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John 8:32

Anachronisms

Right off the bat, I'd like to address just two concerns touching Christian worship and involving anachronisms. I suppose most of us are fairly adept at spotting *anachronisms* — things, concepts, and people misplaced in time — when we encounter them in pop culture:

“Hey! That Ferrari doesn't belong in the background of this sword-and-sandal flick!” But when it comes to vitally important issues like *Biblical worship and eschatology* (last-things doctrines), most people are oblivious to such glaring chronological errors. Allow me, then, to point out 2 anachronisms that prevail in (professing) Christian circles today;

1. The Bible clearly teaches that the *miraculous sign-gifts* were given by God to *mark* the hand-picked *Apostles* as the *authentic* Gospel-carriers in the *1st C., AD.* That generation was the most vulnerable; certification was crucial.

God still performs miracles today, of course, but there are no modern apostles; each and every sign-gift served a specific purpose (authentication) and was bestowed during the *foundational era* of the NT Church. When that era passed, the Church was given the inerrant, infallible and *immutable written* Word of God as an enduring witness. God left nothing out of that testimony that could have better informed us now.

2. We decry the use of modern music (sometimes) in our worship, but are you aware that your *hymns* were neither approved nor widely used until *1700 years beyond the apostles*? What did Christians sing throughout the ages? The Psalms, "**God's Hymnbook.**" Note well: there is *no Biblical warrant for composing man-made, uninspired songs to replace or even supplement the Spirit-breathed Psalms.*

To claim, "we've *always* sung the hymns, right from the beginning!" is to play

with history and truth. Where is the hymn composed by Matthew, John, Peter, Paul, another apostle, or Christ Himself, and in continuous use for 20 centuries? Nothing of the sort exists. Furthermore, consider these Biblical facts: Paul encouraged his fellow Christians to *speak* to one another (Eph. 5:19) and to *teach and admonish* one another (Col. 3:16) in “psalms and hymns and *spiritual* songs.” Then look at how the *inspired* Psalms are presented in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX). Each of the terms Paul used— psalm, hymn, or (spiritual) song—shows up as *the* title or *one of the 2 or 3* titles used in combination (see Psalm 76) for various Psalms. What’s the point? 1st C. Christians were intimately familiar with that Greek OT; it was quoted far more often than the Hebrew OT in the New Testament, including Paul’s letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. When he told them to share psalms-hymns-spiritual songs with each other

and to use them in worship, they knew what he was saying: turn to The Psalms! Once again, there is no NT command or even a hint for God's people to *write* new psalms-hymns-songs for the purpose of enhancing public corporate worship. God is not impressed with our uninspired hymns, no matter how beautiful and pious they may sound to us. We must worship God by His design, with *His* "hymn book," the 150 *God-directed* Psalms. So am *I* the one engaging in anachronism on this? No. Without a Scriptural warrant for new compositions to be used in God-pleasing worship, the proponents of man-made hymnody are the ones who are attempting to inject our current, unbiblical practice into our corporate Christian past. If you ever feel compelled to complain about the use of contemporary "praise and worship" music (in reality, it is neither), think again about your unwarranted use of hymns as well. Only God-approved worship is truly worship.

Biblical Basis

I will unashamedly and unreservedly state that the Bible - the perfect written record of God-spoken truth for all ages - is the ultimate and sole authority directing and governing all of my worldview decisions. As a woefully-fallible sinner myself, I know better than to trust any other fallible human teacher, one who is necessarily limited by time, space, and sin-impaired judgment, just as I am. We can't live without trusting fellow humans to a certain extent, but the Truth (John 14:6) delivers all *essential* truth to His people, and it's our eternal and spiritual lifeblood. In all things, as the Holy Spirit enables, I will trust Christ. Christ *is* — and always was — the Word of God. What God is and wills, and what He has spoken are embodied in Jesus Christ; hear *Him!* (Deut 18:15-22; Mt 17:1-8). The Bible, in turn, is the inerrant and infallible record of the testimony of and to

the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible is not God, but it perfectly reflects and communicates all that is true about God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To me, the biggest fool on earth is the *professing* Christian trying to live without a growing, sustaining knowledge of what the Bible teaches in every area of life. What are such persons thinking, if they're thinking at all? It's practical atheism, atheism in daily living and practice. If you're determined to sort everything out on your own, you're determined to fail, and to fail *eternally*. On the other hand, the *sane* way to go is also, to use an apparent oxymoron, *transcendently practical*. All I mean by that is this: in God's universe (make no mistake, it *is* God's universe), it makes zero sense to fight the holy, all-powerful King who is forever secure in His throne. And you, one who has less power than a gnat by comparison, *you (!)* are going to challenge Him?!? That's not only the height of arrogance, but of folly as well. Still,

that is the way of the ungodly (Psalm 1); in a word, *rebellion* against the authority of the Creator-King to whom we are all subject. The point here is that “Bible-believing Christian” should be seen as a *redundancy*, since no *true* Christian ignores or despises the Bible or fails to regularly be informed by it in decision-making. Again, the Bible is *God speaking* (understand that in the *present* tense if you wish, since God exists in what we might call “the eternal now,” and His Word is eternally true, past, present, and future: Isa 40:7; Heb 13:8).

Let’s back up for a moment. I’m not recommending turning to God merely out of fear for our skins because He is all-powerful and able to grant our thoughtless, suicidal wish to live apart from Him eternally (though *not* in comfort, by any stretch of the imagination!). Coming from the lips of Jesus, we know all of that is true (Luke 12:4-5) , but the nominal “Christian” who despises time spent

in learning the way and will of God despises God Himself, and that person will share the fate of the *known* ungodly. Such a person forfeits hope of salvation and drains his own lifeblood. He/she will go through this life in a fog and be led by evil hands into the eternal pit, from which there is no hope of rescue — *ever*. It is so obviously far, far better to receive The Word as our unerring guide through this life and into the next. If you want to know the truth, you must know The Truth Himself. To whom shall we go for the words of eternal life? Only to Him (John 6:68-69). Don't expect Him to come to you in a private dream, vision, or "word of knowledge." That, too, would be redundant and even *counter-productive*, since He has already been thoroughly revealed in the pages of the **unchanging Bible**. As the Holy Spirit leads us to understand the Holy Book that **He** ultimately authored in every part, we will find Christ and all essential guidance. "Gray areas" will disappear.

Christ: What He has done, and what He will not do

In its essence, *The Gospel* (Gal 1:6-9), expressed in 3 words or less is just this: **God saves sinners**. And this *is* just — *right* — according to the Creator-King-Sole Proprietor of the universe, the One who sets the rules and presides over all time and space. Within and between the triune Godhead — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — it was agreed that Jesus Christ, the Son, would be the only appointed Savior (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5-6). Jesus was not sent to save the already-righteous (there exists no such person, see Psalms 14 & 53, Rom 3:9-20); only repentant sinners “qualify” for the grace of God that saves (Luke 18:9-14), and that salvation comes only through the person and *completed* work of Christ. Now, professing Christian, do you believe that? Has Christ done all that is necessary to save sinners, including you

yourself? Think things through, and think them through *Biblically*. If Jesus has left something undone (to date), then neither you nor I nor anyone can say that we *are* saved, though we might still try to say — by a blind, groundless “faith” — that we are *being* saved. Let me explain that stark, shocking statement in clear terms. Please pay close attention, because this is crucial.

If Christ has not yet fulfilled *all* of the Bible’s prophecies concerning the conquering Messiah, we’ve all got some *huge*, unthinkable problems! If this is the case, then:

1. God the Son hasn’t done *all* that God the Father gave Him to do, even though He has been admitted back into Heaven to eternally share the throne with His Father when redemption had been *completely accomplished*,

His uniquely pure and righteous High-Priestly blood having been presented and accepted (read with the Spirit-enabled eyes of true faith: John 14, Heb 8-9; important to understand: if the only blood that can save has not yet been presented *and accepted*, Jesus has left this undone, and in disobedience to the Father, the lone mediator has failed! Unthinkable!)

2. If Jesus has *yet* to return in our day (or *beyond* even *our* day), *against* the NT testimony of every Spirit-inspired writer and Christ Jesus Himself, it can be claimed that God (Father-Son-Holy Spirit) has lied! Unthinkable! Yet this is what unbelievers quickly point to in order to discredit the Bible as inerrant truth and the Truth Himself (John 14:6, 8:32). This is also what is devastatingly effective in turning professing Christians into

apostates: “Jesus hasn’t returned when expected, so he was either ignorant or a deceiver, or both. I can’t believe what he says, therefore, about anything. I reject him.”

Note well: nearly every “Christian” “leader”/ “ministry” is teaching a ***non-biblical*** yet-future return of Jesus and the *end* of planet earth and/or time. Even when they get the *beginning* right, (*e.g.*, 6-day Creationist ministries), they blow it completely on the *time of the end* (Dan 12:4, 9 & ***The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants, things which must shortly take place...TO His servant John...the time is near*** (*ca.* AD 63, when the Son DID know the Day and the Hour —Mt 24:36—and informed those 7 Asian churches). Bottom lines: Christ saves only repentant sinners, and *has* done so; He will *not* save the self-righteous. Christ *has* returned (**THE *Parousia***, or “Second Coming”). He *won’t* come again because He doesn’t need to do so.

Connections

It occurs to me that I've assumed too much familiarity with the Old Testament *typology* on the part of most professing Christians. In the immediately previous essay, I pointed the reader to John 14 and Hebrews 8 & 9 in order to reinforce some Biblical teachings, namely;

1. Christ's *first* coming was for the stated purposes of *fulfilling the holy Law* of God (Mt 5:17) and the *entire will of the Father*, with which (the Father's will) He was in 100% agreement (along with the Holy Spirit); throughout John 14, Jesus made it abundantly clear that this complete unanimity in design, purpose, and means exists, and in verse 31, He flatly stated, "As the Father gave Me commandment, so I do." There's no wiggle room here: Father commands, Son does *all*.

2. Also in John 14, Jesus told His hand-picked 1st C. apostles just *why* He'd have to go away in the first place: to prepare places in His Father's house for them (v. 3). "That where I am [in Heaven, His Father's house], you may be *also*." In the same breath, He said that when He would return to *them* [context! original audience relevance! was He speaking directly to you in 21st C. Main Street, USA?], He would receive *them* to Himself. We see in this the purpose of His "Second Coming" (*not* a Biblical term, by the way, though *parousia*—Strong's NT Greek word #3952—*is*: Mt 24 (4 times); 1 & 2 Thes (7); James 5:7-8; 2 Peter (3); 1 Jn 2:28). With respect to His hearers, the Lord's purpose in returning would be to receive them into Heaven at the time of their full redemption.

But Christ had to first fully clear the way into the Holy Place — the way to the Father — by fulfilling every jot and tittle of the Old Covenant Law, and as the true High Priest and holy sacrifice that the entire Levitical priesthood prefigured, He had to go “inside the veil” of the Holy of Holies to present the spotless blood that He shed on behalf of all His people to the Father. Until the Father accepted that perfect one-time sacrifice, the high priests in the *earthly* temple (the one appointed by the Father as the only meeting place for this transaction, the temple in Jerusalem that hasn’t existed since AD 70) had to annually go behind the veil and *hope* that they’d done everything according to God’s command on the annual Day of Atonement (Lev 16). To err in any way would be fatal; the type-antitype link was at stake.

3. Hebrews (especially 6:11-12:28)

spells all of this out, hence the suggestion to readers of my previous essay. Then, putting together Heb 1:1 (in *these* last days) with 1:14 (for them who *shall* [Gr. *mello*, or “are *about to*”] *inherit salvation*, we can see that salvation/redemption was NOT yet complete when Hebrews was written. More than 30 years *beyond the cross*, the time had *not yet* arrived when the way into the Holy Place (the Father’s House) had been *opened* to those who would be received there by The Way (Jn 14:6). Circa AD 63, the everlasting kingdom (Dan 2:44, 7:14, 27; Luke 1:33; Eph 3:21; Heb 1:8, 12:28) had not yet been *consummated*, though it had been *initiated* 30+ years earlier. Do I have Bible for that? Of course!

—Luke 21:28: Jesus said that His immediate hearers (AD 30) should

be encouraged (“lift up your heads”) when *they’d* see the signs that led up to His coming (return), for it would mean that their *redemption* was *THEN* drawing near; if their redemption was not fully realized in AD 30 (at Christ’s death and resurrection), why would He who can **NOT** lie (Titus 1:2, Heb 6:18, Rev 3:14, several other places) say that it would still be “drawing nigh” at the time of His return (Parousia)? — The Spirit-inspired Apostle Paul, writing during the *transition period* between the covenants (AD 30-70) — [KEY CONCEPT ALERT!] — pointed to a close-but-not-yet fulfillment of the covenant of redemption and the consummation of the everlasting Kingdom of Christ as well:

Rom 8:23— “...even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting for** the adoption, *to wit*, **the redemption** of our body.” The Spirit didn’t correct him!

Rom 13:11-12— “for now is our **salvation nearer than when we believed**. The night is far spent, **the day is at hand...**” The Spirit let this stand, too.

Rom 16:20— “And the God of peace shall crush Satan under **your** feet **shortly**.” Satan’s power had not yet been destroyed (this was roughly 28 years after the Cross), but the end of his evil reign would occur *shortly*, so soon that Paul could tell his letter recipients that Satan would be crushed under *their* feet; some would survive to see that day. Again, the Holy Spirit — who can **NOT** lie nor permit a lie to be told in His holy name — let Paul’s statement stand.

So there’s some Bible for you on that. Many other passages could be cited, but for the sake of brevity in this short piece, I’ll point to Acts 28:31. Paul is said to be (still) “preaching the kingdom of God” in about AD 64. Why would he be preaching that it was still (then)

coming as a future (to *him*, and to *them*, his hearers) event that had not yet occurred? Well, because the crucifixion-death-burial-resurrection-ascension events didn't cap off/seal the redemptive process: Christ had yet to demonstrate — *emphatically!* — that His blood had indeed been accepted by the Father, the way into the Holy Place had been fully and forever established for all of the Lamb's brother-sheep, and that the deaths of the martyrs were indeed being avenged; God's wrath and justice had to be meted out.

This is what AD 66-70, the 3.5 year, 42-month, 1260-day period of Christ's one-time **Parousia** was all about! It was then that salvation came in its complete form to the faithful, and final judgment and everlasting destruction came to the faithless. The New Covenant Kingdom that was *replacing* the Old Covenant (Heb 8:13) and *being received* by the faithful (Heb 12:28) in around AD 63 was

fully and forever ushered in, only a few years later in AD 70.

This is why we in the past-in-fulfillment school of Bible prophecy (“preterists”) have to shake our heads in sorrowful amazement that any true Christian could even begin to think that the temple in Jerusalem should be rebuilt, the whole Levitical, type-and-shadow sacrificial system should be reinstated, and that it remains for the True Temple (the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, Rev 21:22) to deny all that’s been accomplished under the eternal covenant of redemption and “try again” to establish an *earthbound* throne. That is Christ-denying blasphemy, folks!

When are you going to get over yourselves and admit that God knows His Word and the future better than you do? When are you going to humble yourselves before the Lord of lords and the King of kings, the One who is perfect in

knowledge, and Who alone has the power to not only see into the future, but to control it?

If any modern “prophet” wants to impress me with his knowledge of the future, let him tell me — infallibly — what I will have for breakfast on a certain date that’s in my mind — a date that he’ll have to divine with his awesome powers of prognostication — and how many calories will be involved. Never mind the “end-times,” I just want to know about some pretty mundane things. Can you fill me in on those? You can’t? Then shut up and repent, false teacher and false prophet! Because here’s the point: God knows even the most mundane details about my life and *every* life, past, present, and future. You *truly...know* nothing. You and I can guess and wish and recklessly assume all we want, but unless we fear and respect The LORD, we can’t even begin to *actually* know (Prov 9:10). Wise up!

Challenge to the Churches

As you might have learned from your own life-experience, sometimes brutal honesty is necessary. Sometimes folks need to be shocked and shaken from lethargy and sleep, and jolted awake. Before it's too late. I hope it's not too late for anyone who happens upon this to benefit from what follows.

First things first. This challenge goes out only to those churches that profess to be Protestant/Baptist. I'm not speaking to the world-control cults that masquerade as God-fearing religions, by which I mean Islam, Eastern Orthodoxy, LDS (Mormons), and Roman Catholicism. "Christendom," like Mohammed-ism, is all about church-statism and not about Christ. True *Christianity* centers on the *lone mediator* of the new, everlasting covenant (1 Tim 2:5, Acts 4:12, Heb 12:24, 13:20), appointed by God the Father. There is no room in true *Biblical*

Christianity for another god (Isa 44:6), a sharer of His glory (Isa 42:8), or co-mediating savior (Isa 43:11). Romanists and “Orthodox,” Mary is not to be worshiped, no matter how you try to redefine the term to avoid the charge. Mary is in heaven, yes, by God’s grace in saving a sinner, but she is absolutely *not* the “Queen of Heaven.” Read her own words recorded in God’s Word: my spirit has rejoiced in *God...my...Savior* — Luke 1:47. And Mary’s being blessed *above all women*? Read Judges 5:24, where Deborah and Barak sang, “*Most blessed among women is Jael*” (the background story is in Judges 4:4-22). So what was said about the blessed virgin Mary — I agree with every word of *that*, but not her supposed *perpetual* virginity nor her supposed sinlessness and deity! — was also said about Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite: “most blessed among women.” Now Jael was not the mother of Jesus of Nazareth, but God saw fit to *confer* that honor upon another woman

who was in need of salvation as much as any other sinful human being. That's right, Mary was born in sin, the original sin of *Adam*, *her* many-generations-removed father. *Her* father was not God the Father, and *that's* why Jesus was not an inheritor of original sin, but Mary was. Jesus was *uniquely* conceived by God the Holy Spirit, Who proceeded from the Father; Mary was born of two *human* parents who were themselves conceived in sin *and* sin-committers, so the state of original sin passed to her from her *father*. The doctrine of Mary's "Immaculate Conception" falls apart instantly in this light. And if you insist on *her* sinlessness at birth, *her* mother had to have been born in sinless perfection, *her* mother, *etc.*, all the way back to Eve! Do you really want to argue with God and say that because you want to make Mary sinless, then *Eve* never actually sinned, and *Eve*, too, (and all those mothers in between her and Mary) lived a perfect life? Leaving aside all of this,

nowhere in Scripture is Mary cited as an exception to the chain of original sin inheritance (see Rom 1-5, where it should appear if that were true). And was she even a leader in the church? Nope. Hers was a role that remained in the background, and that by God's design as both the Author of Scripture (2 Peter 1:21) and man's salvation (Heb 5:9, 12:2). Christians should respect and love Mary as a fellow Christian, but she herself would be utterly horrified to hear that millions of deluded souls have regarded her as no less than God!

So before we turn to that challenge directed to Protestants, the simple message to Romanists, Orthodox, and Muslims (you'd be amazed at how many Muslims, too, are engaged in mariolatry): drop your idolatry. Stop worshiping unbiblical idol-gods of your own making or of another human's unfettered imagination. We all need to be tethered to The Word constantly. He is our only lifeline.

Okay, fellow “Protestants,” it’s your turn to get a dose of brutal honesty. You’re getting it from nobody special. I’ll freely admit that for several years now, I have not been a member of a visible church body. The specific reasons for that — my personal “odyssey” from the Missouri-Synod Lutheranism I was born into, to the PCA church I transferred into, to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America flock I intended to join but didn’t — could fill a book. I may yet write that book if God wills it, but right here and now, I think it’s irrelevant. My purpose in this essay is to call the attention of the visible Church at large to two elephants in the chapel, so to speak.

Unbudging elephant #1 is careless and false worship of the *true* God, which, though not considered by many to be idol-worship, is idolatry by God’s definition nonetheless (Second and *Fourth* Commandments of the ever-binding

moral Law of God, see Exodus 20 & 32; Leviticus 10, the “strange fire” episode of Nadab and Abihu; Uzziah’s crossing over into priestly privileges from his civil government position, 2 Chronicles 26, *etc.*). The fact is that there are *thousands* of denominations that differ primarily in worship practice distinctives, and each leadership group considers itself to be purer-than-thou on such matters. I get that; it’s human nature on display in the church sphere. On an individual level, I’m the same way: I think that my couple of decades’ worth of fairly intense personal theological study has brought me to a level of confidence in the truth of my convictions that just may be unjustified. I’m aware of that, too. The last thing I’d ever want to do is to set myself up as a Protestant “pope” in exile! [or *another* one, maybe?] I’m guessing that some of you self-described “dedicated churchmen” loathe the likes of me already. Perhaps you see me as someone who’s lobbying hand

grenades into the Church from the outside. And perhaps there's some resentment along these lines: "Hey, that's *our* prerogative to throw grenades at *each other!* But an *outsider?* No way!" [recall that I've spent much of my life in Reformed circles, eyes and ears open]. In order to clear things up for any reader of this essay, let me zero in on these facts concerning my perspective;

1. By God's *grace* alone, through His *bestowed gift of my faith* in *Jesus Christ alone*, I am a saved sinner. It is only because my salvation has been *won* by God the Son *for me* that I can have any assurance to say that. He did what I could never do, and He did it all in and to perfection, so **HIS** work on my behalf can't possibly be undone. *Sola deo gloria:* to Him alone belongs the glory! I belong to the *true, invisible* church because of *Him*.

2. Because Christ (only) is the Head of His own church, *you* (church official or congregant) can't keep me out of it for your own reasons. Yes, you can bar me from membership or impose conditions that effectively turn me away from your *visible* church body, but *Christ* has paid for my membership in the true Israel of God (Gal 6:16, 3:24) and the congregation of Heaven with His precious blood *AND* His imputed righteousness (Rom 4:5-8).
3. I would love to join a Biblically-faithful congregation, enjoy the fellowship, and actively contribute to it in every possible way. Here's the problem: which denomination lines up closest with the perfect and unchanging Bible regarding the *preaching* of the *whole counsel* of God, church government, ordinances, and God-pleasing worship practice?

Believe it or not, I can offer a fairly objective answer to that question. I've already revealed that I'm not a member of any local church, so when I say that I think the RP's have got it right — the Reformed Presbyterians who sing only God's inspired Psalms when worshiping Him — it's not an advertisement. In the interest of full disclosure, minus some distracting details, I'll say that I could easily have been writing today as a member in good standing of a Seattle RPCNA church. They'd received my approved transfer of membership from a PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) flock, which I'd left on good terms, though I'd come to reject their use of uninspired hymns and musical instruments in worship and observance of manmade "holy days" (Christ-mass and Easter). [two ironies: just months before, I'd paid for 100+ Trinity Hymnals, and the previous December, my height was put to use in decorating the chapel! minds can change — even *quickly*]

The *lone* obstacle that prevented me from joining that RP church was this: I was honest enough to say to the pastor in one-on-one discussions that I was becoming increasingly convinced that the most God-honoring eschatological (“last things”) position was that of the *preterists*. And — this may not be an accurate assessment, but I’ll put it out there for consideration — when I referred to *J. Stuart Russell*, author of the 19th C. book, *The Parousia*, he immediately associated *J.S.* with the Jehovah’s Witness founder, *Charles Taze Russell*, and I think that association never fully left his mind. From that point on, throughout our exchanges in person and via email, I could see that the wall of resistance was being built, and membership could be available, but only with this non-negotiable (and verbally expressed) qualifying condition: I could not (ever) express my views on eschatology, since I was “not necessarily” a heretic, but I *was* definitely “in error.” This pastor

was looking out for his flock, as well he should, and I understand that. From copies of some of our emails that have survived, I can relive the sting of his assertions that I would be a “disruptive” influence on the other sheep, and when I offered that I was only interested in taking my Commander at His word in *all* things, he asked, “Has he commanded you to be disruptive?” Well, that was it. Message received and noted. I shan’t darken your doors anymore.

Which brings us to **unbudging elephant #2**: There are pastors and teachers and even whole congregations, synods, and denominations holding to each and every possible (and frankly, *impossible*) view of eschatology within Christianity. You’ll be able to find a well-known public champion for your own view. *Unless* it’s preterism. I can almost hear many a reader say at this point, “Well, yeah, there’s a reason for that!” To which I reply, “But no *Bible-supported* reason!”

My Open Challenge to All Futurist (non- “Full” or Consistent Preterist) Pastors, Teachers and Promoters

Show me, from the Bible alone, that:

1. Jesus Christ did *not* teach that His return in the glory of His Father, with His angels, for judgment and deliverance would occur before all of the people He personally spoke to during His earthly ministry would be dead. In other words, explain to me how I’m misunderstanding Mt 16:27-28; Mark 8:38-9:1; Luke 9:26-27; Mt 10:22-23; John 14:3 (He would not *return* to *them*, but to *us*, who live 1985 years in the future, and who have never seen Him?); Luke 18:6-8 (He still hasn’t avenged His own elect “*speedily?*”); Luke 19:11-27 (the Master *didn’t* return to the same servants, but to their great-great-great (50x great-) grandsons? And He rewarded and punished *them* for their ancient *ancestors’* responses to His commands? Isn’t it

rather obvious that the same people to whom the commands were given are the same people to whom the Master returned for judgment? Show me how I got that wrong, or that this parable *doesn't* relate to the return of The Master); same deal with Luke 20:9-19 (I'm applying that wrong, too? It had nothing to do with the evil leaders in Jerusalem in the 1st C. AD? Really? The Bible says that those scribes and pharisees "*knew* He had spoken this parable against them"); Rev 1 & 22 (undoubtedly now aware of even the "day and hour" of His return, Jesus Christ Himself revealed through His angel TO John that He would be coming *quickly*, all of the events described were *near, at hand, and must shortly* take place, and once again, He testified, "SURELY, I am coming *quickly*," Rev 22:20). I could go on for hours, but until some faithful student of Christ can show me how an alternative interpretation of His words *in each case cited* makes more sense, I won't budge.

2. (Show me from the Bible alone that...)
Jesus and *EVERY* Holy Spirit-led New Testament writer either a) did NOT expect the events of the “time of the end” (of the *age*) to occur within a generation (about 40 years in Biblical terms), or that b) they were *off by 1945 years and counting!* (caution! keep John 16:33 in mind when formulating your answer; also the fact that the Holy Spirit — God — can **NOT** lie, Titus 1:2). Those are the parameters; those are the treacherous waters which you must successfully navigate: Either Jesus was ignorant and mistaken in his [<note: *no caps*] own understanding and/or failed to communicate to his disciples what was true, or a man claiming to be the Son of God spun deliberate falsehoods, and could not have been God. I don't see how any true Christian can even imply that Jesus talked right past His own hand-picked disciples or right past His own generation of sinners in desperate need of the one true hope, deceiving them all.

3. Along the same lines, show me from the Bible alone that Christ *ignored* His own church-in-the-cradle (in the 1st C. AD), when newborn believers faced persecution and death from not only the Jews — always — but also from the ruling Romans (especially AD 63-68 under Nero). Convince me that all of the promises about avenging *them*, the *most-persecuted generation of believers*, were just empty rhetoric, and that all those promises really were meant to apply to some future generation, and that generation is *ours* (or not; who knows? maybe the Lord will “tarry” even longer than 1945 years past AD 70, despite what has been written in Heb 10:37). Be careful here, too. If Jesus offered *false hope* to his contemporaries — I mean that’s what they understood him to say, and he let them go on in false hope — we must realize that this man who claimed to be the I AM (God) was not God, not the Christ-Messiah sent from God, and just another lying sinner. If

one believes something to be true and then says something that doesn't align with that belief/knowledge, deception is occurring; deception proceeds from a deceiver. No matter how intentional or professedly *unintentional* the deception is, deception *is* going on, and it *is* harmful to someone in the end. But God is above *all* falsehood (see Psalm 119, Num 23:19, 1 Sam 15:29, Titus 1:2, Heb 6:18, Rev 3:14). Just one deceptive statement that runs counter to what is known by the speaker marks a person as a liar, and immediately disqualifies him as God. The point is obvious: you just can't have a "savior" who ever told a lie because that person is a sinner in need of salvation, too, by someone who *is* sinless, who never lies. If Jesus of Nazareth deceived the people of his generation by telling them that either the end-times prophecies didn't apply to them, but to a far-far-*far* distant generation, or that the promises of hope *did* apply to them, when he thought otherwise, he

disqualified himself as the sinless savior of anyone. If you intend to prove to me that we can still *trust* in a known *deceiver*, I must ask you what drug is clouding your thinking! And it simply isn't good enough nor is it true to contend that Jesus "often spoke in parables to His disciples" or "often left them in the dark" (as if there's a connection between His teaching methods and the deliberate misleading of an entire generation, believers and unbelievers alike). Not so, on either count! He spoke in parables to the unbelieving goats, but not to His own sheep (READ: Mt 13:10-17). In case anyone is still missing the point, here's my overkill punch: the Christ (Anointed One/Messiah) can only be the Savior of *anyone* if He is sinless — always and forever, not one sin on His record. If He *ever* spoke incorrectly about *anything*, He proved to be just another "he" (lower case), and ALL of us are without a savior. I really think the skeptics get this better than Christians.

4. This is sort of the “flip side” of point #3, or maybe a corollary: Show me from Scripture alone that the generation that Jesus had in mind when He used the terms, “THIS generation” and “THIS evil/wicked/adulterous/sinful/perverse/faithless generation” was *our own* generation *or one to follow*. Here are the places in God’s Word that I’ve just got dead cold wrong, according to you, the futurist: Mt 11, 12, 16, 17, 23, 24; Mark 8, 9, 13; Luke 7, 9, 11, 17, 21 (you can throw in Peter’s “Be saved from THIS perverse generation,” Acts 2:40; warning: consider to whom *he* was speaking concerning how *they* crucified Jesus (v. 36); did *we* crucify Jesus only just recently? [I mean other than in the “mass” of the Romanists, and in a literal sense]). Once again, I await your thorough refutation of our preterist interpretation of each and every one of these passages, and your thoroughly convincing alternative explanation that absolutely links all of these references to our own era.

5. [It's always 5 points with Calvinists, isn't it?] Show me from the Bible alone that....or, "Sum up *your* eschatology that trumps preterism, using only Scripture."

In this part of the challenge, he who takes up the challenge must know that if you were to add up the combined weight of opinion, trustworthiness, and integrity of Hal Lindsey, Harold Camping, Jack Van Impe, Billy Graham, John Hagee, Mike Evans, Chuck Missler, and every other "Christian" Zionist, Dispensationist, or end-of-the-world-obsessed false prophet of any stripe, on *my* scale, it wouldn't even register. I won't mince words here. Some will caution me to be more charitable towards such men, seeing as how they're my "Christian brothers," and "respected teachers" to boot! Baloney! In this, too, I will follow Jesus. He said in Mt 12:50, "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." I don't see where any of the above-named

demonstrably-false teachers and well-documented false prophets are doing the will of the Father, so I do NOT consider them to be my brothers. In fact, all of the evidence points in another direction entirely. What, after all, can be in a man's heart when he sees fit to churn out one false prophecy after another, or one supposedly biblical template to impose *on* Scripture after another? It almost makes us wish that just *one* element of the Mosaic Law could be brought back to make just *one* prominent example of one of these false prophets of our time (see Deut 13 if you're not picking up on my sarcasm).

One important disclaimer is necessary before we proceed: Anyone who trusts *solely* in Jesus Christ as BOTH Lord and Savior, is indeed my brother in Christ, *regardless* of his eschatology. That must remain clear. Correct eschatology will save nobody; only the person and work of Christ can and does save anyone.

Even brothers in the Lord who try to write us (preterists) off as heretics, usually employing the “hyper-preterist” tag in order to marginalize those of us who are *consistent* in our preterism, while they try to trademark their *partial*-preterism as the official eschatology of the Bible, must be considered to be true brothers *by us*; at least by those of us who *are* trusting in Christ alone. The preterist camp has at least its share of Christians-in-name-only and false teachers, just like futurists do (including “partial-preterists”). In particular, I want to caution against (consciously) Arminian people (who think they’ve regenerated themselves to true faith or rely on the power of their own free will to gain heaven), collective-body resurrection teachers or “heaven now” adherents (who deny that the Resurrection out of Sheol/Hades at the Parousia involved *individuals*, and/or deny that every person is ultimately headed to a literal and eternal afterlife in either Heaven or Hell.

The Challenge: Two-Page Treatment

In order to be *Biblical* and *therefore* valid, any proposed eschatology must:

1. Preserve the absolute integrity and holiness of Christ, else none of us has a savior in your scheme.
2. Demonstrate trust in the Word of God at all points, considering context, original audience relevance, original author intent, literary genre, and compatibility with the themes of all Scripture.
3. Satisfactorily explain Mt 24:34 & Luke 21:22, 32; accurately define what exactly comes under the headings, “all these things” and “all things which are written,” as well as “these be/are the days of vengeance” and “THIS generation.”
4. NOT import or impose any ideas foreign to the Word of God, or any anachronisms that muddle the Biblical picture (*i.e.*, it can't

force-feed the modern world into the ancient, the 21st C. scenario into the 1st C. scenario, or America into Judea; how does Mt 24:16 read? “Then let those who are in JUDEA flee to the mountains” or “Then let those in Flat Prairie, Kansas, USA, flee to the mountains”?) [what mountains? what housetops, v. 17, are folks supposed to use to make their way out of town, jumping from one to another, as they *could* do in ancient Jerusalem? historical context, people!].

5. Bow before the triune, ever-truthful God in unreserved acknowledgment of His omniscience, omnipotence, and worthiness of all glory and honor. For He who knows all things has declared immutable truth, and what He has revealed to us is sufficient and complete, according to His holy will (Deut 29:29; Rev 22:18). Amen!

Everyday Errors in Eschatology

As that consistently faithful and Reformed teacher of *Biblical* eschatology, Ed Stevens, has so often correctly said, “Eschatology *is* soteriology.” Put another way, your doctrine of “last things” is intimately linked to your doctrine of salvation, *informing* it and even *driving* it to a great degree. Diced further into practical small bites, we might say, “What you believe about the “last things” has *very much to do* with what you’ll come to believe about salvation.” This is, as the Lutheran catechism famously says, “most certainly true,” a fact proven by the plethora of *false* “gospel” teachings that really have little to do with the whole-counsel-of-God teachings (**Gal 1:6-9 & Acts 20:27**) actually found in the Bible. I’m referring to those erroneous alternative non-gospels that often had their origins in fatally-flawed alternative eschatologies: dispensationalism and “Christian” Zionism, to

name just two of the most widespread mass-deceptions, both of which attempt to *reinstate* the *types-and-shadows economy* of the *pre-Christ* incarnate centuries. Along with the unbelieving Jews, these “Christian” *unbelievers* are *still* looking for the Messiah to come down to Jerusalem to sit on an earthbound, *physical* throne, *against* the Biblical testimony in Luke 17:20-21, John 18:36, Rom 14:17, *etc.* Such blasphemous *soteriology* is the result, as night follows day, of unbiblical *eschatological* schemes imposed on Scripture by undiscerning mere men, their every judgment soaking in sin; they’re unable to rise above it.

As a layman servant of the living and *now-and-forevermore reigning Christ*, I *plead* with all you who presume to teach (be admonished by James 3:1), who have taken on the awesome responsibility of teaching God’s truth, in its *entirety*, and *without alteration* (Deut 4:2, 12:32; Prov 30:5-6; Rev 22:18-19), to do just that.

Drawn from the Word of God, when read and studied with discernment, here are some hints on how to preach about the last things. In this essay — which I'd like to keep short, leaving thought-expansion for other works (Lord willing) — *4 basic hints* will only be *listed* here:

1. When God says “When,” THAT determines and defines the fixed, ***Biblical timetable*** for that prophecy's fulfillment (Isa 46:10);
2. When God says “What,” THAT determines and defines what is to take place at the fixed Biblical coordinates of time and place. Only Almighty God, in His exclusive saving power and grace and perfect omniscience, can determine the **nature** of any prophetic fulfillment, and He will unfailingly bring it to pass (Isa 46:10-11, and see the Holy Spirit's prompting of Peter in Acts 2:16 to pronounce the *fulfillment* of that spoken by the prophet Joel);

3. Always, always, *always* keep in mind the closely-related concepts of *original audience relevance* and what the speaker/author intended to communicate: to **WHOM** was the inspired apostle (including Christ, the *First* and *Chief* Apostle) speaking or writing, and **FOR WHAT PURPOSE** (God's Word will not return to Him void, without the intended results: Isa 55:11; neither has He any need to self-validate himself as someone who happens to "know" a thing or two that everyone else has missed [*ahem!* I'm thinking quite unfavorably now of a *ton* of false teachers; *Here's* today's headlines for ya: THE BIBLICAL EPISTLES (LETTERS) WERE *NOT* WRITTEN TO YOU!, and GOD DOES *NOT* REVEAL DIRECTLY TO YOU *NEW* THINGS HE HASN'T REVEALED IN HIS COMPLETE WRITTEN WORD!]

4. Preach the unvarnished truth that Hades/Sheol *has* been emptied, and the way to Heaven *has* been secured!

Eden to Eden

“In the beginning” (Gen 1-3), there was the original Eden, *planted by God* (2:8), Paradise *on earth*. God made the first man, Adam, the head of the **ONE race** of human beings. Our common ancestral head began with a “clean slate.” He was created in a state of *original righteousness* (without sin of any kind). While in that perfect state, in a sinless paradise, our God-appointed representative had unaffected free will to choose either to obey or disobey — to choose good or evil — and God gave him a probationary-period test on that basis. Had Adam successfully passed the test for as long as it was in force, we may assume from what the Bible relates that he, Eve, and all of their posterity (that would’ve included you and me) would live without end *on earth* in perfect happiness. Act II : enter *Original Sin*, in direct opposition to original righteousness: Adam, and all humanity *through* him, were plunged into

a perpetual environment of ever-present sin. Each and every father since then (including Adam, who'd forfeited his original righteousness by his disobedience) has passed that *original sin* on to any offspring ("original" in the senses of being the *first* sin, and in *every origination/conception* of new human life; see Romans 5). ONLY Jesus, the absolutely unique *seed of the woman* (3:15), who was conceived in human form *by God* (Luke 1:35), has ever escaped the automatic curse of original sin, and *Jesus alone* has retained a *perfect, untainted free will*. [to say that man, "DEAD in trespasses and sin" (Eph 2:1, 4:18), *still* has the ability to raise himself and choose ultimate good over ultimate evil — *on his own*, without first being made alive (regenerated), is unbiblical heresy; therefore, Arminianism must be rejected without apology; equally offensive is the notion that *Mary* escaped original sin ("Immaculate Conception"), so Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy

must also be jettisoned on this basis]. So the first *physical* and historical Eden has passed out of existence, *never to be restored*. Stop looking for Paradise on earth! That's what every Utopia-pusher *promises* (almost always government-by-elite, government-as-god socialists), and what *nobody* can *ever* deliver. When God kicked Adam and Eve out of that garden, He kicked us *all* out...*forever*.

But God promised AND delivered to all of the faithful in all times, something infinitely better, entirely by His grace: the second, *eternal* Eden, the Father's own abode, **Heaven**. Since AD 70, when the place of departed spirits — Sheol (Heb.)/Hades (Gr.) — had been emptied by the Resurrection of “the dead ones” out of that two-compartment realm (Luke 16:19-31), from AD 66 to late summer, AD 70, Heaven became the *immediate destination* for all who are trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Sheol/Hades is out of business, tossed

metaphorically into the “lake of fire” (Rev 20). It’s crucial for any professing Christian today to understand that Sheol/Hades *was* where all disembodied spirits were held, on either the “pre-Hell” side where the rich man *already* experienced unrelenting torment, or the “pre-Heaven” side, also known as “Abraham’s Bosom” or “Paradise” — to which Christ Himself referred, Luke 23:43. When Jesus was “in the grave” for 3 days, His spirit was in Sheol/Hades/Abraham’s Bosom/Paradise (which leads to a possible interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19). Even *He* didn’t bypass that “holding area.” And until He fully and finally opened access to Heaven with His Parousia (AD 66-70), entailing the Resurrection of/out of the dead (the Bible *never* uses the phrase, “resurrection of the *body*”); deliverance for the living faithful (1 Thes 4:15-17, 1 Cor 15:50-56); the “Great White Throne” Judgment (Dan 12:2; Mt 25; Rev 20); and the final discarding of the Jewish, Old Testament

temple-sacrifice system as outmoded and irrelevant (now that Christ fulfilled all that pre-figured Him as *THE* Temple and *THE* High Priest), all believers went to Sheol/Hades, and NOT to Heaven (excepting *Biblically* only Enoch and Elijah). Yet, what do so many offer at the funeral or graveside of a “dear departed” professed believer? Quite dishonestly, they give the surviving loved ones one of two *false* hopes, false *if* Christ *hasn't* returned, and Sheol/Hades is still in operation: either he/she is *in Heaven* as we speak (couldn't be true if Hades was still the preliminary stop), or that on some still-future “last day,” the very same atoms of the deceased body will be *reconstituted* and raised to Heaven, reuniting body and soul. Sorry, but you can't have it both ways!

Consider well what is taught by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul in that most-explicit Resurrection-themed passage, **1 Cor 15**. Are believers promised

to get *their* old physical bodies back, atom-for-atom, in the same way that Christ did? Be careful! *ONLY* the physical body of Christ did *NOT* see corruption (**Psa 16**), since *only His* body was untainted by either original or personal sin. Nothing that's corrupted or corruptible will ever pass into Heaven. What is required for admission *to* — and life *in* — Heaven is the *UN* corrupted and the *IN* corruptible; **ONLY A NEW, SPIRITUAL BODY SUITABLE FOR HEAVENLY EXISTENCE WILL DO, AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT'S PROMISED TO THE BELIEVER: 1 Cor 15:35-54.** Either tell the truth that you're saying one thing while believing the contrary, or *much, much better*, tell **THIS** Biblical truth: Christ **HAS** returned, **HAS** put Sheol/Hades out of business, **HAS** conquered Death, the "final enemy" (1 Cor 15:20-58), and **HAS** secured entrance into the Eternal Eden for all of those who are in Him, *immediately* upon leaving this sin-soaked existence for that sin-free afterlife. Tell *that* truth!

Jesus is Jehovah

“Jehovah” and “Yahweh” are English transliterations of the Hebrew sacred *tetragrammaton*, rendered as JHVH or YHVH/YHWH, the name of God thought by some of the ancient Hebrews to be too holy to ever be uttered. Whether this grew out of true piety or if it was just another man-made superstition is not at issue here. Neither is the issue at hand that secondary controversy over *which* of the two, *Jehovah* or *Yahweh* — if either one — is closest to the actual pronunciation of “**The Name**” that was eventually “banned” (it wasn’t always so). Many scholars contend that *Jehovah* is a *mistaken* Latinized-English transliteration that *misread* vowels and additional consonants *into* the four-letter Hebrew form; that *Yahweh* is closer to the mark, than *Jehovah*. Other scholars defend the opposite side, and, as usual, there is a third camp, where proponents hold out for the *tri-syllabic* *Yahuwah*.

We're going to avoid those deep woods so that we can get right to the central point: the Bible teaches that Jesus *is* Jehovah-Yahweh.

[note on attribution: more than any other individual, I am indebted to Dr. James R. White for this particular line of thought and direct Biblical proof; we definitely disagree on eschatology and some worship practices, but we're Reformed brothers *in Christ* just the same]

Exhibit A: Compare **Phil 2:9-11** and **Isa 45:23**. On the NT side (Phil 2), we read that God (the Father) has highly exalted His son Jesus, and has given Him the *name [title] above every name*, so that *at the name of Jesus* (the title, *Lord*), *every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ IS Lord*...In essence: Jesus, the Anointed One/The Messiah *IS* Jehovah God. All the knees and all the tongues are acknowledging Jesus as *THE LORD, THE KING, Jehovah/Yahweh. God.*

Now look at the OT roots of this passage by turning to **Isa 45:18-23**, with emphasis on verse 23. The speaker (through the prophet Isaiah) is “the **LORD**” — that is, **YHWH**, Jehovah/Yahweh — v. 18 and in the following context. In v. 23, Who is speaking? It still is the LORD/YHWH/Jehovah/Yahweh, and He says, “To **ME** every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear [confess].” So what do we have here? Are the Father and Jesus in competition for glory? Is that what this passage teaches? No way! We know better from the same two books, in **Phil 2:6 & 11** and **Isa 42:8**, that Christ Jesus is *equal* with God the Father; that He glorifies the Father when *He* is glorified Himself by all those knees and tongues; and there is no God besides The LORD, Who does not share His glory with another. Even if we had nothing else as proof, a comparison of these two representative texts of both the Old and the New Testaments click the connections together seamlessly: Jesus=The LORD=Jehovah.

Exhibit B: Compare **Heb 1:6-11** (NT) and **Psa 102:25-27** (OT). In the 6th verse of Hebrews, the writer (I'm convinced it's Paul) quotes from **Psa 97:7**, in singling out God — in context, the very person of Jesus — as the One Whom the *angels* must worship: ...*let all the angels of God worship Him*. Only God can be lawfully worshiped, and God *alone* can receive worship. That's the first thing involved here, that Jesus Christ is above all the angels, and indeed established as true God. Verses 8 (from **Psa 45:6-7**) and 10-11 (**Psa 102: 25-27**) link Jesus — *unquestionably* — to a) the *eternal, exclusive, holy throne/kingdom of God* and b) His status as *THE Creator*. So, knowing that there is only One Creator-King, only One Who is eternal and unchangeable, all knees should again be bowing before Jesus as Jehovah God; as Yahweh.

Exhibit C: Compare **John 12:37-41** (key verse is 41) and **Isa 6:1-5**. When Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on His throne, the

holy-holy-holy LORD of hosts, Whose glory fills the earth, Who exactly did he see? He would say that he saw Jehovah/Yahweh, and he did. The apostle John, too, saw the glory of Jehovah-Yahweh in His human form as Jesus, from lowly servanthood to humiliating death (**Phil 2:6-8**), to the preview at the Transfiguration (**Mt 17; Mark 9; Luke 9; Jn 1:14**), to His glorious Resurrection and Ascension (**Acts 1**). When the apostle John connected Jesus, whom he knew in the flesh and had seen glorified when *en route* to His Heavenly throne, with Jehovah God *in* Heaven, *on* His throne, in the prophet Isaiah's vision, all connections were made, and the circle was closed. In the unique God-man Jesus, all the fullness of the Godhead — triune Jehovah — dwells bodily/in human form (**Col 2:9**). If anyone has seen God, they've seen Jesus. No one at any time has seen the Father (**Jn 1:18; 4:24; 6:46**). Yet, Christ Himself has shown us the Father (**Jn 14:8-11**). Jesus *is* Jehovah/Yahweh; *God!*

Job to do

In this current (and *every*) election cycle, we're hearing a lot about "jobs/bringing jobs back to America/creating jobs/keeping jobs in our own land" *etc.* In this context, a *job* is always meant to be understood as an economic arrangement whereby a worker is paid by an employer for services rendered; work-for-pay=job. There are, however, other ways to be doing one's job *without* working for a payer, and *without* supporting the payer's agenda. Let me unravel this in short order. And yes, I'll be pleading my own case in the process.

This is yet another worldview issue, and when it comes down to it, what *isn't*? If you've read (maybe *endured*?) even a smattering of my writings, you already know that I strongly believe that where one stands on faith/non-faith, creation/evillusion, Biblical morality/man-made "morality" and politics — all of that and

more — makes up one's worldview. You may not have *consciously* assembled a worldview, bit by bit, but you do have a worldview, nonetheless. If you are one to insist that you really don't have a discernible worldview, that stamps you as a person who is either lazy, indifferent, or clueless to a dangerous degree. Why? Well, if you can't even be bothered to try to figure out why you exist on this planet or what ideas are good and constructive for human society, how can you possibly be expected to care enough about the other lives that interact with yours? How *can* you care about other lives if yours has no meaning? That kind of "thinking" (*lack* thereof) can never lead to good, can never be *productive*.

So maybe **job#1** — common to all — is simply this: recognize that you are a *unique living part* in the Creator's universe, here for a specific reason known to Him, and necessary to the overall plan. God *wants* you here to do a job.

The job which God has in mind for you may not necessarily be a high-paying job, or even a job for which you're paid at all. Christ's hand-picked, personally-trained "employees" could barely rub two silver mites together, but they were all doing their appointed jobs well (Judas Iscariot excepted, but *he* had an *evil* job to do that was central to God's plan of redemption, too). The related point right here is that *God* is *everyone's* boss; all human beings, whether good or evil in our eyes, ultimately have to answer to Him, and work for *His* agenda, like it or not. Look at Pharaoh, Joseph's brothers, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great (NT gospel to the world via Greek language), the Romans, a God-hating Pharisee turned into the premier missionary (Saul to Paul), monks and priests sold out to salvation by works becoming leaders in the Reformation (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli), ***Provi-***
dential twists and turns in so many wars involving this nation, and "chance"

medical discoveries, and on and on. We *all* work for God in the end. I, for one, am not going to stamp my feet and demand greater benefits from my Employer. That would be just plain nutty and sinfully ungrateful, since everything I have has come from His open hand. I might ask the rhetorical question, “What, exactly, have I *done* that merits any wage or salary?” Even if I ask it within myself, God hears it, and He has answered:

“So likewise you, when you have done all those things which are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’ ”

— Luke 17:10

So there it is. We all work for God; we all have a *duty*. The rewards are totally up to Him, yet there is no one who pays so generously for such feeble efforts. Each of us has a job to do in *God’s* company.

We should be happy to have that job and always striving to do that job better. This is what has motivated me — and many people *like* me — when we’re doing “lowly” work like cleaning public restrooms, waxing floors, and sorting recyclables from trash (throw in carrying mail door-to-door and box-to-box if you like). If anyone wants to understand why I’m no longer willing to work for *outside* employers (which I did for forty years), it boils down to this: 1) Corporations have agendas that vary greatly from my own (which is to simply serve God honestly in accordance with my capability, and not to grab every dime possible); 2) Judging by the fact that God freed me from such *outside demands* on my time and *loyalties* (to *alien* and *undesirable* employer goals), I believe that God has led me to my appropriate workstation. Apparently, my Boss wants me to seek, embrace, and disseminate the truth in several areas. He’s given me the necessary *freedom* and time. I’ve a job to do!

Loving Parents

In my life, second only to saving knowledge of the God-man, Jesus Christ, is the blessing of my loving Christian parents. I never married, but it most certainly was *not* because *they* didn't provide a great example of two people united as one flesh by and under God (**Matthew 19 & Mark 10**). For 62 years and counting, they have been a God-honoring *team*. They have consistently shown exemplary Christian love to each other, and to each of their five children as well. To this day, they serve God in the capacity of life-guides towards and under Christ, even when four of us have shot past fifty years of age. That all five of us — and in-laws and grandchildren, too — can still converse with them and learn from them, is yet another blessing that too often goes without proper acknowledgment. From time to time, I do remember this, and I say so. I hope my siblings do so more often than I do.

That brings us to the responsibilities of *children* to parents. The Biblical view has been literally engraved by the finger of God in the Fifth Commandment, **“Honor your father and your mother”** (Exodus 20:12). Reiteration and further exposition can be found in Lev 19:3, Deut 5:16, Eph 6:1-3, and Col 3:20.

***Children, obey your parents
in the Lord, for this is right.***
—Eph 6:1

***Children, obey your parents
in all things, for this is well
pleasing to the Lord.*** —Col 3:20

This is abundantly clear, isn't it? In God's universe — the only one there is, as I often remind — there is a chain-of-command, and it goes: God>parents (His first-line representatives)>children (under parents who are under God, so under them *and* God, the Universal Parent). It's *top-down* authority; it's *reality*.

So once again we see that all aspects of life on earth go back to the Creator-King. God originates all things and holds all things together (**Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2-3**). Sinful creatures that we humans are, we will take turns at challenging God's structure and rules, even though they are perfect in integrity, holy in their design, insurmountable, incapable of improvement, and — *get this straight!* — there *for our own good*. If you haven't absorbed this fact yet, or if you've overlooked it in complacency, re-read the "promise clauses" of **Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16, 33 & 6:2, 11:8-9; Eph 6:1-3**. In each case, longer, more-enriched lives are said to naturally result from obeying parents who obey God. ***The chain-of-command is at the same time a chain-of-blessing.*** While obeying parents *without exception* is never held out as God's standard (children must obey *in the Lord*, or, not in *disobedience* to God, *The Father*, whose commands supercede all), the *principle* holds; obedience will be

rewarded by The Father, Who sees all and blesses accordingly (**Mt 6**). The idea here is that an absolute guarantee of long life is not made, but the principle is simple and *full* of promise: obeying one's parents who convey *God's* rules for life by example and instruction leads to longer, better lives. Throughout history, we've seen countless examples of obedient sons and daughters living long, successful lives. We've also seen many examples of the rebellious (think Absalom, Eli's sons, and more modern examples) dying "before their time." All of the days of each and every human being are numbered and ultimately in God's hands. Parents can't get their offspring to Heaven, but they can point to the Savior Who alone can (and *will*). A *team*, consisting by God's wise and irrevocable design of a male father and a female mother joined together in Christian matrimony, can provide the ideal, *Biblical* family structure. My loving parents have done this. I thank them; I thank *God!*

National Pride

With our American Independence Day right around the corner, amid election-year rhetoric coming at us from every part of the political spectrum, let's pause for a momentary reflection. This is as good a time as any to ask if pride in our homeland is *always* appropriate, or even if it's *ever* appropriate. Or, when is pride a *good* thing, and when is it evil? On the horizontal (human-to-human) plane, all things are obscure, and all waters are muddied. This is by design of the anti-God forces, no matter which banner they're waving: Gay Pride, Islamic Flag of Conquest, La Raza/*Reconquista*/Mexican flags; neo-Nazi white supremacists; "My country, right *or* wrong" Americans; or the Humanist Self-Esteem pushers. This kind of pride is unwarranted and ungodly, surefire sin in the sight of God. God's Word is filled with what such forces for evil will call "hate speech" about this *sinful* pride.

Those of us who esteem God and His Word more than we esteem our sin-soaked selves, however, can be prone to error, too, in thinking that pride is *always* evil, that to be proud of family, friends, country, or *truly good* accomplishments is to manifest pride already gone too far. This is why I'm writing today: to suggest that there *is* a place for pride *within **Biblical** parameters*. This involves the *vertical* plane, the *human-to-God* relationship, as I'll try to show.

I referred to the "My country, right or wrong!" crowd before, and I italicized "*or*" for emphasis. That points to the problem. When my country does right, I have the right to be proud of it; doing the right thing is God-pleasing. *But...* should we be *proud* of our children, parents, employer, sports team, church, clergyman, military force, or nation when they do *evil* things? Should we fully (100%) back/own/praise such actions when they are clearly *wrong*?

Is it God-pleasing loyalty or deluded and misplaced pride when a mother *knows* her son has committed murder, but insists on accusing everyone *else* of evil, because *her* son can simply do no wrong? Is God buying any of that, do you suppose? Or reverse the polarity: should the sons and daughters of America blindly accept everything that our duly-elected officials — I have *great* reservations about just how honestly *many* were elected in recent decades — decide to do on our “behalf” — as our representatives? How about our governmental “parents” declaring that it’s a good thing to kill off our pre-born brothers and sisters? Is *God* “cool” with that, do you suppose? And how about making us *accessories* to those murders by stealing *our* money to *pay* for them? Of course, that’s just *one* instance of proof for what I’m saying: *unqualified* support *for* and pride *in* my country is foolish and sinful, because my country has become increasingly anti-God.

So where do we draw the line, if we're seeking to be proud within *Biblical* parameters, exhibiting pride to the extent that God permits? First of all, no saved-by-grace Christian (that would be *every true Christian*, folks) can be *proud* that they're saved. **Ephesians 2:8-10** dispels any such notion in a hurry, and with finality. If you *are* saved, *you did nothing* to be proud of, nothing to set yourself atop the trash-heap of sinful human flesh as a singular diamond. However, there *is* **God's grace**: you *should* be proud of God's mercy towards *any* sinner *period*; towards *any* nation *period*! How can you *not* be moved to revere, love, and yes, *be proud of* The Holy One who *always* does right and saves from *all* nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues (**Rev 7:9-10**)? And when He *owes* it not to one of us? And has God not also built this most-blessed nation from scratch? Of course He has: "**He** makes nations great and destroys them; **He** enlarges nations, and guides them."—**Job 12:23**.

Now put those two simple truths together. Whether it's an individual or a nation, *God* does the saving. And America didn't build itself; *God* built it. *God* does the *good* that is to be done and preserves society through His chosen *faithful* servants, as long as He is properly acknowledged, and as long as His patience holds out (even *His* patience does have limits, as history has demonstrated: Jerusalem and Judea, AD 66-70, for instance!). When the time for national judgment comes, God will always execute that, too, *through* His chosen *instruments of destruction*. God builds, enlarges, and guides nations, but He also *destroys* them when they abandon His ways and embrace what He hates. This is where America is today: if our "leaders" could get their way, they'd convince every soul of the non-existence of the eternal God of all existence. It wouldn't be until we all strode blindly right into eternal damnation that we'd know how alive and how holy God is!

Shudder at that thought, but then leave it behind with this hope: if we stop trusting in the fact that we are *Americans* — as if that’s enough to guarantee our survival and continued prosperity — and we go back to earnestly trusting in *God’s* building, enlarging, and all-wise guidance, He might still keep His protective hand in place. *Yet longer. Again.* God *SAVE* America should be our prayer. Because each day we give Him *less* “reason” to *bless* us; He’s already blessed us like no other nation in history, yet we stand there, rocking on our heels like Nebuchadnezzar (**Dan 4:29-31**), in love with the way we Americans have made such a big deal of ourselves and how we’re so free that almost anything goes. That’s national pride run amok, and it precedes a certain fall, barring repentance (**Prov 16:18, 8:13**). Now please get this: I love America for all of the good it has done as a nation, but ultimately, I can only give unqualified admiration, thanks, and love to *God*.

Parents, Revisited

A while back, I wrote about *Loving Parents*, and more specifically, how thankful my siblings and I should be for *our* loving Christian parents. The main points intended were:

1) In His infinite wisdom, the God of the Bible has designed the *family* as the living-and-breathing foundational unit of societies under construction, and the *parental teams* are the “crew chiefs” of this ongoing enterprise. By this design, God, as the Architect, has set these crew chiefs/construction supervisors in positions of ultimate *human* authority over all of the crews/families on earth;

2) The *primary* task delegated to the parents by God is to train/instruct/lead their children in the way they should go (**Deut 4:9, 6:6-7; Prov 22:6; Eph 6:4**), which is always *towards* the one true unerring Shepherd who will lead them

home, Jesus Christ (**John 10 & 14; Heb 13:20-21**). Good health, security, and happiness will most often and most naturally fall into place where parents are *truly* first-line representatives of God's holy will, in that they convey His commands in all parts — as for the *good* of all — to those under their charge;

3) *Christian* parents are the ideal. And when I thank God for Christian parents, I don't limit that to thanking Him for mine only, but for *every* Christian parent, whether as half of a team, as one unequally yoked (**2 Cor 6:14**), or as one faithfully soldiering on alone. *Every* parent who points the next generation to the triune God is doing job #1 well. Keeping them alive, as much as it is in your power, is vitally important (**1 Tim 5:8**), but if they go without Christ into a hopeless eternity, what has really been gained? Keep them looking to Christ.

In this short follow-up, I want to add

only a quick point or two. I think it's important to emphasize that what made *my* parents such good and faithful and *responsible* servants to God AND society by extension, is that they took the job *seriously*. They didn't have kids because it was a "fun" idea (some think of their offspring as pets, or mere toy-like possessions); because it was what they thought other people expected them to do (meeting the usual expectations of normal people); because children could mean tax write-offs or welfare payment cash, or any other selfish reason. No. Mom wanted to be a "Mommy" from the age of four or so, and Dad obviously warmed to the idea of being a father — and *accepting all of the responsibilities* — when God put the two of them together for *His* purposes. Taking the job seriously translated to sacrifices across the board: sleepless nights through five pregnancies and early childhoods (and *beyond*, of course, as each child tested the limits of their "independence"); the

necessity of second jobs and careers for each, and a consistent smart thriftiness; having to endure temporary fits of resentment when *discipline* was justly administered (this is *so* critical, since permissive parenting is neither God-honoring NOR effective; see again the negative Biblical examples of David and Eli). The list could go on and on, but again, *my* parents were not unique in this; lifelong sacrifice on the part of responsible parents has always been the norm, though that's steadily changing. Now we are told that what we only *thought* constituted a family does not a family make. In fact, the *Government* (or "Village") is dad OR mom, and it functions as unfettered gift-giver *to* some children by stealing first *from* the other children. It doesn't add up, but that *is* the "new math." The responsible kids in the family must meet the ever-increasing demands of the brats. Train up a child in the way he/she should go? "Ha! That's the *loser's* way!" [and society crumbles]

Thinking Things Through (Part 2: Theology)

I'm used to proceeding from the theological to the political, so today we're going against the usual flow. It's just that I suspect more people want to deal with the political stuff these days (I'm told it's an election year of some sort), so that came first for the sake of *both* of my readers. [I *hope* I'm joking!]

So now, in *this* essay, we'll take another look at the importance of thinking things through — *beyond* the initial unproved assertion of the liberal — to the determination that the claim is either true or false, but from a *theological* perspective. In the previous *political* approach, it was noted in passing that only *God's* statements can be taken as true in each and every case. All *human* claims, however, are subject to verification via a process of honest inquiry, since many

humans have been known to lie from time to time (from midnight to 11:59 PM, in the case of BHO or HRC, or “I rather like being a god” Soros, or maybe “Nosferatu” Schumer, to name a few). But I digress, and I must remind myself that *theology* is the subject at hand. So now we look at the way *religious* liberals *among the masses* (not the “scholars” who are prone to *over*-think themselves into untenable corners) put their *un*-exercised brains into full-sleep/trance mode at the hearing of the latest pronouncement by an end-times “prophet,” a Billy Graham, an archbishop, patriarch, or pope; *all* of ‘em finite in knowledge and oh-so-capable of telling falsehoods. And they *frequently* demonstrate, to any who would notice, these serious limitations. Compare these *sinner*s to the God who can’t lie (**Titus 1:2, Heb 6:18, etc.**).

The reader may have noticed that I often “pick on the Pope” and those under his spiritual “care.” Let me explain why. It

has nothing to do with “bigotry” by a “Protestant” towards those of the Roman Catholic persuasion. Mock my sincerity in this, if you will, but the only woman I ever intended to marry (and proposed to) was a Catholic, as was (and is?) my best friend since high school. Most of the people with whom I have any face-to-face interaction these days are at least nominally Catholic. I *like* all of these people very much, and the thought that *any* of them is actually being “shepherded” into the afterlife by such a charlatan as the “pope” is a constant source of consternation and grief to me. Because I *firmly* believe that they are being led into a *hopeless* eternity by a deceiver who sets himself up in a throne that belongs *exclusively* to the Holy, holy, holy (Isa 6:3) Creator-God described in the Bible. In the pages of God’s very Word of Truth, *NO* place is given to a man as “father” of *CHRIST*’s flock, to Peter, or Mary, or any being *period* other than the one true God. It’s

utter and obvious *blasphemy* to construct and spin out a counter-narrative that attempts to rob God of the glory that's due to Him *alone* (Ex 20:3-6; Isa 42:5, 8-9; & 48:11; Matt 23:9-10; Rev 15:3-4; 19:1; 21:7 (“*I will be his God and he shall be My son*”) and 21:22-23, where *God's* glory illuminates the New Jerusalem; neither Mary nor any “pope” is *ever* in view when proper (idolatry-free) worship is the subject in Scripture. Please take the time to read and absorb the texts cited above. THESE are the Words of God; no *sinner* speaks for God!

So what about this idea of “thinking things through?” Okay, it's just this simple: God knows all, can't lie, IS the eternal Creator-Sustainer-Redeemer, THE Holy One who *alone* can convict morally culpable humans of their sinfulness and bring them from spiritual death into *eternal* spiritual life, and gently but firmly and securely guides *all* who are to be saved by *His* grace; **THE** Shepherd!

Contrast all of that (and much, much more that could also be said) with a far-from-omniscient, *finite* and mortal sinner in need of salvation himself “dispensing” grace and salvation as if they were commodities that belonged to him, and taking the place of *God*, The Holy Spirit (!!!) as Christ’s “holy” representative on earth *AND...the place of God, THE Shepherd (John 10)*! And for how many souls has any pope suffered and died? Or *Mary*? Or any Orthodox or *Protestant* “saint” for that matter?

People, I *beg* you! Think these things through! It’s not enough to recognize that the atheists are wrong, the JW’s are wrong, or the Mormons are wrong, or the Muslims are wrong, but stop and think about who *else* has been telling you lies and “shepherding” you right into hell! This isn’t some wild conspiracy theory; this is *Biblical* wisdom, true knowledge supplied and applied. Only *Christ* is the Way, Truth, and Life!

Vengeance and Vindication

[Note on the writing process: In mid-October, I decided that I'd said what I wanted to say with regard to *politics* in this ultra-important election year, and that my focus should return to theological themes. Essays V through Z will deal with subjects closer to my heart.]

When I ended my “political analysis” avocation on my website, the last essay I posted (*U3, “U.S. Undone”*) revealed to those few still surfing my neck of the net that I had just then been *convinced* by recent events that God's patience with sin-soaked America had finally run out: *Judgment Time!* Because I'm *not* able to see into the future — and I would remind *everyone else* that *they also* suffer from this infirmity — I can't say with certainty what will transpire on Election Day, Inauguration Day 2017, or beyond. But for *me*, all of the hard-to-miss *signs*

point to the same destination:

The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God—Psa 9:17

Two things we *do* know: 1) Since the Bible is ultra-clear on the absolute sovereignty of God Almighty (see, for example: +++**Job 12:13-25**; +++**Psa 33:8-19**; +++**Prov 21:1**; +++**Dan 4:34-35**; +++**Rom 9:20**; +++**Rev 4:9-11**; and *hundreds* more), it's also ultra-clear that the *continuation of our ruination* is not happening *without* God noticing it, but much more than that, it's *by His will and design. Because...* 2) America has lost its moral compass; as a nation, we've done all we can to push God completely out of our consciousness and memory. We *have* rejected God's moral authority and turned to embrace *everything* that's wicked, and we *have* forgotten Him. We reap what we sow. That's the bitter pill of reality that we must now swallow.

Historical Precedent

There are striking parallels between what has been occurring in America in 2009-2016 and what occurred in *Judea* in 63-70. Any perceptive reader of passages like **Matthew 23-25**, **Mark 13**, or **Luke 17-21** can see that God *does* run out of patience with nations. And when the unbelieving Jews taunted God by saying...

“[Let] his blood [Jesus Christ’s] *be* on us and our children” (**Mt 27:25**)

...within *that generation*, their “desire” came true. Acting through the armies of far-flung Rome (*gentiles*, see **Lk 21:24**), the *Lord* of hosts (armies) decimated Judea and the environs of Jerusalem (**Mt 24:15-16; Lk 21:20-22**), Jerusalem and the temple (**Mt 24:1-2**), *and* the two self-cursed generations. So in that 7-year period in the *first* century AD, God *enacted* His vengeance on the nation of Israel,

though it had been long in coming. *Now*, in the *twenty-first century AD, America*, too, has pumped a collective fist in the air and called Christ's blood down upon our own heads. And as before, God *will* have *His* vengeance (**Deut 32:35**) upon a most ungrateful and sinful people. The world itself will continue spinning, but *our* world in America as we knew it *will* come to an end. The "leaders" we've (*supposedly*) elected in recent years are serving as *instruments of God's wrath*, and *not* as public servants for our protection and advancement. That's rather obvious now, isn't it? *Sovereign* God has willed it, and so it has been done. Vengeance belongs to *Whom?* To *God*, not to man. Who shall *always* be *vindicated*? The One who shed His blood *for* all of *His* people, in Whom we alone find true liberty: **2 Cor 3:17**. He *was* vindicated during His *Parousia* when He avenged the martyrs, emptied Hades, and delivered the blood-bought to Heaven. God's people will find vindication *in Him*.

Wealth of a Different Kind

Wealth is *money*, or at least material possessions, right? *Usually*, that's what we're talking about. *Wealth* is what the "haves" have and the "have-nots" do not, in the ordinary use of the term. It has gotten to the point that the *radicals* preside over *all* definitions and all the nuances of nomenclature, so when there is talk of "redistribution of wealth," we all are supposed to be in agreement with the definition *and* the "fairness" of the concept, even if it *really* means "stealing from some to give to undeserving others" (breaking God's Commandments nos. 8 & 10, with support from breaking no. 9 on lying to achieve that). Well, *this* dissenting pipsqueak has another take on the question.

Decades ago, while attending college, I posted a couple of pretentious, self-defining notes over my desk in my dorm

room. One of those little scrap-banners read, “My Independence Is My Wealth.” Thus spake the one who was on the hook for repayment of thousands of dollars to student loan providers upon graduation (not to mention the fact that his folks were still providing for most of his needs *without* calling for repayment; NOT so independent, truth be told). So it was typical for a 19- or 20-year-old to exaggerate his own importance, dignity, and place in the grand scheme of things. But like I said, it was also *pretentious*. “Poorer than thou” = “holier than thou.” So *my* (true) wealth isn’t *your* (money-grubbing) “wealth.” *Saint Cookstan*, then, patron of wannabe hippies (that’s *another* story or *two*, since I’m not fluent in Catholic-speak). The point for us now is that I *did* say that (“my independence is my wealth”) when I didn’t know what I was talking about, but *now*, I can see that it *could* be true. I’ll try to explain my meaning in the next two pages, so we all can get out of here on time.

In purely financial terms, I am now *debt-free*. The student loans were paid off long ago; I've worked for what I considered to be fair wages, and was able to buy homes, including my current mobile home (my favorite place on earth to be); there *is* space rent, but no mortgage, and very low property taxes; credit card balances never get out of hand, and I pay them off *on time every time*. When added to the fact that I do *NOT* have to leave my "castle" to work in support of some other person's (or corporation's) less-than-God-pleasing agenda, *yes*, I'd say that I'm rather independent; I live simply and guard against coveting more than what God has seen fit to grant me. And what He's granted me is *freedom, true freedom*. Freedom to serve Him with my meager talents and bountiful time. Freedom to commune with Him in a sort of running conversation (although I sometimes imagine Christ clearing His throat to remind me of His presence in the room, as *you* can probably imagine).

Last page, bottom lines: I may have retired from working *outside* my home and *for* someone else; I did that nearly four years ago, and in that (classic) sense, I *am* retired. By *government* definition, I'm *well* below the "poverty line," since *ZERO* income from sources other than dwindling life's savings and stock payouts qualifies as "poor." [SoSec checks are several months away at minimum] But poor in my *spirit*? No! *Besides* the *paramount* benefit of eternal salvation in and through Jesus Christ, my Great Benefactor has led me to this place of independence. "My" time is my own (it's really His, on loan to me, but I'm speaking human-to-human now). If I *want* to work 8-14 hours in a day (as I often do), I can do that. But I work at my speed, and on what *I* want. I support the charitable organizations that I choose, and I boycott anti-God businesses. My time, my choices, my God. *That's* freedom and true independence. These days, that *is* my wealth. To God be the glory!

X-ray of the Heart

On my original “schedule” — such as it was — this essay would’ve landed around Thanksgiving. Even though I’m writing and releasing these last five essays on an accelerated schedule, I see no reason to alter the subject matter. So let’s be thankful ahead of time. [I *kid*, you see.]

Our only *national* “holidays” which have a Biblical pedigree, as far as I can tell, are the Purim-like *Independence Day* (4th of July) and *Thanksgiving* (4th Thursday in November). We Americans can observe and celebrate a day of *deliverance* from oppression and widespread death on our Independence Day in much the same way that the Jews since Esther’s time observe and celebrate Purim, when the wicked, murderous, and treasonous Haman had the tables turned on him by God’s providence. Proclaimed

festivals of thanksgiving, whereby grateful peoples have openly and publicly given thanks to the Source of all blessing are also found in Scripture, as well as in world history. For the individual Christian, and for *all* individuals who can still be informed by any remnant of conscience, *every* day should be a day of thanksgiving to God, The Creator and Giver of all good things. That should be the natural, universal response, but of course, that isn't the case. And in *this* time and place — 21st-Century America — *ingratitude* is epidemic. Too many of us will thank *each other* out of *social reflex*, or will thank our “lucky stars” for favors big and small, but *sincerely* thank *God, THE Giver, THE Ultimate Source* of all good that circulates throughout the universe? Nope, not gonna happen; out of the question, and “unconstitutional.”

What the Holy Spirit prescribes is an X-ray of the heart. *He* knows what's going on in each heart, but we need to see it

for ourselves in stark black and white.

In this country, and in much of the world today, *self-esteem* is yet another obstacle placed in the way of getting to the truth. I'm OK, you're OK; it's all about YOU; YOU deserve special treatment, because YOU are such a *good* apple, yes you are, so you're worth it! The world's your oyster, and don't let anyone tell you differently! You can be and do anything you want, and there will be no bad consequences! No "God" could tell YOU what's right or wrong, and He's dead anyway, so let your urges run wild and free! *etcetera, ad infinitum*. That's what the *world* tells you, and the idea of a soul-searching X-ray is positively *abhorrent* and *verboten*.

God, the Holy Spirit, insists on it, however, and unless YOU repent, YOU are not headed into a blissful afterlife. Self-esteem may be a coin of the realm on this sin-saturated planet, but it will get

you not *one* step closer to God's holy Heaven. Instead, you *must* take the X-ray, see the damning evidence of your heart's true condition, and turn to the Great Physician for the cure. You should know that the Apostle Paul, writing *God-breathed words*, pointed to *ingratitude* ("neither were [they] thankful" — **Rom 1:21**) as a basic symptom of a society that can only *decline* into ruin (**Rom 1:18-32**). When people shove God to the sidelines of their thought or blaspheme Him, they cut themselves off from His help and protection. That only stands to reason, doesn't it? He doesn't exist to serve *you*, now does He? But if we fail to acknowledge *OR* thank Him, we incur His wrath just as surely. *All* good proceeds from the Father (**James 1:17**), and He most certainly *deserves* to be sincerely thanked for it; when you say, "Well, thank *God* for (whatever)...," *mean* it! Yes, *do* thank humans for the *derivative* good that they do, but be sure to thank The Ultimate Source above all!

Yahweh, You, and Yours Truly

In this *penultimate* essay, [old English majors die hard] I'll endeavor to explain why I do what I do. Basically, next only to the true, triune God, or *Yahweh* (see my essay *J, "Jesus is Jehovah"* for more background), I love the truths that He has established for time and eternity. It gives me pleasure to seek them out, examine, embrace, and move forward in them, and finally — this is where *you* come in — to *share* them with others. I know that most people have neither the time nor the inclination to dig out God's truth in various areas, but I *love* to do it. The only thing that excites me more than finding how a "new" (new to *me*) truth clicks in place with all of the others in God's design is when I can detect "the light" coming on for someone else. That's what makes me tick; that's what energizes me. And that's what I'd like you (any reader) to know about me: It's

all about Yahweh-God, you, and *then* me. I am *third*, as the fine book by Gale Sayers reminded us years ago. Right now, we're seeing entire generations that have missed that lesson in *priorities* simply because the entire public school system through which they've passed has never *approached* it. I've already harped on this whole self-esteem issue, but have I mentioned that such teachings have taken *God's* former place in these idol factories? So the new order is akin to 1) YOU; 2) your *cool* friends (the only kind worthy of yourself); and 3) uh, ...what was the question again? [We were talking about priorities, but never mind; I can see you can't get there from where you are now.]

Sounds like I'm scolding again, doesn't it? I'll admit that I'm prone to do that if you'll admit that I have at least one good reason to do so: the *eternal* after-life awaits each and every one of us, and

I simply do not want to see *any* fellow human being stride right into the *unending* torments of a very real *hell*. I *mean* it when I say, “There but for the grace of God go I!” If the tables were turned, I’d want *you* to warn me away from the wrong side of eternity, and for the record, *many* servants of God *did* before the Holy Spirit in effect grabbed me by the shoulders and said, “NOW is the time to know the Truth!” (**John 14:6; Isa 55:6**). For my part, I didn’t show them much kindness, so I know a thing or two about your wanting to keep me and other truth-tellers at arm’s length. I’ve been there, I understand the situation, and yet I persist in putting the Truth before you. Why? I care about *you* because I love God first. God told His prophets that they *had* to warn others away from sin and its inevitable eternal consequences (apart from the true repentance and complete faith in the Messiah that they preached). Read about some of the things that Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and

others endured when their message was scorned and rejected; they took some severe lumps! (**Heb 11:35-38** provides some hints, as well as the OT books of the prophets). And it certainly didn't get smoother for Paul, Peter, James, and the rest. The message of Christ's salvation that they shared in speech and on paper got them killed; most people in *their* day, too, would have none of it. Today, there's hardly any difference. Most people have no patience with those of us who want to convey the Truth to them. I'm sure many people hate me and my kind (no *inspired* prophet among us, but many who carry the same message to a dying world, in one way or another). As I've said often in other writings, I sure can't blame anyone for resenting my tone, my pointed terminology, or my methods. I'm admittedly rough around the edges, and too often my tongue reflects badly on the Savior. But *He IS THE Savior*. Hate *me* and *my* ways, but love *Him*. All of the other "bridges" are out!

Zeal

Like change, zeal isn't always good or always bad. There's *good* change, like a change of underwear, and *bad* change, like a change into *dirty* underwear (sorry, I lapsed into talking about Socialism again). It's the same with zeal; whereas zeal properly directed and correctly applied is good, even *Biblically* good, but zeal *improperly* directed or motivated or *misapplied*, a kind of zeal that is "not according to knowledge" (**Rom 10:2**) is most definitely *bad*. The word "zeal" is hardly ever heard today. "Passion" has largely replaced it, as has "passionate" replaced "zealous." And in recent years especially, but actually for several decades stretching back (think the *sixties*), *all* change is said to be good and *whatever* one is passionate about is okay; that's his or her "thing," and nobody can speak against it (*unless* your thing is moral discretion per the Bible).

Well, I'm one of those going "against the grain" because the foundation for *my* beliefs and practices IS the Holy Bible, the very Word of God. *God* is the *sine qua non* of all existence, and His Word is the *sine qua non* for any valid world-view. Without that starting point, humans are doomed to "firmly planting" their feet in mid-air/space, as Reformed theologian-philosopher Cornelius Van Til was fond of saying. If a person lacks a Biblical foundation, life will become a series of flitting about from one cause-of-the-moment to another: Down with capitalism; down with dead white-man influence and patriarchal society; down with global cooling-global warming-climate change- *deniers*; down with "gender discrimination" in all public restrooms, changing rooms, and locker rooms; down with *God*. In the cesspool that is American politics, we *must* join the movements to "elect" (install) the first black president, the first female president, the first "gay" pr.....*oops*, I

forgot, we got that covered as a “bonus” with Barry. I suppose that next on our list of electorate “duties” is (after the first woman *and* lesbian president has been installed and has served until her death, per her unilateral decree) is to get some transgender...er...what’s the P.C. term nowadays?...uh, *person* into a White House where *all* rest rooms are free of gender designation, and none have doors (what would be the point?). Or maybe the push will be for the first Latin-American prez, first Asian-American, first non-human mammal, ...who knows?!? The point? It could be *anything*! Anything that the Anti-God forces want to turn *all* attention to will be *your* cause that you must passionately support or *else*! [I’m *SO* glad that I’m no younger than I am, but I *shudder* at what my nephew and nieces will run up against in the *insane* future.]

By now, it should be clear that *everyone* has a worldview, and it’s either based on

what God has *declared* to be true in His *unshifting* Word and appeals to *conscience*, OR it will reflect what has been *imposed* from top-down by the ever-shifting powers-that-be via mental slavery. When we listen to mere humans, we get near-sighted opinions. When we listen to *God*, we get the *facts* of the past, the present, *AND* the future. **Only. God. KNOWS.** *Without* error, without having to retract something that was “misquoted” or “taken out of context.” Zeal for the *true triune God* and *His* ways is *always* good. Jesus Himself displayed this *holy* zeal in a very public way (**John 2:13-17**). He displayed it *every day* of His public earthly ministry among the multitudes of the lost, and it drove Him relentlessly towards the cross on the behalf of His people (*repentant sinners*, like you and me). But passion for petty politically-correct “causes?” *Dung. Vapid. Worthless*, a waste of time and life. Escape from soul-slavery, flee to Christ, and be zealous in *freely* serving Him!