus Christ in John 3:6? *The Jerusalem Bible* translates the latter part of verse 45 like this: “but the last Adam became a life-giving spirit” (emphasis added). This *second* “Adam” is Jesus Christ. That “life giving” has to do with resurrection from the dead. This is part of the process by which “spirit” gives “birth” to “spirit.” The process of that second “birth” is shown in vv. 51-54. That is the moment when you will be completely “saved.”

Now read John 5:24-29. Paying close attention to verse 26, what is Jesus saying here about the *potential* of the true believer? How does this agree with Job and Paul? *The Jerusalem Bible* translates v. 26 like this: “For the Father, who is the source of life, *has made the Son the source of life*” (emphases added). If He is now the *source of life*, then it makes sense that *Jesus Christ* is the one who gives the living and dead true Christians *a new body composition of spirit* (Greek = *pneuma*) at His return – a *second birth* (see also Paul’s comment in 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Would you conclude, therefore, that Jesus now has the power to *give* a spirit-composed “second birth” to human beings? If so, by what means will He accomplish that miraculous feat? According to Jesus Christ in John 3:3, 7, how does one go from being flesh to being spirit? Jesus says that it will be accomplished by being *born again*. Now read John 3:8. To what does Jesus compare the person who has

been “born again”? The wind. Why? To show the difference between the *flesh* and the *spirit*.

In verse 4, Nicodemus shows that he understands what Jesus means when He says “born again”: “Can he enter a *second time* into his mother’s womb?” (emphases added). This is not referring simply to a spiritual transformation of one’s mind or being “begotten from above.” Jesus is explaining why the “clod” cannot be “spirit” until something happens to *change* the “clod” to “spirit.”

The Greek term used here – *gennaō* – can mean “to beget” (the father’s action) and “to give birth” (the mother’s action). Jesus uses both meanings in this passage. Pay close attention to how this works. Man has to be “born [that is, *begotten*] of water and of the Spirit” before he can be *brought to birth* into the spirit state.

In other words, these two events are prerequisites for entering the Kingdom, or Family, of God. “Born [begotten] of water” is an allusion to baptism (see Acts 2:38 and Romans 6), and “born [begotten] ... of the Spirit” is an allusion to receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 1:13, 14). The individual is “begotten from above” by these two most important rituals. In other words, the individual is *converted* at present but not *born again*. The *second* birth occurs at a specific time in the future when the *flesh* is changed to *spirit*.

Paul explains this, in part, in Ephesians 1:13, 14. What is the purpose for receiving the *gift* of the Holy Spirit? Notice that the Holy Spirit is given only as a *down payment* – a *partial* installment “until the *redemption* of the purchased possession” (emphases added). Being baptized and receiving this *partial* installment of the Holy Spirit does not mean that one is, as a result, *born again* at that moment. S/He is *spiritually begotten*. As far as God is concerned, s/he has become a new creation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17) who begins *anew* to fulfill God’s

requirements of holiness, blamelessness, and love (Eph. 1:4). Let me explain that more specifically.

Paul is explaining something that goes on in God's mind when a person repents and professes to believe in and accept God's requirement that s/he be "made acceptable" in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:6). Upon that true, heartfelt repentance and subsequent baptism and laying on of hands for the receipt of the Holy Spirit, God forgives *all* of that person's past sins. Now the individual stands *completely innocent* before God. It is as if God is dealing with newly created Adam and Eve *before* they violated the Lord God's command regarding the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil (2 Cor. 5:17). The individual is *not* changed from flesh to spirit; s/he is *regenerated*: renewed or restored to a state of innocence before God.

### The *Redemption* of the Body

In Romans 8:18-25, Paul says that we must *wait* for the *redemption* of our bodies. Are humans the only ones that have been subjected to the *bondage of corruption*? How did this bondage of corruption come upon God's creation? (Hint: read again v. 20 and Genesis 3:14-24.) When will God's creation be *released* from it? (Read Rom. 8:19.) Also, ask yourself this question: According to Paul's statement here, are there any *spirit-composed* children of God among us at this time? If not, then the *redemption* for which we wait *has not yet come* – and we must continue to have faith that it will come. The term *manifestation* means that something will be readily perceived by the physical senses.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-55 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. When does that *redemption* take place – that is, when will the individual be *born again* from flesh to spirit? Notice that Paul places that event *at the return of Jesus Christ* for those who are "in Christ" – that is, for those who have repented of their sins, accepted Christ as Lord and

Savior, been baptized, and received the “begetting” *gift* of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands. This is in agreement with John 5:24-29.

Do the living “in Christ” and the dead “in Christ” receive this *second birth* at the same time? Read those verses very carefully because the concept of the immortality of the soul teaches that the dead in Christ have already gone to their reward – and the sinful dead already have eternal life in hell-fire. Read Romans 6:23 again and see what is the reward each will receive – and remember the biblical definition of *death*. Read Revelation 20:10-15. Satan and the incorrigibly wicked are thrown into the lake of fire and consumed (read Mal. 4:1; Ezek. 28:12-19 – noting that this concerns Satan, the power behind the King of Tyre; and Rev. 20:14, 15 – hell in the *KJV* means “the grave”).

The ultimate fate of the wicked dead is to be raised to physical, fleshly life and cast into the lake of fire – which does not presently exist – after the completion of the 1,000-year ministry of reconciliation (read the parenthetical statement in v. 5, along with v. 7). The *second death* – which occurs after the 1,000-year completion of the ministry of reconciliation – is the antithesis of the second birth. If you understand that, then you are well ahead of the average or typical religious person. Most do not know that the concept of Satan being an agent of punishment and the keeper of hell is an idea from John Milton and Dante, not the Bible.

If you read Hebrews 11:39, 40 again, ask this question: Have *any* people of true faith received the promised reward yet? Does verse 40 agree with 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17? Do these agree with Job 14:12-15? Does any of this agree with what is *commonly taught*? Why/why not?

Let’s go back to Romans 8:9, 14. What is your condition if you *do not have* the Spirit of Christ? What is your condition if you have the Spirit? The *King James Version*

says: “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you.” This is somewhat confusing – even when read in the context of the previous eight verses. Does this verse mean that you are changed from flesh to spirit when you receive God’s Holy Spirit? No!

Let’s read this from *The New International Version*: “You, however, are *controlled* [guided; motivated] *not* by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you” (emphasis added). The addition of the Holy Spirit changes how one’s life is *controlled* [guided; motivated], but it does not cause one to be *born again* from flesh to Spirit. You have a new “spiritual” nature under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit.

Now, let’s compare Romans 8:15, 16 and 1 John 3:1, 2. Even though we are still in fleshly bodies, does that mean that we are not yet the children of God? How does John’s comment in verse 2 help you to understand this? Notice his use of the *future tense*: “what we shall be ... when He shall appear.” That future tense gives you a hint that the rebirth has not yet taken place. But ... that does not mean that you have not been regenerated. *Regeneration* and *redemption* are not the same thing.

Are we, at this time, what God intends for us to ultimately be – what we shall be? Why/why not? Think about a man and woman who are expecting a child. Do they consider the fetus to be their child? The gestation period is part and parcel to the birth process. The actual birth is a work in progress at that time – but the developing fetus is nothing less than their child. God the Father and Jesus Christ have the same attitude toward Their spirit-begotten children. They want them to come to full term and be *born*. They expect it to happen – and it will if nothing happens to cause a miscarriage (see Hebrews 6:4-13).

Finally, let’s focus on Ephesians 1:14, where Paul says “the redemption of the purchased possession.” There are two ways to understand that term. There is the sense in

which it means that a *ransom price* has been paid. That is the sense of 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20: You, personally, have been “bought back” for God’s purposes through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (see Heb. 10:1-14).

This was not a ransom paid to a kidnapper ... like Satan the Devil. It was the choice of the divine being (the Word: John 1:1-3) to divest Himself of His divine equality with His divine partner in order to be the death sacrifice for all humans of all times (see Phil 2:5-8; Heb. 10:5). This decision was made before the creation of the orderly universe (see also Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:18-20). To what end was this redemptive sacrifice made? This is where the second meaning is significant in its contribution to understanding the expression “born again.”

The Greek term is apolutrosis. BAG defines it as follows: “fig., of the release fr[om] sin and finiteness that comes through Christ” (p. 95). I will let you do some “legwork” by referring to the following scriptures: Romans 3:24; 8:23; Hebrews 9:15; Luke 21:28; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Ephesians 1:7, 14; 4:30; Colossians 1:14. Each of those scriptures carries that meaning. Here is what the repentant sinner ultimately gets in order to be “born again”:

1. absolute and total forgiveness of all the sins that s/he has ever committed, and
2. absolute and total release from the finiteness (definable limitations) of the human body – that is: you will have **no** earthly limitations ... you will be able to go and come as you please at the speed of thought because you will have been “born again” into the Elohim Family. Traveling into outer space will no longer be a problem for you!

Paul specifically states in Romans 8:23 that the redemption of the body is the adoption into the Elohim Family.

How does all of this discussion help you to understand the biblical definition of what man is? Is God's word clear and understandable about this? If not, take some time to re-study the material and pray about it. There is no need to attempt to understand anything else at this point if you do not understand what you have studied thus far. It is not a bad thing to re-study things that you do not understand in whole or part. *Your main goal is to understand.*

How would you now respond to this statement: “[Man’s] soul, *the real person*, is immortal. It will never cease to be” (Hobbs; emphases added)? Remember, you are trying to determine what God has revealed in His word, not what man has formulated without, or in addition to, God’s word. Man, having refused to accept God's revelation, has gone about creating God in their own image. Romans 1:25 says that they have actually changed God's truth into a lie. This business with the immortality of the soul is merely one way by which they have done that. You need to understand what is wrong with that doctrine in order to more fully understand what man is ... according to scripture

## Review Questions

1. John 3:6 – To what does *flesh* give birth? To what does *spirit* give birth? Why do you think Jesus made the distinction between the two “births”?
2. 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22, 45, 50 – How does Paul support the statement made by Jesus Christ in John 3:6?
3. John 5:24-29 – Paying close attention to verse 26, what is Jesus saying here about the potential of the true believer? How does this agree with Job and Paul?

4. Would you conclude that Jesus now has the power to give a spirit-composed “second birth” to human beings? If so, by what means will He accomplish that miraculous feat?
5. John 3:3, 7 – According to Jesus Christ, how does one go from being flesh to being spirit?
6. John 3:8 – To what does Jesus compare the person who has been “born again”? What attributes of the “wind” does Jesus intend to stress about the “spirit”?
7. Ephesians 1:13, 14 – What is the purpose for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit?
8. Romans 8:18-25 – Why does Paul say that we must *wait* for the redemption of our bodies? Are humans the only ones that have been subjected to the bondage of corruption? How did this bondage of corruption come upon God’s creation? (Hint: read again v. 20 and Genesis 3:14-24.) When will God’s creation be released from it? (Read v. 19.)
9. 1 Corinthians 15:35-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 – When does that redemption take place – that is, when will the individual be born again from flesh to spirit?
10. Do the living “in Christ” and the dead “in Christ” receive this second birth at the same time?
11. Hebrews 11:39, 40 – Have any people of true faith received the promised reward yet? Does verse 40 agree with 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17? Do these agree with Job 14:12-15? Does any of this agree with what is commonly taught? Why/why not?

12. Romans 8:9, 14 – What is your condition if you do not have the Spirit of Christ? What is your condition if you have the Spirit?

13. Romans 8:15, 16; 1 John 3:1, 2 – Even though we are still in fleshly bodies, does that mean that we are not yet the children of God? How does John’s comment in verse 2 help you to understand this?

14. Are we, at this time, what God intends for us to ultimately be? Why/why not?

15. How does all of this discussion help you to understand the biblical definition of what man is? Is God’s word clear and understandable about this?

16. How would you now respond to this statement: “[Man’s] soul, the real person, is immortal. It will never cease to be” (Hobbs)? Remember: you are trying to determine what God has revealed in His word, not what man has formulated without, or in addition to, God’s word.

17. Why is Romans 1:25 important in this matter?

18. Explain how *conversion* is a step-by-step process. What does *regeneration* mean?

19. Write a brief explanation of the “birth” process for being “born again.”

20. What is *apolutrosis*, and what does it do for the true believer? In your answer, briefly define *redemption*.

## Chapter Four

# How the Concept of the Immortal Soul Came into Christianity

One of the amazing similarities of most, if not all, pagan religions and philosophies is the belief that man is, essentially, a spiritual being. The most generally accepted idea is that man is an immortal soul housed in a body of flesh ... what some call “a bag of blood and bones.” Therefore, the body is not the real person; it is merely the temporary dwelling of the immortal soul as it makes its journey back to the heavens where God dwells, from where it has fallen. As a result of its “fall,” it is allowed to occupy the body of a beast or a human so it can recapture its vision of the dwelling place of God.

You would do well to get this idea straight: Their concept is that the real person is not the body, but an invisible, immaterial, immortal soul that thinks, hears, sees, and lives on consciously forever, whether or not it occupies a body. It is here that the pagan philosophy collides head-on with God’s scriptural revelation.

### The Plato Connection

Plato, in his work *Phaedrus*, creates a dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus in which Socrates says that the soul was not created – that is, it is an infinite being; therefore,

it is indestructible (Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, *The Rhetorical Tradition*, Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, Boston, 1990. p. 123b; emphases added). In a similar conversation with Gorgias, Socrates defines death like this: "Death, as it seems to me, is actually nothing but *the disconnection of two things, the soul and the body*, from each other" (Ibid., "Gorgias," p. 110; emphases added).

When that happens, the soul leaves the body and journeys to one of three locations: a heaven, a purgatory, or a hell for judgment and preparation for the next stage of its journey homeward. The host body is put into a grave to be destroyed and returned to the natural elements. Thus, the *real person* never dies; it is merely separated from the body. Socrates tells Phaedrus that it normally takes about 10,000 years for it to return to the realm of God because of the things that could happen as it is reincarnated – put back into various fleshly bodies – during its journey home.

Compare the above information with this quote by Hobbs ... and find the similarities with Plato's philosophy and write them down:

[Because of sin] man's *animal principle of life* shall cease; his body shall return to the ground (Genesis 3:19). But his soul, *the real person*, is immortal. It *will never cease to be* (Hobbs; emphases added).

Presumably, the expression "animal principle of life" has to do with the life-force that animates the *body*. As far as this doctrine is concerned, this *seems* to cover the bases in Ecclesiastes 3:18-20. This cannot be the same life-force that animates the immortal soul because, according to Plato, that life-force *was not created* and *cannot cease to exist*.

Here is how Socrates explained it to Phaedrus:

(a) Each soul returns to the place from which it came in 10,000 years.

(b) The only exception is the soul of an innocent philosopher or a lover of philosophy: If it can have three consecutive 1,000-year periods in such a state, it will receive its wings at the end of the 3,000<sup>th</sup> year.

(c) All others will receive a 1,000-year judgment according to how they have lived their lives, after which time they can choose how they will live their second lives: as *a beast* or *a human*;

(d) The soul that has never seen the truth cannot transmigrate into a human body.

(e) The soul must use the various senses of the human being to collect perceptions of things that the soul once knew when it journeyed with God and use them to rise above the material world.

(f) Only the mind of the philosopher has wings because only the philosopher is able to have communion with God, through memory, of those things that cause God to be divine. In this way, s/he is initiated into the perfect mysteries and becomes truly perfect – allowing him/her to return to the realm of God (Bizzell & Herzberg, p. 125).

In such a scheme as that of the pagans, how important are the body and the material world? Why? It is in this concept of the immortal soul that all other concepts about it are rooted. You must understand that this concept is that of *the pagan*, not what God has revealed through His word. Hebrew and Greek thought involve two opposite concepts

about what man is, as well as two different concepts about how creation operates.

In later *Greek* thought – that is, as a result of the influence of men like Socrates and Plato – man is believed to be a *duality of soul or spirit* imprisoned in a body of material substance. This is in keeping with their concept that *creation also represents a duality*: the visible, temporary, material world, and the invisible, eternal, spirit world. The temporary world is made up of matter, which is the realm of sin and darkness (paraphrased from: George Eldon Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967, pp. 98, 99).

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

## The Intrusion of the Doctrine into Christianity

You can re-read Romans 8:18-25 to refresh your memory about the *Hebrew* concept: Both man and creation were subjected to decadence *because of sin*; therefore, both will be delivered from it at God's appointed time.

How did the pagan concept get into traditional Christianity? *The Jewish Encyclopedia* says:

The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principle exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which

Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/8092-immortality-of-the-soul>).

This tells us that the concept *is not intended in any of the teachings* of the Old Testament – the scriptures of the Jews. Considering how all of Israel attached themselves to the gods of the pagans, it is no surprise that they adopted some of the religious concepts of the pagans (see Jer. 9:12-16). Traditional Christianity has been no different from the Israelites as it has spread among the Gentile nations.

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

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

In fact, Socrates learned this philosophy directly from the Egyptians and taught it to his most famous pupil, Plato. Neither of these pagan philosophers conceived of death as being *without senses and perception* (see Eccl. 9:5, 10); it was merely the separation of the soul from the body. As various aspects of Greek government, education, philosophy, and religion were spread by the Roman Empire, most European nations adopted them ... along with the concept of the immortality of the soul.

What does Paul warn Christians about in Colossians 2:8? It is apparent that some “Christians” were involved with pagan philosophers and their philosophies. How can you tell from this discourse?

Paul reviews with the Colossians in vv. 9-19 some of the basic Christian principles of belief in God’s truth. The “handwriting of ordinances that was against us” has to do

with *God's laws* – the principles of holiness by which our behavior is judged (see 1 John 3:4; Rom. 6:23; 8:1-4). When the individual sins, a *death warrant* comes into effect. The death of Jesus Christ ... the sacrifice for our sins ... effectively “nailed” that *death warrant* to the cross and blotted out all the sins of all of mankind. The expectation of God, from that point forward, is that mankind will humble him/herself, repent, and begin the salvation process (John 3:16-19). If they fail to do so, then the death warrant remains in effect.

One thing overlooked by those who claim that God's *laws* were nailed to the cross is that His Law is the Law of *love*. Read Matthew 22:35-40. Did Jesus indicate that those two Laws are *temporary* ... valid only until He would be crucified? Now read John 14:15. How does Jesus expect His people to express *love* toward Him? Jesus is speaking primarily of the 10 Commandments, but any other command He gives also requires obedience. Finally, read Romans 13:8-10. How does Paul, *decades* later, define *love* in v. 10? Does he say that love *fulfills* the Law?

Would you suppose that the Colossians were being warned about *syncretizing* the philosophies of the pagan philosophers with Christian teachings (Deut. 12:29-32)? Was there a need for concern?

Paul expresses that concern in Colossians 2:20-23. All of Paul's concern is summed up in vv. 21-22: (a) “commandments and doctrines of men” (see Matt. 15:1-9) and (b) “a show of wisdom in *will worship*, and [false] *humility*, and *neglecting the body*.”

Paul also shows in vv. 20, 21 the kinds of *man-made* ordinances that will “perish with the using” (v. 22). This is known as the “Colossian heresy.” Some people are so careless with their reading and understanding that they unknowingly will construct and perpetuate *lies* as though God Himself commanded them (Rom. 1:25).

From Acts to Revelation, you will find that there were those who presented themselves as “Christians” ... but their teachings were foreign to God’s revelation in the Old Testament. I point out the dependence on the Old Testament by the true Christians of the Apostolic Church era because they only had the Old Testament from which to get God’s truth. The New Testament canon developed, or evolved, over the course of the first 250-300 years of Christian history. These “fake Christians” were responsible for the intrusion of many false doctrines into “Christianity.”

Read Jude 4. What accusation does Jude bring against the “certain men” who “crept in unawares”? Would you agree that these men were up to no good among God’s true people? How does that compare to Paul’s accusations in 2 Corinthians 11:4 that there were those who preached *another Jesus* and *another gospel* and *another spirit* – all different from the orthodoxy of the True Church? Read vv. 13-15. Speaking of Transformers! Paul calls them “false apostles, deceitful workers, and changelings. Who was their *real* leader?

Now read Galatians 1:6-9. What was happening among the Galatians? What you see is known as the “Galatian heresy.” Of what does Paul accuse the Galatians at the end of v. 6? What do you think he means by the expressions “another gospel” and “pervert the gospel”? Does the term *nefarious* apply here?

Now read 2 Peter 2 and pay attention to Peter’s accusation in vv. 1, 2. What kinds of problems are caused by the “false prophets” among the True Church people? You have to understand that these troublemakers were posing as “true” Christians. They were doing many religious things *in Christ’s name* ... but they were not doing them according to God’s will (Matt. 7:21-23). This was exactly what Jesus Christ warned about in Matthew 24:4, 5! *Many* were coming in His name and deceiving *many*.

The *idea* of the Christ fascinated many. The specific *truth* revealed by the Christ did not. They wanted to mix and mingle it with pagan religious and philosophical ideas ... and still call it “Christianity.” That is our modern dilemma among 32,000+ “Christian” denominations who teach competing “gospels” that contradict one another.

Acts 17:15-32 is a great example of how pagan philosophies differ markedly from God’s truth. Verse 17 shows Paul disputing (engaging in a thorough debate) both in the Jewish synagogue and the market place. When the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers heard about Paul, they set out to make a fool of him – especially because Paul preached Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead. They invited him to Areopagus (the “*hill of the god Ares*”) so he could explain to them the “new doctrine” and “strange things” of which he preached. As Luke puts it in v. 21: “The Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.”

There is spiritual instability in always pursuing the “new thing.” It might make you to be an informed person, but it does not really settle your mind on what is true and profitable. Such instability is the result of the “wisdom” that comes from the consumption of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil mixed together. Eve thought it would make her wise (Gen. 3:6; Rom. 1:21). Proverbs 4:7 implies that wisdom without understanding is powerless. Read 1 Corinthians 11:8-31 in order to get insight into “godly wisdom.”

In Acts 17:22, Paul accused the Athenian philosophers of being “too superstitious.” He based that accusation on the number of idols dedicated to all of their many gods. Paul said that the tipping point came when he saw an altar dedicated to *the Unknown God*. You can imagine that they had altars for every god imaginable, but ... just in case they might have left out one, they covered their bases with the

altar to the Unknown God. Then Paul claimed that he was speaking on behalf of the Unknown God.

In vv. 24-31 Paul explained the God whom he worshiped and served – even pointing out that they also believed that man is the “offspring” of God (vv. 28, 29). He spoke against their idolatry and admitted that God had “winked” at their sins in the past. However, God has declared that man should repent because a time of judgment is coming. Part of that judgment has to do with *the resurrection of the dead*. At that, some of them mocked Paul, but others wanted to hear more about that at a later date (v. 32). It is plain that Paul’s teaching contradicted the Greek philosophers’ concept of *life-after-death*.

### The “Early Church Fathers”

Justin, the pagan philosopher-turned-professing-Christian, wrote as late as A.D. 160:

But our Jesus Christ, being crucified, and dead, and having ascended to heaven, reigned; and by those things which were published in His name among all nations by the apostles, there is joy offered to those who expect *the immortality promised by Him*” (Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, p. 176; emphases added).

Does it appear that this early Catholic “father” believed in man’s *innate* immortality – or did he believe that immortality is something that man will receive in the future? While it is true that the early Catholic “fathers” were divided on the subject, it took several centuries for the pagan concept of the immortality of the soul to be successfully blended into traditional Christian teachings.

Origen, a Catholic teacher from Alexandria, Egypt, wrote this around A.D. 200: “Souls are immortal, as God

Himself is eternal and immortal” (Ibid., vol. IV, pp. 314, 402). Even though Origen was a Catholic teacher, he blended the speculations of Plato with certain biblical doctrines and called his philosophy *Neo-Platonism* – that is, a revival of Platonic philosophy! This is *syncretism*. It was an attempt to explain Christian doctrine to a pagan world by *mixing* pagan concepts that were similar to Christian concepts into a “compromise” concept that would satisfy both pagan and Christian.

John Nelson Darby, a leader among the “Plymouth Brethren” during the 1800s, wrote this:

*I cannot show from Scripture that man is naturally immortal. I can only deduce it. The idea of the immortality of the soul has no source in the gospel; it comes, on the contrary, from the Platonists, and it is just when the second coming of Christ was denied in the Church, or at least began to be lost sight of, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul came in to replace that of the resurrection. This was about the time of Origen (Lectures, vol. IV; emphases added).*

Does Darby admit that some biblical teachings were cast aside, while some nonbiblical teachings were added? In this case, does Darby say that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was accepted in order to *replace* the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead? That should not be very difficult to understand because the immortal soul doctrine posits that the soul leaves the body *immediately* upon the death of the body. Mainstream “Christianity,” in general, claims that the soul goes *immediately* to heaven or hell. Pay attention to how funerals are conducted.

Tertullian of Phoenician North Africa, another Catholic “father” teaching at the same time as Origen, wrote this:

For some things are known, *even by nature*: the immortality of the soul, for instance, is held by many. ... I may use, therefore, the opinion of *Plato*, when he declares: "Every soul is immortal" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. III, p. 547; emphases added).

What is Tertullian's source of authority? The Greek philosopher Plato. How would such a position agree with Paul's comments about "unequal yoking" in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and Deuteronomy 12:29-32?

During the early 300s A.D., Emperor Constantine *forced* the Catholic Church on the Roman Empire. At the same time, another Phoenician North African, Augustine of Hippo, (St. Augustine) "sanctified" the immortality of the soul in his massive work *The City of God*. He, too, was a Neo-Platonist.

Arnobius, a Catholic writer and teacher at that time, wrote:

[The Neo-Platonists] are carried away with an extravagant opinion of themselves that souls are immortal. ...Will you lay aside your habitual arrogance, O men, who claim God as your Father, and maintain that you are immortal just as He is?" (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. LV, p. 440).

Does it appear that Arnobius agreed with the neo-Platonist movement? Is it clear, therefore, that the *battle* over the doctrine was still being waged during the 300s A.D.?

Notice how long the process of making the doctrine "stick" actually took. Thomas Aquinas, an Italian scholastic teacher and theologian who lived between A. D. 1225-1274, *permanently* established the doctrine of the immortality of the soul *in the Catholic Church*. About 50 years later, Durante Alighieri (Dante) wrote *The Divine*

*Comedy*, which, even if he did it as a “spoof” (as some contend), influenced people’s belief in the pagan concepts of hell, purgatory, and paradise that he pictured in it. You find these concepts in a central position in Catholic theology.

In A.D. 1513 at the Lateran Council, the Catholic Church imposed the death penalty on all who refused to believe in the doctrine of the immortal soul! Here is the text of the edict:

Whereas some have dared to assert concerning the nature of the reasonable soul that it is mortal, we, with the approbation of the sacred council, do condemn and reprobate all those who assert that the intellectual soul is mortal, seeing, according to the canon of Pope Clement V, that the soul is ... immortal; ... and we decree that all who adhere to like erroneous assertions shall be shunned and punished as heretics” (emphases added).

In most cases, the punishment for heresy was death. Notice this statement about the immortal soul in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: “It enshrines the principles of ancient speculation” (article “Soul,” p. 157; emphases added). This is a blatant admission that the belief that man is essentially a spiritual soul housed in a material body is actually a product of ancient pagan philosophical speculation! And, you have seen that the Bible condemns such philosophical speculations.

Read the following quote from Martin Luther, written around A.D. 1522:

It is probable, in my opinion, that, with very few exceptions, indeed, the dead *sleep in utter insensibility* till the day of judgment. ... On what authority can it be said that the souls of the dead

may not *sleep* ... in the same way that the living pass in profound slumber the interval between their downlying at night and their uprising in the morning? (*Michelet's Life of Luther*, Bohn's edition, p. 133; emphases added).

What was the belief of this man who began the Protestant Reformation? Martin Luther taught that it was the *Pope*, not the *Bible*, who taught that the soul is immortal (Defense, proposition #27). As a matter of historical fact, he was charged with heresy by Catholic Cardinal Du Perron for teaching "...that the soul die[s] with the body, and that God would hereafter raise both the one and the other" (*Historical View*, p. 344).

But, in his Augsburg Confessions, Luther also charged the Pope with exceeding his power by doing away with the seventh-day Sabbath, which is the fourth of the Ten Commandments, and substituting the *uncommanded* first day of the week (Sunday). Yet, neither Luther nor his followers ever maintained the integrity of the commanded seventh-day Sabbath of Exodus 20:8-11. Even more interesting, some of Luther's original teachings are a far cry from what the Protestants and their ministers and theologians teach today!

William Tyndale, a Protestant reformer who printed the first English language New Testament, wrote:

In putting departed souls in heaven, hell, or purgatory you *destroy* the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul proved *resurrection*. ... ***The true faith putteth the resurrection***; the heathen philosophers, denying that, did put that souls ever live. And the Pope joineth the spiritual doctrine of Christ and the fleshly doctrine of the philosophers together [syncretism] – things *so contrary that they cannot agree*. ... And because the fleshly minded

Pope consenteth to heathen doctrine, therefore he corrupteth the Scripture to establish it. If the soul be in heaven, tell me what cause is there for the resurrection?” (emphases added).

Tyndale’s position concerning the immortality of the soul does not agree with mainstream “Christian” orthodoxy. He used the following to refute it:

1. Christ and Paul establish the resurrection of the dead to be true, not the immortal soul doctrine.
2. There is a contrast between true faith and the pagan philosophers’ teachings.
3. The Pope went against scripture by mixing and mingling scripture and pagan philosophy/religion.

*Tyndale’s argument is scripturally valid!*

If you use Matthew 24:4, 5 and 1 Corinthians 15:12-23 as reference points, can you understand how the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has been added to Christianity? Today, too much of “Christianity” is little more than a quagmire of syncretized biblical concepts and pagan philosophies wrapped up in the name of Jesus Christ. It bears little resemblance to God’s inspired scriptural truth, even though it uses scripture and the name of Jesus Christ to legitimize itself as being “Christian.”

Olhausen, in his comment in *Lange’s Commentary* on 1 Corinthians 15:19, 20, says this:

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and the name [that is, immortal soul], are alike unknown in the entire Bible” (emphases added).

Read the following scriptures to see if you can figure out what happened: Matthew 7:21-23; John 4:23, 24; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 2; Jude 4. Write down any significant words and phrases (ex.: God's will, truth, transformed, pervert) that would help to justify your conclusion.

Finally, ponder this comment from Cal Thomas, a newspaper editorialist:

Multiculturalism, globalism, and an emphasis on 'inter-faith' [which has been taught in public schools for more than a decade and during the same time has slowly crept into the "Christian" community] (which is *interfaithless* because in this view Truth does not exist) are contributing to the decline of the West just as paganism, hedonism and greed undermined past empires. Rather than learn from their mistakes, *the West thinks it can engage in such practices without consequences*" (*The Albany Herald*, "Muslims launching new segregation," January 8, 2008, p. 8A; emphases added).

What kind of picture is Cal Thomas painting here? Is it in any way similar to what we have been discussing? It is high time for those who want to claim the name of "True Christian" to open their Bibles and see what God has revealed in it! Quit following *traditional* teachings that lead you astray from God's revealed truth! The advance of counterfeit "Christianity has been a slow, but steady, march from the time of the Apostolic Church until today. It is very deceptive ... especially for those who do not understand God's truth. You have the opportunity to learn this truth in this Bible Study Course series. Please take full advantage of the opportunity you have to learn it.

## Review Questions

1. What do Plato and Hobbs have in common relative to the doctrine of the immortal soul?
2. In such a scheme as that of the pagans, how important are the *body* and the *material world*? Why?
3. How did the pagan concept get into traditional Christianity?
4. What does Paul warn Christians about in Colossians 2:8? How does that relate to his lesson in Colossians 2? How can you tell that he was not advocating doing away with God's Law?
5. Is it apparent that some Colossian "Christians" were involved with pagan philosophers and their philosophies?
6. Would you suppose that the Colossians were being warned about *syncretizing* the philosophies of the pagan philosophers with Christian teachings? Was there a need for concern? Why/why not?
7. Acts 17:15-32 – How did the Athenian philosophers react toward Paul's message?
8. What did Paul mean when he said they were "too superstitious"?
9. Did Paul's teaching about the resurrection of the dead agree with the philosophers' concept of life-after-death? How can you tell?
10. Why would you suppose that is true?

11. Explain briefly the concepts held by Origen and Justin. Do they agree with one another? In what way(s)?

12. Does John Nelson Darby admit that some biblical teachings were *cast aside*, while some nonbiblical teachings were *added*? Is that *adding to* and *diminishing from* God's word?

13. Why does Darby say that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was accepted in order to *replace* the doctrine of the *resurrection of the dead*? (Think of the immediate abandonment of the body by the immortal soul upon the body's death.)

14. What was Tertullian's source of authority for his beliefs regarding the doctrine of the immortal soul? Would such a position agree with Paul's comments in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and Deuteronomy 12:28-32? Explain your answer.

15. Does it appear that Arnobius agreed with the Neo-Platonist movement? What did Arnobius believe?

16. For how long was the battle over the doctrine waged thereafter? Do you think the issue is settled today? Explain your answer.

17. What was the belief of the man who began the Protestant Reformation? Why did he believe this?

18. What is Tyndale's position concerning the immortality of the soul? What argument does he use to refute it? Do you believe that his argument is scripturally valid? Why/why not?

19. Using Matthew 24:4, 5 and 1 Corinthians 15:12-23, explain how the doctrine of the immortality of the soul has

been added to Christianity. Try to make a full explanation in your own words.

20. Read the following scriptures to see if you can figure out what happened in “Christianity” during the Apostolic Church era: Matthew 7:21-23; John 4:23, 24; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 2; Jude 4. Write down any significant words and phrases (ex.: God's will, truth, transformed, pervert) that would help to justify your conclusion.

21. What kind of picture does Cal Thomas paint regarding multiculturalism, globalism, and the “inter-faith” movement? What does “inter-faith” mean? Is it in any way similar to what we have been discussing? Is there need for those who desire to be true Christians to be concerned?

## Chapter Five

# The Theory of Evolution Challenges God's Revealed Truth

**T**he basic dictionary definition of *evolution* says that it is the theory that the kinds of animals and plants that presently exist have developed from previously existing kinds. In and of itself, that definition is *not* a complete statement about what is involved in the theory of evolution.

A *theory* is a plausible or scientifically acceptable general principle offered to explain observed facts. The facts are gathered as the result of a *hypothesis* – an *assumption* (something taken for granted though not proved to be true) or a *guess* – about why something exists or operates as it does.

*Evolution* is also defined as the process by which something attains its distinctive characteristics through a series of steps. An example of this would be the impregnation of an ovum by a spermatozoon. The steps of change that take place throughout the resulting gestation period is, in fact, an *evolution*.

Is this what we mean when we say that the *Theory of Evolution* challenges God's revealed truth? No. It is indisputable, by its very definition, that *evolution* takes place in many different ways in all of creation. What challenges the revealed truth of God is the manner in

which people like Darwin, Huxley, Hegel and others say the evolutionary process has taken place. When that difference in definition is properly understood, the problem is very great. Let's understand how this works.

## Kind Begets Kind

For instance, beginning in Genesis 1:11, God is said to have created plants and animals to reproduce *after their own kinds*. Variations that occur within each *kind* are acceptably referred to as part of an evolutionary process – that is, existent types of animals and plants have developed from previously existing kinds related to the *original kind* ... as the above definition stipulates. So, if God did not originally create a Chihuahua dog, it would be acceptable to assume that the Chihuahua came from (or, through a series of steps, evolved from) a previously existing dog-kind. It would be ludicrous to assume that the Chihuahua came through the lineage of, say, a *reptile* like a crocodile.

If God created only one kind of apple, it would be safe to assume that all other kinds of apples came from the original apple – not from a fern or a daisy. There is no problem with applying the term evolution (a series of steps within a given *kind*) to these situations if you adhere to the definitions from the dictionary given above: *kind begets kind*. But – and this is a pregnant exception – that did not preclude God from originally creating numerous *variations* of the same kind in the beginning.

Based on Genesis 1 and 2, one would correctly assume that God created the human to reproduce after its own kind, too. However, God also reveals in Genesis 1:26, 27 that He intends for man to ultimately evolve into the *God-kind*. In other words, there is a *series of steps* that man must go through in order to ultimately change into the exact image of God. Passing through a *fleshly stage* is

merely one step in the process. Again, there is no argument that, by definition, an *evolutionary* process is involved.

But, does that mean that God began with green swamp slime and, over millions and millions of years and the development of vastly different creatures, finally came up with a *Homo sapien*? No – not according to the record that exists as God’s revelation. God’s record agrees with *this* evolutionary concept: *kind begets kind*.

Here is another example of correctly applying the definition of the term *evolution*. James Reston, writing in the December 1995 edition of *National Geographic*, explains how “proplanetary dishes” found in the Orion nebula turn into planets:

Most of the proplanetary dishes O’Dell has identified are *flat* rather than *spherical* – evidence, he says, that an active, *evolutionary process* is at work” (vol. 188, no. 6, p. 101; emphases added).

In other words, according to Reston and O’Dell, there is a *step-by-step process* by which these *flat* “proplanetary dishes” become *spherical* planets. The wider discussion was about how the Orion nebula is a birthing place for stars – therefore, of planets and planetary systems. It all hinges on the concept that “stars are the source of all matter.”

Reston says that once the star is born, the material that is left over (from the explosion that is caused by the nuclear fusion that ignites the star) becomes a planet (pp. 94, 95). This *step-by-step process* is correctly considered, by definition, to be an *evolutionary* process. God’s word does not dispute such a claim *within that definition*.

## Design Demands a Designer

Another point worth considering is based on the following axiom: *design demands a designer*. Within that

“self-evident” concept lies another one: The existence of numerous *similarities among various designs* does not mean that they all came from the same original source. For instance: if a shark embryo, a chicken embryo, and a human embryo bear some striking similarities to one another at one particular stage of development, it does not automatically mean that they all came from a common ancestor.

And, just because a chimpanzee shares about 98% of the human DNA, it does not mean that they came from a common ancestor. They can both be *primates* – a group of mammals that includes monkeys, apes, and humans – with varying degrees of *similarities*, without having a common ancestor. It would not be uncommon for a designer to repeat various themes and use similar materials in all of his/her different creations.

How do we tell that a group of paintings came from Renoir – and not from Norman Rockwell? Style. Medium. Technique. Subject matter. The rock group called The Monkees could sing a song written by Neil Diamond, and one would be able to recognize the Diamond style – unless they altered it so radically as to destroy the Diamondesque identity. But, if you hear a song that sounds *like* a Harry Nilsson creation – or, a James Taylor creation – you might have to research it to see if, in fact, it is one of their creations. *It is possible for someone to create something in the style of someone else.* If your research is inconclusive, the most you will be able to say is that it is *in the style of* or *from the school of* a certain artist.

Also, a designer might very well abandon his basic style from time to time, but one might be able, even then, to find traces of things that would give clues to his identity. This idea is born out in current evolutionary research.

Sharon Begley, writing in *Newsweek* (“Beyond Stones and Bones,” March 19, 2007, pp. 53-58), admits this about the traditional concept of human evolution:

The neat traditional model in which one species gave rise to another ... has been replaced by a profusion of branches, representing species that lived at the same time as our direct ancestors but whose lines died out. ... *New research also shows that “progress” and “human evolution” are only occasional partners* (p. 54; emphases added).

What she is admitting here is simple: There were various species of hominids – human-like creatures – existing side-by-side that *were not related to one another*. This includes hominids that looked more human than an ape or monkey! One such find, *Sahelanthropus tchadensis* (“Toumai”), is much better developed than others a few million years younger; yet, he is not related to *Homo sapiens* (p. 55).

In fact, Begley writes that:

DNA makes clear that *Homo erectus* was almost certainly a dead end and *not, as some scientists had argued, our ancestor* [that is, not the ancestor of *Homo sapiens*] (Ibid.; emphases added).

All in the format of new DNA and genetic science, new assumptions have arisen and old assumptions have been discarded. Although the *Homo* species is judged to be millions of years old, it was not until “600,000 years ago [that] everyone had a big brain, and by 200,000 years ago people in Africa looked like modern humans” (Ibid.).

However, Begley add this:

The first modern humans ... departed Africa about 66,000 years ago. ... From the amount of variation in Y chromosomes today, population geneticists infer [that] ... only 4,000 brave souls ventured forth

from Africa. *We are their descendants* (Ibid; emphases added).

An artist's conception of the tool-making, tool-using Neanderthal man (*Homo Neanderthalus*) is included with the caption: "In Europe 200,000 to 30,000 years ago, *but not our ancestor*" (emphases added). A concluding caption reads:

The pair that strolled the Tanzanian Plain shared Africa with many other hominid species. *Why all but one species died out is a mystery*" (p. 58; emphasis added).

This is a great admission that many different *Homo* species lived side-by-side in Africa; some were related, and some were not; but, all but one species *died out: Homo sapiens*. That is a remarkable admission! It is remarkable, therefore, that there are no *partially evolved* species of hominids among us today that are actively evolving into the next "step" of their progression.

Richard Klein, a Stanford University archeologist, is quoted as saying:

There was no representational art, no figurines, no jewelry until 50,000 years ago. *Some kind of cognitive advance was required, probably in language or working memory*. But since size hardly changed, the *brain change* that produced behaviorally modern humans must have been in *structure* (Ibid; emphases added).

So, scientists looked for gene structure that would have "emerged just when language, art, culture, and other products of higher intelligence did [and] ... found three with the right timing." Those are:

(a) FOXP2 – which plays a role with speech and language (it appeared less than 200,000 years ago),

(b) Microcephalin – which plays a role with symbolic thinking (it appeared 37,000 years ago), and

(c) ASPM – which plays a role with brain size – appeared about 5,800 years ago (Ibid.).

The right combination of all three genetic materials did not occur until 5,800 years ago – if the assumptions of these scientists are correct. This, they say, means that “we are still evolving” (Ibid.). Really?

It is a huge observation that none of these gene structures coincided with the others to produce “language, art, culture, and other products of higher intelligence” *before* 5,800 years ago. If that is true, then it is significant that “[This occurred] just before people established the first cities in the Near East and is well after *Homo sapiens* attained their modern form” (Ibid.).

The most popular Theory of Evolution does not teach that *kind begets kind*. It teaches that a *gradual change* took place over millions of years whereby amoeba that suddenly came to life when lightning struck a pool of green swamp slime and ultimately developed into all of the varieties of plant and animal life we presently see.

Darwin, Huxley, and scores of others would have us believe that a modern warm-blooded, porous-boned bird is the direct relative of a cold-blooded, solid-boned crocodile! They would have us believe that woodpeckers evolved from a radically different species of bird as a result of *natural adaptation* or *survival of the fittest*. And, the appearance of all of the varieties of plant and animal life occurred by mere *time and chance without the interposition of an outside force like “God.”* Evolution in its simplest dictionary

definition has taken place; evolution as popularly defined and taught in most science classes has not.

It should be noted that scientists and evolutionists do not even admit that the existence of anything like “God” could have had a role in creation. To them, “God” is an unquantifiable entity; so, “God” cannot be considered in the development of the theory about how creation occurred. At best, they hold that it has been a matter of *blind chance*. That is the danger embedded in Paul’s remark in Romans 1:28. Refusing to retain “God” in our knowledge subverts our understanding of why man exists in the first place. Read vv. 24, 26, 28 to understand God’s reaction to such suppression of His truth (v. 18).

### Review Questions

1. According to the dictionary definition of *evolution*, how likely is it that the chimpanzee and the chicken came from the same ancestor? Explain.
2. How likely is it that a chimpanzee/human split occurred 1 million years later? Explain.
3. How likely is it that the chimpanzee – or any other primate – is related to the *Homo sapien* when so many *Homo* species that were much more advanced in human form and characteristics than the chimpanzee are not?
4. Is it apparent to you that there is a difference between the evolutionary concept that *kind begets kind* and what some teach about evolution? Explain.
5. How would you apply the “design demands a designer” axiom to the information above? How about “creation demands a creator” and “laws demand a Lawgiver”?

6. Would you accept the religious idea that *God* caused the type of evolution supported by Darwin, Huxley, and others? Does the dictionary definition support Darwin, Huxley, and others? Explain your answers.



## Chapter Six

# The Significance of God's Revelation

*R*evelation, in the sense in which it will be disclosed below, means that God makes apparent (readily seen, obvious, evident) His thoughts and ways to mankind. However, it is *revealed* in scripture that such understanding is *not* presently made readily apparent to *everyone* at any given time.

For example, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 that God has not chosen to reveal His “deep things” (2:6-8) to the mighty, wealthy, and worldly-wise. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus Christ makes it clear that a person can have a *form* of “Christianity” that is unacceptable to Him because it is not held according to the will of God. This is similar to Paul’s statement in 2 Timothy 3:5 that there is a “form of godliness” that *denies* the power of God.

It is important, therefore, that we should understand the importance of God’s revelation and how the individual is made privy to God’s thoughts and ways ... to His *truth*. Jesus tells us in John 17:17 that we need to be set aside for holy purposes (“sanctified”) by God in order to know His truth. He tells us in John 8:31, 32 that we must be dedicated to studying, learning, and living what we find in His word in order to know the truth and be set free from our spiritual ignorance about Him and His thoughts and ways.

Such is the nature and objective of this discussion about pre-creation history and the roles the angels played in it. Take to heart what the eunuch told Philip in Acts 8:30, 31: “How can I [understand what I am reading] except some man should guide me?” Scripture *reveals* through the writing of Paul that God has called out men to whom He has made privy His “deep things” so that they may be able to teach others and bring them to spiritual maturity (see 1 Cor, 12:28; Eph. 4:11-16). Be aware that God does not simply zap you with a magic wand and make you wonderfully and miraculously spiritually mature. You must have a deep and abiding hunger and thirst for knowledge of His thoughts and ways (Matt. 5:6; 6:33). Study the following carefully

## The Creation

There are at least five places in scripture where the topic is about a “beginning”: Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3; Ephesians 1:1-14; Philippians 2:5-11 and 1 Peter 1:18-20. In this chapter, I want to focus on what led up to the creation in Genesis 1:1. God’s word provides some interesting information about the subject. Your task is to pay attention to what you are taught here and compare it to what the “wisdom of the world” teaches in contrast to it. In that exercise, you should be able to understand better the concept of *revelation*. Pay attention to the questions that are asked. The point of the questions is to provoke thoughts about what you are reading and thinking.

Does Genesis 1:1 refer to a dateless past, or to the verses that immediately follow? Because of the traditional teachings by so-called Creationists (religious people who make certain claims about when God pursued the action in Genesis 1:1) that it all began about *6,000 years* ago, this is a necessary question. You should contemplate it because of

what science has been able to demonstrate about *the great age of matter* itself and the universe in particular.

The “Big Bang” theory suggests that the explosion that caused our present universe occurred 13+ billion years ago – and the earth is a mere 4.5 billion years old. This would most certainly refer to a dateless past. We should understand, therefore, that the Bible record gives us some clues about *God’s revelation* relative to this dateless past.

Now read Genesis 1:2. How many times is the verb *was* used here? This term is translated from the Hebrew verb *hayah*, which means “to fall out, to come to pass, to become, to be.” This indicates, as science has absolutely demonstrated, that in the dateless past the earth has undergone some major cataclysms.

Properly translated, this verse would read: “And the earth became or came to be formless and empty; and darkness came to be upon the face of the deep.” For one reason or another, it appears that the original creation existing upon the earth was destroyed to the point that God covered it completely with water. This is not simply the author’s personal opinion; it is one also held by some who do not share the doctrinal positions of The Seventh Day Christian Assembly.

Dr. C. I. Scofield’s notes in his *King James Version Reference Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press; 1945) posit the following about Genesis 1:2:

*Jer. 4. 23-26, Isa. 24.1 and 45.18, clearly indicate that the earth had undergone a cataclysmic change as the result of divine judgment. The face of the earth bears everywhere the marks of such a catastrophe. There are not wanting intimations which connect it with a previous testing and fall of angels. See Ezek. 28. 12-15 and Isa. 14. 9-14, which certainly goes beyond the kings of Tyre and*

Babylon (Footnote #3 – original copyright: 1909; emphases added).

Let's see what some of these scriptures reveal about this verb.

Genesis 1:3 appears to be a *new beginning* after the earth *became* formless and empty – subjected to the judgment of God to lie in darkness and be covered with water. Such a *judgment* command of God does not imply an *original* creative act. The sense implied here is that the light was made visible by clearing away whatever obstructed it. One has to consider this from the perspective of the earth's surface looking up into space, not from the perspective of space looking down upon the earth. God simply did what He had to do to make the light visible upon the earth again. Now you might be asking from where the concept came that it was *under God's judgment*. Let's see what God's word says about it.

Read Isaiah 45:18. In what *original* condition did the Lord God create the earth? Pay attention to the expressions “not in vain” and “to be inhabited.” This directly relates back to Genesis 1:2 and its observation that the earth *became*, or *came to be*, without form and empty. The Hebrew term used for vain is *tohuw* – which means “formlessness.”

“Without form and void,” as used in Genesis 1:2, is an expression that links two Hebrew words together: *tohuw* and *bohuw*. In other words, the Lord God says here in Isaiah 45:18 that He did not *originally* create the earth in the condition of a formless, uninhabitable mass suspended in space. He made it to be inhabited by plant and animal life ... including mankind.

Now read Job 38:1-7. Why did the angels of God sing and shout for joy? Was this something they did *during* the creation process or at the *completion* of the process? I would suggest that it is both.

If the action taking place in the Orion nebula is any indication of the process God used in the original creation, then the original creation was a time-consuming, step-by-step, evolutionary process to get the heavens and earth properly formed for the future inhabitants – plant, animal, and human. That suggests the passage of millions of years while layer upon layer of the planets were spun into form and position. It was not the waving of a magic wand and scattering of spoofoom dust!

Let Reston explain the process:

If ... a knot of gas in a nebula becomes more dense than the material around it, the knot will start to collapse because its own gravitational force is greater than that of the surrounding material. As the clump continues to contract through self-gravitation, it becomes even more dense and its core heats up. When the center reaches a certain density and temperature, nuclear fusion begins. A star is born – a nuclear furnace of hydrogen and helium enveloped in a spinning cloud of gas and dust. ...When the nuclear furnace shuts off, gravity causes the star to collapse. The energy from this sudden contraction is released in a huge explosion, or supernova...” (*National Geographic*; p. 95).

Thus, Reston explains the process by which both star and planet are born. This is what he means when he says that “Stars are the source of all matter” (Ibid.; p. 94). The “Big Bang” theory suggests that just such a process began our present universe 13+ billion years ago. Scientists estimate that the earth itself, as a byproduct of this explosion, came into existence 4.5 billion years ago.

When God had all of the earth’s parts and natural laws in place and the finished product was filled with plant and animal life and was capable of supporting a human

population, the angels sang and shouted with joy because they had just witnessed the completion of one of the vital steps God deemed necessary for reproducing the God-kind: the creation of the heavens and earth – *the space designed to house the coming human inhabitants*. This is not to say that there was no rejoicing by the angels as each step of the process was completed ... as God took His measurements, stretched His lines for plumb and level, laid the foundations, fastened the foundations to the empty space, and set the cornerstone (Job 38-41).

The Darwin and Huxley schools of evolution cannot explain from where the hydrogen, helium, dust, and laws of gravity and nuclear fusion that governed the explosion necessary for the formation of the stars and planets came. They assume that *no intervening, divine source* was responsible. All of that just appeared out of nowhere, and time and chance took over from there!

Now read Jeremiah 4:23-26. In what condition did the Lord God behold the earth? “Without form and void”? Was this past, present, or future? Here the Lord God uses a *past* historical reference to prophesy a *future* event for Israel. *Whatever had been on the earth had met a cataclysmic end – apparently as an act of judgment by God*. He uses the same term *hayah* (was, came to be, became, etc.) that was used in Genesis 1:2. Israel faced a similar judgment for their sins.

Notice that He uses *future tense* references in v. 27ff: “The whole land shall be desolate; yet I will not make a full end.” He uses a reference to the past to demonstrate a coming reality. This is a prophecy. This kind of reference is also used in Isaiah 24:1: “Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty, and makes it waste, and turns it upside down, and scatters abroad the inhabitants thereof.”

This is a description of a cataclysmic event in which the earth not only becomes waste and empty – it is rocked with something like volcanic and earthquake activity, perhaps

even massive flooding that was like the great flood of Genesis 6-8 in which “all the fountains of the great deep [were] broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened” (Genesis 7:11). He has that kind of power to bring upon the earth such cataclysmic events!

If so, this was why “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” in Genesis 1:2 as God began to *reclaim* His creation from the pre-history destruction that is also shown in Genesis 1:2. We have no way of telling how long the earth was allowed to be *with form* and *habitable* before this cataclysmic event took place. Nor do we fully understand the various forms of plant and animal life that inhabited it *before* God’s judgment.

We have fossil records and can infer from them that there were beasts of great size that no longer exist, a variety of other animal life and vegetation that no longer exist, and *hominids* that no longer exist. Everything that then existed was totally destroyed, and the earth – *perhaps our entire solar system, too* – was, in effect, made formless and empty of life.

The fossil record *proves* they existed and died. Some cataclysms came so suddenly in some cases that animals that no longer exist died instantly where they stood, and the food they were eating was preserved in their mouths and stomachs. All of this is undeniable because we have the fossil record as evidence. Not only that, we also have evidence that was preserved in ice – evidence that shows woolly mammoths with green vegetation preserved in their mouths and stomachs. It would be foolish to argue that such evidence does not point to such a sudden, cataclysmic event.

## The Role of the Angels

Read Hebrews 1:4-14 very carefully. Was it *ever* God’s intention to bring the *angels* into the Elohim family as sons

and make them co-rulers with Him? What specific role were the angels to play in relationship to God's creation of mankind? I ask these questions because some claim that God offered sonship and co-rulership to the angels *first* ... that He created the heavens and earth as an inheritance for *them*. When one-third of them rebelled against Him, He then decided to create a *mortal* being (mankind) that He could execute if they rebelled against him in similar fashion. Your task, in the questions provided and comments made, is to determine if that is what God has revealed in scripture. If it is *not* His revelation, then your responsibility is to believe scripture, not the faulty assumptions of man.

Does 2 Peter 2:4 suggest that *a rebellion among the angelic forces* was a reason for God to act in judgment upon His creation – *before* mankind was created? Refer to Genesis 6:5-7 for an example of a similar judgment against *mankind's* sinfulness. You should pay attention to Peter's statement that the angels are capable of *sinning* against God and being *brought to judgment* for doing so.

What does Jude 6 mean that some angels did not "keep their *first* estate"? The *Revised Standard Version* translates this verse thusly: "And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling..." *The Jerusalem Bible* renders it: "Next let me remind you of the angels who had supreme authority but did not keep it and left their appointed sphere..." *Moffat* says: "...the angels who abandoned their own domain, instead of preserving their proper rank."

It is apparent that the angels in question were given some kind of responsibility in specific areas of the creation at that time. For some reason, they either refused to perform it, or they did something other than their assigned tasks as ministering spirits – perhaps perverting or adulterating the contents of their assignments during the pre-history process of creation to the degree that God found

it to be absolutely unsuitable for the crowning touch of His plan: the creation of *mankind*.

Whatever it was, God considered it to be so shockingly evil and diametrically opposed to His will that He destroyed the creation as it was at that time and reserved the angels involved to the “judgment of the great day” when all evil will be completely destroyed, as referred to by Peter and others. You can see in Revelation 12:4 that one-third of the angelic population was affected by this rebellion. In Revelation 12:7-9, you can see that *Lucifer*, whose name was changed to *the Satan*, was the leader.

We find some of the details of this pre-history in Isaiah 14:12-17. Satan’s original angelic name was *Lucifer*. Here, he is accused of insurrection against God and attempting a *coup d’état*. From various translations of v. 14, you can derive three possible motives for this rebellion:

- (1) He wanted to be *like* the Most High God.
- (2) He wanted to *rival* (be an equal or stronger opponent) the Most High God.
- (3) He wanted to *vanquish* the Most High God in order to *become* the Most High God.

Verse 15 shows God’s determination to utterly destroy him (see Rev. 20:10 – the expression “tormented for ever and ever” is *figurative language* denoting the irreversible finality of God’s decision to destroy him).

Many believe that angels cannot be destroyed because they are immortals. It would seem that Jesus Christ’s experience proves the contrary: He was a divine Being who became flesh and died the death of the human. If such a thing was possible for “God,” why is it not possible for an angel? If He wants to do so, God can easily remove the *immortality* of evil angels in order to destroy them.

God's threat in Isaiah 14:15 is to bring Lucifer "down to *hell*." The Hebrew word *sheowl* is like its Greek counterpart *Hades*. At the simplest level, it is a hole in the ground where the dead are buried. To that end, it is defined as "the world of the dead." It is **not** a place in the netherworld where shadowy phantoms of the dead exist in a state in which they are devoid of their senses. That is a *pagan* concept.

In scriptural reality, there is no difference between the death of an evil angel and the death of an evil human ... with the exception that the evil angel does not return to *dust*. It is simply destroyed and turned to *ashes*. None of the things of which it is made will exist anymore at all (see Mal. 4:1).

Ezekiel 28:12-19 appears at first to be a prophecy about the King of Tyre. It turns out to be a prophecy about the power that supports him: a powerful, adversarial angel. Nowhere in this prophecy does it name this powerful, beautiful, highly intelligent covering cherub.

Verse 13 gives us a clue by revealing that he was in the Garden of Eden, and v. 14 reveals that he was a covering cherub stationed at the very throne of God. He had intimate knowledge of Elohim, their plan for mankind, and their holy and righteous thoughts and ways. He was probably the companion of Michael and Gabriel – the other two archangels (powerful covering cherubim) named in scripture.

We know from Isaiah 14:12-17 that *Lucifer* became God's adversary. If we put the pieces together, we can reasonably conclude that Ezekiel 28:12-19 is about *Lucifer* and how/why he fell from God's grace. So, Ezekiel 28:12-19 is a historical account of *Lucifer* that parallels Isaiah's account. The Garden of Eden apparently did not exist prior to the Genesis 2 account (see v. 8), but we know that Lucifer was there. Ezekiel 28:16, 18 support my conclusion about Isaiah 14:15: This covering cherub will be *destroyed* by

being *burned to ashes* (see again Rev. 20:10 and Mal. 4:1). By that action, he will join the “world of the dead.”

This angelic covering cherub occupied a position (*estate*: Jude 6) of supreme authority over about one-third of the angelic forces (Rev. 12:4). Michael and Gabriel had similar ranks of angels under them. Jude 6 does not indicate which angels followed Lucifer in his rebellion – some could have been under Michael; some could have been under Gabriel. Some of Lucifer’s angels could have supported Michael and Gabriel. In total, one-third of all of the angels eventually followed Lucifer.

What was the reason for God’s judgment against him? Despite all of the advantages with which he was created (vv. 13-15), God eventually found *iniquity* in him (v. 15). There is no way to tell when he and the other angels were created in the vast eternity of the past, so there is no way to tell when this iniquity was found in him. This iniquity (vv. 15, 18) is, at its base, immoral, evil, perverse, unrighteous, and wicked.

What does the Lord God mean by the expressions “the multitude of your *merchandise*” (v. 16) and the “iniquity of your *traffick*” (v. 18)? The Hebrew term for both words is *rekullah*. It has to do with the business of bartering, buying, and selling: *peddling* (BDB; that is: going from place to place selling small articles).

This would suggest that Lucifer was so convinced that he could throw God off His throne that he *traded* positions, levels of authority, and/or parcels of the creation to at least one-third of the angelic population to get them to support him in his attempt to overthrow God. It is the same term used in v. 5 to describe how the prince (ruler) of Tyre became wealthy. Someone (Lucifer, no doubt) among these angels was profiting from the bargains made. Read Matthew 4:1-10 to understand how he operates.

Revelation 12:7-9 reveals that Lucifer/Satan is going to attempt a “last ditch” effort to overthrow God again in the

future. Ultimately, he will not be successful because Jesus Christ will stop him. We can see in Revelation 20:2, 3 that Jesus Christ will send a strong angel to capture him, bind him in chains, and put him into a bottomless pit in order to deny him access to mankind for 1,000 years.

Revelation 20:7-10 reveals that he will be loosed at the end of the 1,000 years and allowed to roam free among mankind again for a while ... the exact amount of time is not specified, but it will be short-lived. It is apparent that he will emerge from that dark, bottomless pit as determined as ever to pursue his conquest of God. However, his plot will be overthrown, his co-conspirators destroyed, and he will be thrown into the lake of fire to be burned to ashes (Ezek. 28:18, 19).

It is apparent that his original rebellion occurred before God created mankind as He wanted him to be. It is not clear if the numerous *hominids* that existed in the dateless past were God's *prototypes* ... or a product of the work of Lucifer and his cohorts trying to create a human in *their* image. It would be foolish to speculate about who created the varieties of dinosaurs and other animals that would have imperiled the existence of mankind.

It is clear, however – and science has postulated this very believably – that *none of those hominids exist in any shape, size, or description today*. They were completely wiped out, along with many other creations from that dateless past, by some unspecified cataclysmic occurrence that ultimately ended with the earth's surface being covered with water and our solar system being pockmarked from some struggle of gigantic proportions.

How many millions or billions of years passed between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 is anybody's guess, but the present creation (a *re-creation* of sorts) that is recorded from Genesis 1:2b and following is slightly less than 6,000 years old. What God decided to create in His own image and after His own likeness was *Homo sapien*. And,

according to Begley's article, *Homo sapien* was the recipient of the three genetic materials needed to give him "language, art, culture, and other products of higher intelligence," which combined about 5,800 years ago "just before people established the first cities in the Near East." She concluded her article by remarking: "Why all but *one* [hominid group] died out is a mystery" (Begley, p. 58; emphases added).

This exposition explains, in part, the great age of the earth, the great age of the fossils we have uncovered, the existence of various hominids (related or unrelated to *Homo sapiens*), the cataclysms that destroyed previous ages, and why God brought that dateless past into judgment. The biblical record of God's revelation is not inconsistent with much of what scientists have uncovered. It strongly opposes, however, the explanation of creation without a creator that is given by the Darwin and Huxley schools of evolution and perpetuated by most evolutionary scientists today.

### Review Questions

1. Genesis 1:1 – Which *beginning* is being spoken of here? Is it obvious that this refers to the beginning of the creation of our universe? Explain.
2. Does this verse refer to a dateless past, or to the verses that immediately follow?
3. Genesis 1:2 – How many times is the verb *was* used here? What does it mean? How would you interpret v. 2 based on that meaning?
4. Genesis 1:3 – Does this appear to be a new beginning after the earth became formless and empty – subjected to

the judgment of God to lie in darkness and be covered with water? Explain briefly

5. Isaiah 45:18 – In what condition did the Lord God create the earth? Pay attention to the expressions “not in vain” and “to be inhabited.”

6. Job 38:1-7 – Why did the angels of God sing and shout for joy? Speculate here: Was this something they did *during* the creation process or at the *completion* of the process?

7. Jeremiah 4:23-26 – In what condition did the Lord God behold the earth? “Without form and void”? Was this past, present, or future?

8. Hebrews 1:4-14 – Was it *ever* God’s intention to bring the angels into the Elohim family and make them co-rulers with Him? Which verses help you to form your answer? What specific role were the angels to play in relationship to God’s creation?

9. 2 Peter 2:4, 7-9 – Does a rebellion among the angelic forces suggest a reason for God to act in judgment upon His creation – perhaps *before* mankind was created? (Refer to Genesis 6:5-7 for an example.)

10. Jude 6 – What does Jude mean that some angels did not “keep their first estate”? What was their “first estate”?

11. Revelation 12:4 – How much of the angelic population was affected by this rebellion?

12. Revelation 12:7-9 – Who was the leader?

13. Isaiah 14:12-17 – What was Satan’s angelic name? Of what sin was he accused? What was his punishment then and in the future? To what do vv. 16, 17 refer?

14. Ezekiel 28:12-19 – Is this prophecy really about the King of Tyre – or, is it about the power behind him? Which clue helps you to answer this correctly?

15. Does this angelic covering cherub appear to have occupied a position (estate) of supreme authority? What was the reason for God’s judgment against him? Does this judgment include: (a) being deposed and (b) being destroyed? In what manner will he be destroyed?

16. What does the Lord God mean by the expressions “the multitude of your *merchandise*” (v. 16) and the “iniquity of your *traffick*” (v. 18)?

17. Revelation 12:7-9 – Is Lucifer/Satan going to attempt to overthrow God again in the future? Will he be successful? Who will stop him? What judgment is his rebellion expected to receive in the future (see Revelation 20:10)?

18. Explain the two possible reasons for the existence of previous varieties of hominids before *Homo sapien* finally appeared. In what way could this also apply to plant and animal life that would have imperiled the existence of *Homo sapien*?

19. Comment on any new perspective you now have about the existence of man. How has your new perspective helped you to understand what God is up to and why?



## Chapter Seven

# Mankind's God-Given Potential

**N**ow we will discuss David's comment in Psalm 8:39: "What is man, that you are mindful of him? And the son of man, that you visit him [with a friendly or hostile intent]?" Indeed! Why has God fixed His attention on this creature we call *Homo sapien*? Did He burn up millions of years just to adopt a dead-end project for Himself – merely to entertain Himself with His great power and creative skills? Or, was there some *great purpose* behind it all? We're going to take the short route to understand the answer.

Ephesians 1:4 tells us when humans were conceived of in the mind of God. "Before the foundation of the world" is an interesting expression. The Greek word for *world* is *kosmos*. Although it has several meanings, in this context it means that God conceived of this plan *before the creation of the orderly universe*. So, God revealed to Paul that, before that dateless past we considered, God – *Elohim* – decided to create *Homo sapiens* and do something with them in relationship to the Christ

### Adoption and Redemption

In v. 5, *predestined* simply means that God decided to do something *before* He actually did it. The intervening space of time between *concept* and *action* is of little consequence. What did He decide to do with mankind? The

expression “*adoption* of children” (Greek = *huiiothesia*) means that the human being is destined to be “*placed* as a child.”

This means that it was decided before the creation of the orderly universe that the individual who maintains a proper relationship with God through Jesus Christ (being holy, blameless, and loving) will be put into a position to become God’s very own child. It is a word denoting a *legal position* (see Rom. 8:14-17). This is a position granted *before* the *new birth* actually occurs. I will make this plain in the following discussion.

You can see the revelation of this plan in John 1:11-13 where it is said that Jesus Christ gives to those who receive Him the *power* (the ability) to become the sons of God. *Huiiothesia*, as used by Paul in Galatians 4:5 and Ephesians 1:5, is a descriptive term to assist us in understanding the *process* used by God to accomplish His great plan.

Read Ephesians 1:7. From v. 6, we know that we are made acceptable to the Father by Jesus Christ. In what way? By *redemption* through Christ’s blood. Jesus Christ became a blood sacrifice for mankind’s sins in order to reconcile sinful man to God (see v. 10; Phil. 2:10, 11; Col. 1:19-23; Heb. 10:5-14). How does the individual receive *redemption*? What does *redemption* mean? By God’s grace, which is unmerited pardon, God decided that man can receive forgiveness of his sins and obtain *redemption* “by the blood of Jesus Christ.” The Greek term translated *redemption* is *apolutrosis*, which means, in this context, “to release from *sin* and *finiteness*.”

In other words, God determined ahead of time that mankind would be created in His image. When the Lord God began the process in Genesis 1:26, 27, He made man a *temporary* being – out of the dirt clods of the earth (Gen. 2:7) – until such time as He should decide to complete

man's *evolution* from dirt clod to His own spirit composition.

Also, He anticipated that the human, having been created spiritually neutral and having been given the power of personal choice (what some refer to as free moral agency), could choose to be something other than “holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4). Sinful man would need to be *redeemed* – that is: “*released* from the consequence of sin and the restraint of finiteness” in order to move to the next level: *spirit composition of the God-kind*. So, release from the consequences of sin is not enough. Mankind must also be freed from *finiteness*: the condition of having determinable limits. The human is capable of only a certain level of ability and a certain length of life (Gen. 6:3).

Presently, mankind has a point in time at which s/he will die (Heb. 9:27). *Unless God provides a means by which s/he can live again, there is nothing in store for mankind beyond the grave.* That is one of the *limitations* of the flesh. We also cannot fly away at the speed of thought to distant lands or universes. We cannot live beneath the surface of water without an appropriate breathing apparatus. We cannot withstand great shock to our bodies ... loss of oxygen and loss of blood. We cannot bail out of airplanes at great heights without a parachute and crash to earth at terminal velocity (limbs outstretched = 122 mph; limbs tucked = 200 mph). So, *apolutrosis* also means “to be released from such earthly and physical limitations” (see Luke 21:28).

According to Ephesians 1:10, when will God’s plan come to completion? Will this affect only the human? The term *dispensation* comes from the Greek word *oikonomia*, which has to do with the management of a plan or program – as well as the *arrangement, order, and structure* of a plan or program. In this case, as stated in v. 9, it is plain that God

has allowed the true Christian to understand this mysterious plan He has had since the “beginning.”

The true Christian will understand that its completion will not come *when he dies*, but it will come to completion *in the future* under Jesus Christ “when the times [have] run their course to the end” (*The Jerusalem Bible*). Paul reiterates in v. 11 that God decided on this approach beforehand. In v. 13, he calls this “the message of the truth and the good news of your salvation” (Ibid.).

Read Matthew 24:13. The expression “the end” refers to the death of the individual and/or the time when Jesus Christ brings the things of which He has spoken to the end – whichever applies to the individual’s situation. In other words, Jesus Christ is laying out a *terminus point*.

According to Ephesians 1:13, what happens once a person has believed this “gospel” and accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Remember that one must repent of sin, be baptized, and have the laying on of hands for the receipt of the Holy Spirit (refer back to John 3:5 and Acts 2:38; 8:14-17). The completion of these acts “places” one as a child of God – in other words, it gives the individual all the rights and privileges of a natural born child, including the rights of inheritance (see Romans 8:14-17 and Galatians 3:26-29; 4:1-7). Consider the following comments with that in mind.

Those rights and privileges remain intact as long as the individual is “led by the Spirit of God” (Rom. 8:9-14). If he repudiates or reneges on his agreement with God, then he forfeits *forever* these rights and privileges (see Luke 9:57-62 and Hebrews 6:4-12; 10:26, 27). This is the sense of the term *adoption*. *Adoption* is a *legal process* that moves an individual from one family to another ... essentially erasing the former family association in favor of the proposed new family association. It essentially amounts to a “new birth” because the former family association will ultimately be erased.

That *new birth* will make the true Christian the naturalized (that is: change the identity) child of God (see 1 John 3:1-3 and Romans 8:18-25). Even though mankind is not conceived by a divine consort of God (a “wife”) and brought to birth in the spirit realm through such an action, they will have conferred upon them the legal status of “child of God.” That status erases all debts, legal problems, and former “family” relationships. They will have all of the rights and privileges of the natural-born child. To be a “joint heir” with Jesus Christ is the highest honor of sonship in all of creation (Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26-29).

In Ephesians 1:14, why does Paul call the gift of the Holy Spirit an *earnest*, or *down payment* (see also 2 Cor. 5:5 and 1 Cor. 13:9, 10)? How long will the true believer have only a partial payment of the Holy Spirit? An *earnest* is a deposit, a pledge or partial payment made to preserve an impending transaction until the entire price can/will be paid. It hints at a *conditional* situation under which certain conditions have to be met. In the sense of Paul’s discussion, there is a point in time in the future when the actions of v. 10 come together to “the end” – when the *terminus point* (goal; objective) of the plan of God is reached.

At that point, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will come into *full* force so that mankind’s sins can be *completely* and *forever* forgiven and wiped from God’s memory (see Isa. 65:17). At the same time, the “adopted” human being then can be released from the limitations of the flesh (and his/her former family relationship) by being changed from flesh to spirit.

In Romans 8:23, Paul calls the “adoption” the redemption of the body. That is the point at which the body is changed from flesh to spirit ... an action that can never be reversed because the individual will be totally holy, blameless, and loving as God is totally holy, blameless, and loving. Does this make clear the comment in Ephesians

1:10 about the *management* and *completion* of God's predetermined plan?

## The World to Come

Hebrews 2:5 reveals that God did not plan to put *angels* in charge of the *world to come*. Why? Refer back to Hebrews 1:5, 13 to remember His reasoning. Here, the word used for *world* is not *kosmos*; it is *oikoumene*. This is an interesting term because it generally means "the inhabited earth, the world, the whole inhabited earth, humankind." In this context, it has an extraordinary meaning: "the whole world so far as the living beings that inhabit it, which includes the realm of spirits."

This is extraordinary for two basic reasons:

1. To whomever the object of this rulership pertains, it will involve ruling over the inhabited earth.
2. It will also involve ruling over the spirit realm (see also 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3).

Remember Ephesians 1:10:

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in[to] one ["package"] all things in Christ, both [of] which are in *heaven* and which are on *earth*.

In Hebrews 2:6-8, Paul cites David's question from Psalm 8:4 about why God involves Himself with man. Why would He visit man for reward, affliction, or punishment? Read Hebrews 12:3-17 for additional insight. Pay attention to the pivotal verse 10: "That we might be partakers of His holiness." Compare that to Peter's comment in 2 Peter 1:3,

4. Both indicate that God's objective is to cause mankind to ultimately share in the *divine nature* of God. What is God up to regarding man?

In Genesis 1:26-30, what responsibility did God place upon mankind when He created him? This *dominion* refers to all of the things presently under the control of mankind. Why? Because mankind is destined to become part of the Elohim Family ... so, mankind will inherit with Jesus Christ any and all "territory" owned by the Elohim Family. The caveat in that plan is that mankind must learn to be holy, blameless, and loving (Eph. 1:4).

In Romans 1:18-32, Paul says that mankind has come under God's judgment because they have actually *suppressed* God's truth and impeded its distribution among mankind. Turning aside from God's truth, changing it into a lie, and eliminating knowledge of the true God from their minds and hearts has caused mankind to lose control over his God-given responsibility.

Romans 1:24, 26, 28 reveal God's reaction to this action by mankind. (Re-read Genesis 3:14-24.) The expressions "gave them up to/unto/over to" mean that God's judgment for mankind's failure has been to let the spiritual laws they have transgressed heap upon them the sad results of their sins. Mankind has had to suffer the awful consequences of his sins, which include sexual perversions, physical maladies, and social turmoil. So, at present, mankind has shown himself both unable and unworthy of bringing the world into subjection to God's way of life.

This will only be possible through Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3-4, 9-12), whom mankind has either generally despised (shown by their unwillingness to obey Him – see Matthew 7:21-23 and Luke 6:46) or not known at all (see 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4 and Revelation 12:9). Read the entirety of Romans 1:18-32 to get the complete picture that Paul is presenting here. One would be correct to question

mankind's motives, as well as his ability to rule at God's side in the world to come.

Does it appear from Hebrews 2:9-15 that Jesus Christ had to come in the form of a human in order to show us how to fulfill God's will and purpose? Of what is Jesus Christ the "captain" (v. 10)? *Captain* comes from the Greek word *archegos*, which is rich in meaning and significance. In this instance, it means that Jesus is the *founder* or *originator* of our salvation. It can just as easily mean that He is *the first of a series* that supplies the driving force for our salvation. The sense of this is also contained in the expression "*author* and *finisher* of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), as well as that contained in the expression "Alpha and Omega" (the beginning and the ending) in Revelation 1:8.

Consider this: Which human being has ever been born again from flesh to spirit? Most who believe in the immortality of the soul believe that the human is a spirit encased in a fleshly body. The automatic consequence of the death of the body is the release of the immortal soul to go to heaven or hell or wherever. We have seen that God's revelation does not agree with that. Here we see another "nail in the coffin" of that concept.

In Acts 26, Paul is defending himself before King Agrippa against the accusations of the Jews. He relates to Agrippa how he was converted on the road to Damascus through a confrontation with the resurrected Jesus Christ – and subsequently commissioned by Him to preach the revelation of God's true gospel.

In verse 22, he says that he is teaching nothing more than what Moses and other prophets taught. In verse 23, he reveals what they taught: "That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the *first* that should rise from the dead" (that is: the *first* of a *series*).

He reiterates that idea in his letter to the Corinthians when he says: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and

become the *firstfruits* of them that slept [that is, died]" (1 Corinthians 15:20). He repeats the idea of Christ being the *firstfruits* in verse 23 (read the entire discussion in 1 Corinthians 15:12-23). In other words, *Jesus Christ is the only human who has died and been recovered from death by a resurrection to spirit life*. True Christians from all ages back to Abel (see Hebrews 11), living and dead, will not experience that until the return of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:23, 50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 11:39, 40).

How did Jesus Christ become "perfect" (Heb. 2:10)? Philippians 2:5-11 indicates that the Word (Jesus Christ) emptied Himself of His spirit composition in order to become a human. He willingly became subject to death. Why? Read Hebrews 2:14-18:

(a) To destroy him that had the power of death (Satan the Devil – remember Satan's conversation with Eve in Genesis 3:1-7), and

(b) To deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Depending on the context, the term *perfect* means "to perfect [verb], accomplish, fulfill, complete, or become mature." In a religious sense, it means to be made holy by being fully cleansed of sin or cleansed from defilement. Although Jesus Christ did not commit any sin (see Hebrews 9:23-28), He still took part in the experience of the human to demonstrate that the human can be completely obedient to God. Becoming perfect through the sufferings He endured simply means that He became well-qualified to lead "many other sons unto glory."

He was, indeed, a *pioneer* in God's plan to create man in the exact image of God (see Hebrews 1:1-4). Although Jesus Christ has been elevated above the spirit composition of the

angels, mankind still is “a little lower than the angels.” Jesus Christ never had, nor ever took upon Himself, the nature of angels (Hebrews 2:17). Mankind is no different.

What does Paul mean in Hebrews 2:11 when he says that “He who sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one” (*KJV*)? The term *sanctify* means “to cleanse, make holy, or separate from defiled things.” As the author and finisher of our faith and salvation, He is the one who provides this ministry to those whom He and the Father have called out of the world (see John 6:44, 65; 15:14-16). But what does Paul mean that they “are all of *one*”?

According to several sources, it might be better translated “from one.” This indicates that those who are sanctified are all of *one origin*, thereby indicating that they are all of *one family*. It would not apply to our common ancestry from Adam – simply because not all of Adam’s descendants have been sanctified through Jesus Christ. Although we have reason to claim descent from Abraham, either by race or faith (see Galatians 3:26-29), that also does not fully answer the question in its ultimate sense.

John 1:12, 13 answers the question in its fullest and ultimate sense:

As many as received [Christ], to *them* [Christ] gave the power [Greek = *exousia*: the capacity, ability, privilege, freedom] to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on His name: which were born [begotten = the *father’s* action], not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but [by the will] of God (emphases added)

God’s revelation to mankind is that His will is for man to be born into the *family of God*. This is far more than just a spiritual relationship through a partial gift of “holy spirit.” This is an evolutionary leap – part of a *multi-stepped process* – whereby *Homo sapien* goes from being a

clod of dirt to being a powerful, eternally self-sustaining, spirit-composed being with full, individual identity. What a marvelous picture is presented to us when the Apostle John writes: "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, *we shall be like Him*" (1 John 3:2; emphases added). What a glorious, God-given potential!

Read Hebrews 2:3. What happens if we *ignore* God's revealed truth? How much do you want this? Matthew 5:6 indicates that one must actually hunger and thirst after God's righteousness. Matthew 6:33 says that we must put the Kingdom of God and God's righteousness first in our daily priorities. Both of these citations are from the mouth of Jesus Christ Himself. Now put that into the context of His statement in Matthew 4:4 – living by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

If you have any questions or need further clarification for any part of these lessons, please contact me at [tsdca@hughes.net](mailto:tsdca@hughes.net). You can now download, at no cost to you, our book *There's More to Salvation Than Meets the Eye* – an expanded discussion about the process of "salvation" as revealed in God's word.

## Review Questions

1. Ephesians 1:4 – When was the creation of humans conceived of in the mind of God?
2. Ephesians 1:5 – *Predestined* simply means that God decided to do something before He actually did it. What did He decide ahead of time to do with mankind? What does the term *adoption* mean (explain *huiiothesia*)?
3. Ephesians 1:7 – How does the individual receive *redemption*? What does *redemption* mean? (Explain *apolutrosis*.)

4. Ephesians 1:10 – When will God’s plan come to completion? Will this affect only the human? Explain.
5. Ephesians 1:13 – What happens once a person has believed this “gospel” and accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?
6. Ephesians 1:14 – Why does Paul call the gift of the Holy Spirit an *earnest*, or *down payment* (see also 2 Corinthians 5:5 and 1 Corinthians 13:9, 10)?
7. How long will the true believer have only a *partial* payment of the Holy Spirit?
8. How does this make clear Paul’s comment in Ephesians 1:10 about the *management* and *completion* of God’s predetermined plan?
9. Hebrews 2:5 – Did God plan to put angels in charge of the world to come? Why? (Refer back to Hebrews 1:5, 13.)
10. Hebrews 2:6-8 – Why does God involve Himself with man? Why would He visit man for reward, affliction, or punishment?
11. Genesis 1:26-30 – What responsibility did God place upon mankind when He created him? (This refers to all of the things presently under the control of mankind.) Why?
12. Romans 1:18-32 – What caused mankind to lose control over his responsibility?
13. Romans 1:24, 26, 28 – What was God’s response to mankind’s failure? (Re-read Genesis 3:14-24.)

14. Hebrews 2:9-15 – Explain why Jesus Christ had to come in the form of a human.

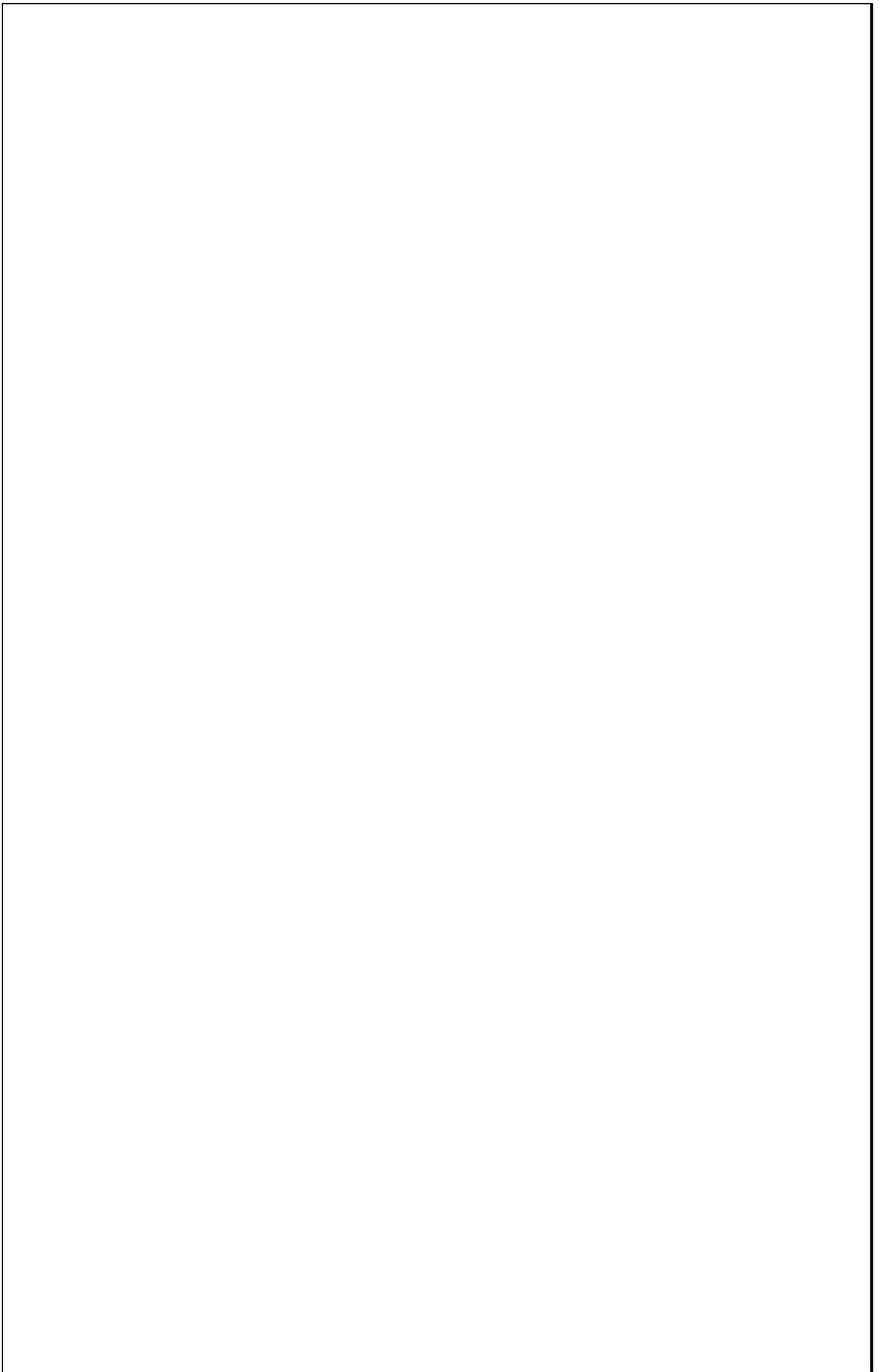
15. Hebrews 2:10 – Of what is Jesus Christ the “captain”? Explain the term “captain.” Include in your explanation the expression “author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2), as well as that contained in the expression “Alpha and Omega” (the beginning and the ending) in Revelation 1:8.

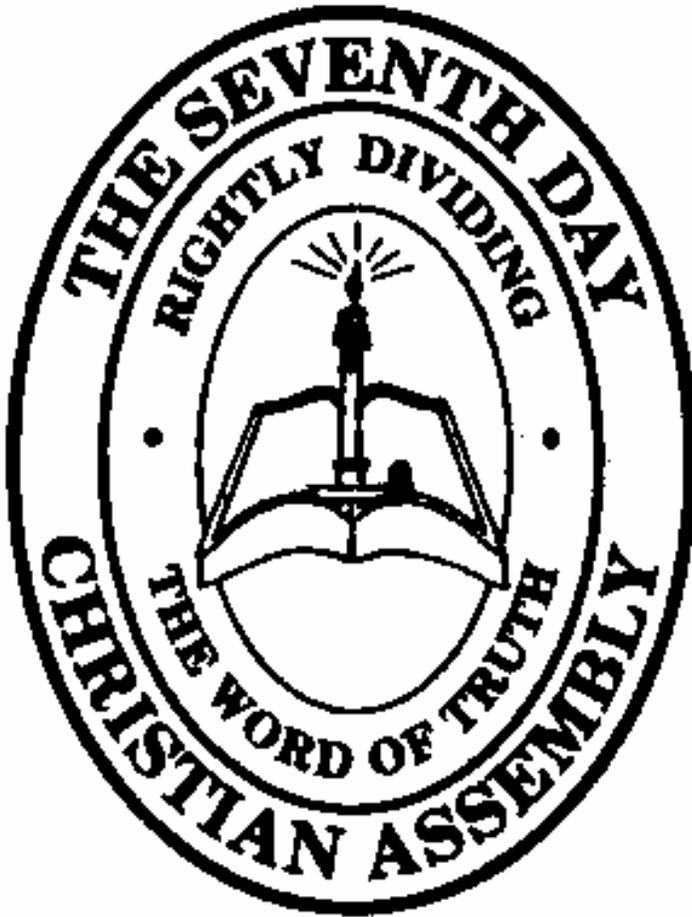
16. Verse 10 (continued) – How did Jesus Christ become “perfect”?

17. Verse 11 – What does Paul mean when he says that “He who sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one”?

18. Verse 3 – What happens if we ignore God’s revealed truth? How much do you want this? How are Matthew 5:6 and 6:33 included in this discussion?







## **Straight Talk ... Plain Truth**

**THIS BOOK IS NOT TO BE SOLD**

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