



THE FATHER'S TEARS

A Parable with Paradox



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The Rich Man and Lazarus

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INTRODUCTION

The Jewish faith and religion of the 1st century A.D. had undergone many changes since the days of Abraham and Moses. God's law and covenant had profoundly shaped a nomadic people into a nation that resembled the Character and Person of God more so than any other. Jesus came to illustrate perfectly the fulfilment and completion of man's restored relationship with God. Jesus shows mankind how to be fully human. Fulfilment in life is found in one's heart-embrace and desire to be re-created into the Image of God.

The intent of this review of 1st century Judaism is to more fully understand how the Pharisee thought and why. To know the mindset and teaching of their religion will give understanding to many of Jesus' sayings and parables.

Why Did Jesus Often Speak in Parables?¹

Jesus spoke in parables to hide the spiritual meaning of His words because not all would receive His message. The Pharisees did not believe Jesus was Messiah and continually sought to entrap Him. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."² Jesus made use of parables to veil the truth from those who were not willing to see it. Those who really desired to know would seek and find the meaning.

This parable is easily understood if taken literally but would be paradoxical in that it goes against general Biblical doctrine and belief. If interpreted as a parable with symbolism, metaphor and contextual purpose, it will totally agree with all Biblical facts and principles.

One must begin with the context of what precedes the gospels. Careful and objective exegesis will more accurately explain the original meaning of text. Consideration of the literal, historical, and grammatical background gives a clearer understanding of the purpose and intent of this scripture. The parable of **The Rich Man and Lazarus**³ includes several subjects such as: Hell; Immortality; and Eternity. A few of the basic questions that are examined are:

What is the underlying message of this parable?

How do these truths apply to the church today?

Is man naturally immortal?

What traditions and myths were influential in the beliefs of the Pharisees?

What was the message to the Jews within the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus?

Why did Jesus use parables?

What is the Biblical definition and description of death and the "here-after"?

How many resurrections have and will occur?

How do the spiritual characteristics of the Pharisees define the apostate church of today?

It is the sincere prayer and intent of this writer that these scriptures be rightly divided, reveal God's true nature, and dispel any myth or misrepresentation of God's character and word.

¹ Matthew 13: 10-15

² 1 Cor. 2: 13,14

³ Luke 16: 19-31

CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Around 31 A.D., Jesus encountered the Pharisees in Jerusalem. His purpose was to explain His fulfillment of the Law of Moses. The history and language of Jesus' day must be considered to more fully understand the situation surrounding the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The influence of the Greek and surrounding pagan cultures had a profound impact on the customs and practices of Jews, both in Roman Palestine and in the dispersion of the Jews beyond Israel.

In Greek mythology, **Hades** (ᾍδης; *the "unseen"*) was also known as the god of the underworld. This pagan god was likely the most influential in describing the deity that rules the dead in the underworld. "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."⁴ Early Christians used the Greek word *hades* as the translation for the Hebrew word **Sheol** (שְׁאוֹל; grave).

Ba'al, Dagon and Moloch were the pagan Canaanite gods most mentioned in the Old Testament. Ba'al was the god of rain and thunder. Dagon was the chief deity of the Philistines. The worship of this pagan god dates back to the third millennium B.C. Moloch was known mainly as the deity to whom child sacrifices were offered. These gods are worshiped today in the form of hedonism and drug addiction. The drug "Meth" could easily be today's modern Moloch. Our children and families are being sacrificed to this god every day. The immorality and ungodliness of this generation has surpassed that of Sodom and pre-flood evil. God has shown us in His word that this day would come, and is now here.

What were some of the prevalent **world views** and **schools of thought** that most influenced the Jewish religion of that day? Many of these basic world views of the 1st century are still prevalent today. These include: Materialism (*Matter only*); Pantheism (*Worship that admits or tolerates all gods*); Deterministic theism (*God is in control*); Appeasement Theism (*God must be appeased*); and Benevolent Theism (*God is love and victorious*).

The pharisees of Jesus' day were greatly influenced by **Greek schools of thought** and philosophy. These include Stoicism, Platonism and Gnosticism. The stoics held to the concept of providence—the natural, unstoppable will of God. This ascetic, frugal life style, known as asceticism, was characterized by the renunciation of material possessions and physical pleasures. Time was spent fasting while concentrating on the practice of religion or reflection upon spiritual matters. They were individualistic and often morality-obsessed, seeing the flesh as being evil.

Platonism taught that man was naturally immortal. Gnosticism: is of the essence of science. It means that a man shall not believe that which he has no scientific grounds for professing to know or believe. "Spirituality" was often measured in the amount of knowledge one allegedly possessed.

Jewish Schools of Thought

Jewish scholars were divided into two schools: The House of Hillel and House of Shammai. Hillel was the most liberal of the two while Shammai held strictly to the letter of the law. These two schools debated on matters of ritual practice, ethics, and theology and were critical for the shaping of the **Oral Law** and **Judaism** as it is today.

⁴ Matt. 12: 40

Rabbinical literature describes the halakhah which is based upon the Oral Law. Hebrew doctrine taught that man was not naturally immortal. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"⁵

The stories of Hillel and Shammai told in the Talmud do seem to justify this unhappy reputation: "The gentile came before Shammai and requested, 'Convert me on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot.' He [Shammai] pushed him out with the ruler in his hand. He then came before Hillel, who converted him. Hillel addressed to him the immortal words, 'That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and learn.'" Afterwards, the successful convert declared in the presence of Hillel and Shammai that it was Hillel who had been his salvation.

Pharisaism

The Pharisees were known as the 'separated ones'. The Sadducees were "the moralists". They opposed the Mishnah [*codified oral law*] and had no use for the oral tradition. They interpreted the Law literally and severely. There was a continual striving for perfection.

The Greek concept of the natural immortality of man gradually became a doctrine that held that man will exist for eternity in one state or another. The Old Testament definition of the grave (sheol) was being replaced with the Greek concept of eternal torture in an unquenchable flame known as tartarus. Tartarus (Τάρταρος) is a Greek name for the under-world, especially the abode of the damned – hence to "cast into hell"; to send one into the subterranean abyss reserved for demons and the dead. Tartarus, Hades and Sheol later became labeled "hell". In Roman mythology, Tartarus is the place where sinners are sent. Their belief was that there was a pit inside earth which is said to extend down twice as far as the distance from the lands of the living to Olympus. Still more sinners are contained inside Tartarus, with punishments similar to those of Greek myth.

If Luke 16: 22,23 is taken literally, then the resurrection has already occurred. The first resurrection of the dead is a yet future event that occurs after the Great Tribulation.⁶

Why is This Parable Not to be Interpreted Literally?

It's comes in a list of parables. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus comes at the end of a string of parables filled with symbolic, non-literal illustrations. It contains an impossible conversation. Can people in heaven have conversations with people in hell? It uses symbolic imagery. The rich man wants Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. It uses figurative expressions. Do the people who died with faith in Christ find their rest in Abraham's literal bosom? This is a figurative expression, for angels will gather the saints at the second coming of Christ.⁷ It would contradict the rest of Scripture: "In death there is no remembrance",⁸ Those who die are asleep in the grave awaiting resurrection.⁹

5 Job 38: 4,7

6 Revelation 20: 4-6

7 Matthew 24: 30, 31

8 Psalm 6: 5

9 1 Thessalonians 4: 15, 16; John 11:

11-14 (50 More References)

The Seven Woes¹⁰

Pagan precepts had crept into the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees, resulting in Jesus pronouncing seven woes upon them. Generally speaking, the Scribes and Pharisees had:

(1.) No love for God: They taught about God but did not love God – they did not enter the kingdom of heaven themselves, nor did they let others enter; Calling attention to their selfishness, self-centeredness and obsession with the physical, Jesus ridiculed the scribes and Pharisees for having neglected “justice and the love of God”.¹¹

(2.) Dead Religion: They preached God but converted people to dead religion, thus making those converts twice as much sons of hell as they themselves were. “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.”¹² Isaiah warned Israel to look only to “the Law and to the testimony of the prophets! If they do not speak according to this Word, there is no light in them”.¹³

(3.) The Commandments of Men: The **P’rushim** and **Talmud** commentaries not only took the **Tanakh** to be God’s word to man, but also considered the accumulated tradition handed down over centuries by the sages and teachers to be God’s word as well. The practice of the Oral Law made it possible for the written **Mosaic code** to be adapted to changing conditions in Jewish life. The Pharisees opposed a rigid interpretation of the **Pentateuch Law**. By using the God-given power of reason and special methods of interpretation, various Pentateuch laws could be reinterpreted and modified to harmonize with the advanced ideas of each generation”. “There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death”.¹⁴

(4.) No Love for Neighbor: They taught the law but did not practice some of the most important parts of the law – justice, mercy, faithfulness to God. They obeyed the minutiae of the law such as tithing spices but not the weightier matters. It was the Pharisee who despised others and thanked God that he was better than others.¹⁵

(5.) A Sinful Heart: They presented an appearance of being ‘clean’ (self-restrained, not involved in carnal matters), yet their heart was defiled; Within their spirit lay hidden worldly desires and carnality; They were full of greed, self-indulgence, anger and hatred.

(6.) Self-righteous: They exhibited themselves as righteous and scrupulous keepers of the law, but their heart was full of ungodly thoughts and feelings; They sought to attract the attention and the admiration of men; The spirit of their religion was opinionated and wrapped up in pride and self-righteousness.

(7.) Sin-denying: They professed a high regard for the prophets of old, and claimed that they would never have persecuted and murdered prophets. They actually had murdered prophets and their spirit was still that of persecutors and murderers.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”.¹⁶ God’s true representation in this dark world is Pure and Perfect Light. His perfect Goodness cannot be separated from His perfect Holiness. Our joy will be in proportion to our being made holy, and through grace, more like Him.

10 Matthew 23: 13-30

11 Luke 11: 42

12 1 Sam. 15: 22

13 Isa. 8: 20

14 Prov. 14: 12

15 Luke 18: 9-11

16 1 John 1: 8

Grace that does not lead to holiness is not grace at all

God has provided a sufficient Sacrifice for the penalty of sin. Believers must continually confess their sin, and apply by faith, the blood of that Sacrifice. Not admitting sin produces pride, arrogance, judgmentalism, and self-righteousness. Pride and self-exaltation is an attempt to prove or persuade others of one's spirituality, power and authority. Jesus said that: "All authority and power is given unto Me, both in heaven and in earth."¹⁷ Satan exalts himself, attempting to receive the honor and glory that is Gods'.¹⁸

We Need a Savior!

Jesus said that tax collectors and prostitutes were closer to the Kingdom of God than were some of the religious leaders of His day. Sinners know that they are sinners and that if God loves and forgives them, it is not because of anything good or Godly in themselves, but is purely by God's grace. The Scribes and Pharisees believed that God's continuing love and grace for them was based on their own personal godliness and holy lifestyle. All who walk near to God, in holiness and righteousness, are aware that their best days are mixed with sin.¹⁹ Believers must rely wholly on his mercy and truth, and through the righteousness of Christ, find free and full forgiveness and deliverance from the power and practice of sin.

"Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven".²⁰ Jesus was not calling His followers to become more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees. He was saying that when it comes to personal righteousness, one must be more perfect than the scribes and pharisees, which involves purity of the heart.

What is our "Heart Condition?"

We may believe ourselves to be champions of the truth and defenders of the Gospel, but by the true condition of our heart, we may be as a whitewashed tomb, or as the blind leading the blind.²¹

THE GRAMMATICAL CONTEXT

What did these words mean?

Using **grammatical** description in **context** considers the socio-cultural meaning at the time it is written. Word meanings change through time with cultural and environmental influences. For this study, as accurately as possible, the meaning of significant words will be defined as originally intended. Jesus and his disciples spoke Aramaic, which was the common language of Judea in the first century AD. It is likely that Jesus spoke a local Galilean dialect and the towns of Nazareth was an Aramaic speaking community.

17 Matt. 28: 18

18 Is. 14: 13

19 1 Jn. 1: 8

20 Matthew 5: 20

21 Luke 18: 13

Who is immortal?

“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.”²² Man may receive the gift of immortality but only God is absolutely immortal. “Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.”²³ “God is, was, and ever shall be.”²⁴ The physical body will decay and be replaced by a glorified body at the resurrection. The “twinkling of an eye”²⁵ will seem the same for all, if it be one second or a millennium. The “dead in Christ will rise” regardless of how long they have been dead in the grave. At judgment, the redeemed will receive the gift of everlasting life. The lost, un-saved will not receive this gift and shall “perish”. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. [*Where were you Job*] “when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding.”²⁶

The Gift of Everlasting Life

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever be-lieveth” [(πιστεύω, *pisteuó*) (*be live*)] “in him should not perish” [(ἀφανίζω, *aphanizó*: *be destroyed; vanish away*)],²⁷ but have everlasting life”²⁸ (ἀλλ' ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον). God’s word does not teach the natural immortality of man. By the end of the 2nd century Christianity had begun to blend Greek philosophy with the teachings of God’s Word. Such phrases as ‘continuance of being’, ‘perpetual existence’, ‘incapable of dissolution’ and ‘incorruptible’ began to appear in Christian writings. Many of these thoughts originate from the Greek philosopher Plato. Other phrases used were ‘the soul to remain by itself immortal’, and ‘an immortal nature’. The way was being paved for the introduction of eternal torment for immortal, sinful souls. The apostles consistently taught the Hebraic doctrine that death is a sleep, to be followed by resurrection. God did not create death, but death has inserted itself into nature, as a fruit of man's sin and his withdrawal from God. There is a death of the body and a death of the soul. Death of the soul is the removal of the grace of God from the soul, and death of the body is the separation of the soul from the body.

Jesus tells the thief on the cross “Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” John’s letter had no commas. This comma was added in the later translations. Was Jesus really saying [*verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise?*] This alternative reading could be possible if all scriptural evidence is accounted for. Entering paradise will take place when “this mortal puts on immortality”²⁹ This will be when Jesus comes again.³⁰ Three days after the crucifixion, Jesus told Mary that He had not yet ascended to His Father in paradise.³¹ Jesus and the thief did not die on the same day. The thief asked Jesus, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”

22 Gen. 3: 22

23 1 Tim. 6: 15,16

24 Psalm 90: 2

25 1 Cor. 15: 52

26 Job 38: 4

27 Ps. 37: 18-20

28 Jn. 3: 16

29 1 Corinthians 15: 52,53

30 Luke 23: 43

31 John 20: 17

“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”³² The punishment of sin is destruction, and it is of eternal duration. It is a destruction which never ends, because there will be no resurrection from that destruction. “The wages of sin is death,”³³ the second death and destruction that will be eternal.³⁴

Forever

Graionios: “forever”; within the possibility inherent in the person or thing itself. Hanna presented Samuel to serve ‘forever’, “as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD”.³⁵; The slave would serve his master ‘forever’. “Then his master shall bore his (*slave’s*) ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever” (לעל) [*for as long as it lasts*].³⁶

Some of the significant thoughts of Socrates and Plato on hell were: The soul and Hades, unlike the body, are eternal; Good souls are destined to go invisibly to God; Wicked souls are to be newly imprisoned in other bodies; The true earth is in a sphere above the surface of our earth; A tunnel is connected from it to the inside of our physical earth where Tartarus is located. Souls who are not especially good or bad are purified for a year and released. Very bad, “incurable” ones remain forever, without end. Those who are not so bad can ask those they wronged for forgiveness and, if it is granted, be released.

What About the Body?

The primary passages concerning Jesus' state between his death and resurrection are: Acts 2: 31 “He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell,” (**Hades**: ᾠδης): This is the name of the Greek god of the underworld, as well as the name of his underworld domain; The abode of departed spirits; (*The unseen world*) “neither his flesh did see corruption”.³⁷ Christ was raised bodily³⁸, and so will the saints. It is sown a physical body (σῶμα ψυχικόν), it is raised a spiritual, ‘glorified’ body (σῶμα πνευματικόν). Paul anticipates the day when the saints will be resurrected into a body that is fully and finally animated by the Holy Spirit.

Destroy (καταργήση): Abolish, Cease to exist

Destroy: Kartageo (atarghsh): He should be discarding; Inactive; Unemployed; Useless. To be (render), entirely idle; abolish, cease, do away, become (*make*) of no effect, vanish away, make void.” God's Word is not contradictory. The Scripture cannot be broken.³⁹ In Hebrews Paul tells us that Messiah will “destroy him who holds the power of death -- that is, the devil”.⁴⁰ “Kartageo is used of the beast, or Antichrist, of whom Paul writes in II Thess. 2:8: “And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

32 2 Thess. 1: 8,9

33 Romans 6: 23

34 Revelation 21: 8

35 1 Sam. 1: 28

36 Exodus 21: 6

37 Ephesians 4: 8-10 ; 1 Peter 4: 6; and 1

Peter 3: 18-20

38 1 Cor. 15: 3-4; 12-14

39 John 10: 35

40 Heb. 2: 14

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, (καταργήσῃ) that henceforth we should not serve sin.”⁴¹ “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy (καταργήσῃ) him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”⁴²

The Grave

Sheol (לוֹאֵשׁ), originally a synonym of the grave, the repository of the dead or the cessation of existence until the resurrection of the dead. This doctrine of resurrection is mentioned explicitly in Daniel 12: 1–4. It simply means "unseen." Nowhere in the Old Testament does it refer to a place of torment where people go after death.

Sheol is found in the Bible sixty-five times. It is translated “the pit” three times, “the grave” thirty-one times, and “hell” thirty-one times. Hades is used eleven times, being rendered “hell” ten times and “grave” once. Two other words are also translated hell in the New Testament. Tartarus, which is found once and Gehenna, which is used twelve times.

Gehenna (γεέννα): A Greek version of the Hebrew “Hinnom”, which is both a name and a place. It was here that King Ahaz burnt his children in fire, and made other profane offerings.⁴³ Gehenna is found in Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15,33; Mark 9:43,45,47; Luke 12:5; and James 3:6. Gehenna is described in Scripture as a “furnace of fire”⁴⁴; “everlasting punishment”⁴⁵; “the mist [*gloom*] of darkness”⁴⁶; the “hurt of the second death”⁴⁷; “a lake of fire burning with brimstone”.⁴⁸ Jesus refers to Gehenna in reference to the permanent consequences of unrepented sins. Trash, refuse, animal carcasses, and even the dead bodies of despised criminals were thrown there to be destroyed by the fires that burned perpetually on the valley floor. If some animal or vegetable matter fell on one of the ledges below the rim, escaping the fire, it would instead be devoured by maggots.

Jesus' point is that whatever was thrown into the valley never came out again; it was totally consumed, either by fire or by worms or maggots. In other words, just as nothing and no one exterminated the maggots or extinguished the flames in the valley of Gehenna, so there will be no escape from the certain fate that God has decreed for all unrepentant sinners—death in the “lake of fire”.⁴⁹

If taken literally, the Parable of the rich man and Lazarus will contradict much of the Bible on the topic of death. The rich man is in hadēs which is used in this parable to denote the “grave”. Nothing occurs in the grave and it is complete darkness. This is a part of what this “hell” represents.

Words for Grave

Words in the Bible that refer to the grave are:

Taphos (τάφος), meaning sepulcher or tomb;

Mnema (μνημα), sepulchral monument or memorial;

Queber (קבר), tomb;

Shah-g hath (שׁוּכַחַת), “the soul draweth near to the grave”.

41 Heb. 6: 6

42 Hebrews 2: 14

43 2 Ch. 28: 1-5

44 Mat. 13: 42

45 Mat. 25: 46

46 II Pet. 2: 17

47 Rev. 2: 11; 20:6,14; 21: 8

48 Rev. 19: 20; 20: 10

49 Revelation 20: 14-15

The Soul

The Greek, Egyptians, Babylonian and others believed in the immortality of the soul. This belief is known as “Anthropological Dualism” which teaches that man has a temporal body that decays but he has an eternal soul. [*Man may receive the gift of immortality, but only if he receives Christ as Savior.*] You must be “born-again”.

The traditional concept of an immaterial and immortal soul distinct from the body was not found in Judaism before the Babylonian Exile, but developed as a result of interaction with Persian and Hellenistic philosophies. The Sadducees however did not believe in the immortality of the soul or the resurrection of the body.

The Hebrew word *nephesh* (נֶפֶשׁ) "soul", is commonly rendered as "life". *Nephesh* has a meaning closer to "living being", without reference to an immortal soul. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became [הָיָה שֶׁפֶּנֶל] (*to soul living*) a living soul”⁵⁰. In the New Testament, "soul" (ψυχή) has no reference to an immortal soul. ‘Soul’ refers to the whole person, the self: “three thousand souls” were converted in Acts 2: 41.

To Perish

Perish: *apolhtai* (*Should be being destroyed; To destroy utterly*). In John 3: 16, the implication is that if one does not receive eternal life then they would not have eternal life, anywhere at any time. To perish is the “outer darkness”; the “second death”. The "exterior darkness" is referred to three times in Matthew into which a person may be "cast out", and where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth". It is the place of separation from God and from the "wedding banquet".

Death is described by the metaphor of sleep until being awakened at the resurrection. When Lazarus died, Jesus said he was sleeping and then explained that he was dead. The dead do not know what is happening during their "sleep." The second death, to be experienced by the wicked at the end of the thousand years, will be different. It will be outer darkness— a night from which one will never awaken. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”⁵¹

“Absent from the body; Present with the Lord”

“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”⁵² A Christians’ next conscious thought after death is in the presence of the Lord, be it one minute or a millennium.

1st resurrection: The righteous at the beginning of the 1000-year reign;

2nd resurrection: The wicked at the end of the 1000 year-reign.

“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”.⁵³

50 Gen. 2: 7

52 2 Cor. 5: 6-8

51 Matthew 25: 46

53 Jn. 5: 29

The dead walked through the town.

“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many”.⁵⁴ “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”.⁵⁵

The Life

“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”.⁵⁶ “These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb”.⁵⁷ They are those whose hearts have been made as the hearts of little children”⁵⁸, who have that purity of heart which Christ declared to be blessed, and which James declared to be the first mark of heavenly wisdom.⁵⁹ The metaphor is the virgin (*Bride; Church*), who has not mixed their pure religion with other religions.

Born Once-Die Twice;
Born Twice-Die Once.

Jesus experienced the 2nd death for us that we would not have to be separated from God. “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”⁶⁰

Restriction

Satan misrepresents God by deceiving Adam and Eve into thinking God is too controlling and “restrictive”. [*I want all of the trees in the garden! Besides, the serpent said that we wouldn’t die.*]

Have It Your Way

Adam did it ‘his way’ in the garden and was ‘kicked out’. Cain did it ‘his way’ and his way was rejected. Abraham did it ‘his way’, conceived Ishmael and caused mayhem that continues today!

54 Matt. 27: 50-53

55 1Thes. 4: 16,17

56 Jn. 17: 2,3

57 Rev. 14: 4

58 Matthew 18:1-4

59 Matthew 5:8; James 3:17

60 Matt. 27: 46

Who's your daddy now?

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."⁶¹ The Galatians were reprov'd for departing from the great doctrine of justification alone, through faith in Christ. Under the gospel state true believers are all one in Christ. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are most evidently brought forth by the doctrine of faith. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."⁶²

But Jesus!

Jesus did it His Way, The Father's way, and delivered us from the 'pit' of our own self-inflicted death and destruction. In gethsemane before His crucifixion Jesus said: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done"⁶³. By the accomplished work of Christ, provision is made available to "eat freely of the tree of life". "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day".⁶⁴ Jesus is the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden. Christ is the Secret Place of the Most High. Jesus provided peace and safety under the 'shadow of His wings' on the cross. He is the Tree on a tree. He is the Pilot Light of the golden candle stick. He is the Light of the world and heaven.

The age-ending fire

Jesus said in a parable about the wicked, that He will one day say to them, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels".⁶⁵ Here the final fate of the rebellious angels is described. But what is "eternal fire"? The age-ending "fire," will convert the bodies of all the wicked to ashes -- including that of Satan. "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare" (*burned up*). That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise, we anticipate a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness".⁶⁶ During the great inferno, the wicked and Satan will perish, consumed away into smoke and ashes.

God is Love! so:

How could God endorse, cause or create a situation in which one would experience a conscious eternal suffering and torment without end in the fires of hell? This view originates from the Greek concept that man naturally possesses an eternal, immortal spirit.

61 John 8: 44

62 Gal. 3: 29

63 Luke 22: 42

64 John 6: 53,54

65 Matt. 25:41

66 II Pet. 3:10-13

God is to be respected, not some One to be afraid of, unless one is not born-again. Fear of God is: Respect; Honor; and Obedience. God is love, not God is wrath. Yes, God pours His wrath out upon evil men and God's judgment is fair and righteous. His chastisement and destruction of nations occur only after rebellion and unrepented apostasy. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."⁶⁷ God loves us enough to give us free will. Our choice to refuse His salvation and gift of eternal life will be granted when His day of grace is at an end."⁶⁸

The Refuge

To fear God is: An appreciation and reverential awe. "Fear not", don't be afraid.⁶⁹ Man should be very afraid of his own sin, self-centeredness and self-righteousness that leads to outer darkness. Because of what Christ has accomplished, we may now, through Christ, enter into His presence without being afraid. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."⁷⁰ "What manner of love, that we would be called "sons".⁷¹ God loves us enough to provide us with a Refuge from he who threatens to "steal, kill and destroy."⁷²

Everlasting

"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample (*example*) unto those that after should live ungodly".⁷³ As an example of God's eternal destruction of the wicked, the fires at Sodom burned until there were only ashes left. The fire at Sodom is not burning today but the consequences are total destruction and everlasting (*aeonian*): age-lasting. They "suffered the vengeance of eternal [*aeonian*] fire".⁷⁴ They will be tormented "forever"⁷⁵ until they die; until they lose consciousness, and perish! "Aeonian"; as long as the conditions exist." "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting (*aiwnion*; αἰών from: αἰón) fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."⁷⁶ In the Old Testament God said that a man could be another man's slave "forever", until his death, or until he ceased to exist. God said that the heathen in the land "shall be your bondmen for ever".⁷⁷ "You can make them slaves for life".⁷⁸

Does "forever and ever" mean "endless time"?

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever".⁷⁹ "I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever:

67 Genesis 6: 5-7

68 Matthew 13: 1-9; 18-23

69 Exodus 20: 20

70 Heb. 4: 16

71 1Jn.3: 1

72 John 10: 10

73 2 Peter 2: 6

74 Jude 6

75 Revelation 20: 10

76 Matt. 25: 41

77 Lev. 25: 46

78 Deuteronomy 15: 17

79 Rev. 20: 10

yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God".⁸⁰ "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name".⁸¹

"Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever".⁸² "But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever. Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there".⁸³

The prevalent, un-biblical concept of hell

The Idea of Hell as a place of eternal torment developed in the Second and Third Centuries. The concept of Hell did not exist in the earliest days of the church. In 212 CE: Hippolytus writes: ("eternal punishment...unquenchable and unending fire... fiery worm which does not die and which does not waste the body but continually bursts forth from the body with unceasing pain . . . no sleep").

226 CE: Minucius Felix ("clever fire burns the limbs and restores them, wears them away and yet sustains them, just as fiery thunderbolts strike bodies but do not consume them").

252 CE: Cyprian of Carthage ("ever-burning Gehenna . . . devoured by living flames . . . tormented . . . souls along with their bodies will be preserved for suffering in unlimited agonies . . . without the of repentance; weeping will be useless, and prayer ineffectual."

Other Fabrications:

Purgatory, where the saved souls go to be purged of the temporal effects of their sins;

The Limbo of the Infants (Limbus Infantium), a place of perfect, natural, subjective happiness to which those who died before Baptism (and so are denied the Beatific Vision) but who have not committed personal sins (so don't warrant punishment) go.

The Limbo of the Patriarchs (Limbus Patrum), where the righteous who lived before Jesus came to earth went. Did Christ actually descended into the lower regions of the earth and preach to lost souls that were imprisoned in some purgatory or limbo?

Christ preached to those spirits in prison by the Holy Spirit. God preached to those who later died in Noah's flood.⁸⁴ God preaches today to those who are bound in the prison house of sin. The primary images of hell we have today came from the poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321). In The Divine Comedy, Dante takes the reader through three realms of the dead: Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. The poet has developed places for every type of person, allowing him to editorialize about people's actions in the world of his day. In the process, he creates vivid scenes of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. Those, then, became the basis for virtually all of the artistic depictions of hell in the middle ages and our modern conceptions of a hell with demons, torment, and fire. All of it is poetry; none came from the Bible.

80 Jonah 2: 6

81 Rev. 14: 11

82 Ex. 21: 6

83 1 Sam. 1: 22,28

84 1 Peter 3: 19,20

John Milton (1608-1674)

Milton's Paradise Lost ended the embellishments of hell, both because of the masterpiece Milton had created and because not much more could be originated that Dante and Milton hadn't already created through the genius of their imaginations.

If the church created hell, Dante and Milton furnished, decorated, and populated it. The church was delighted with the horrific images that would frighten the flock into submission and encourage conversion through fear, so it adopted them in toto. The fact that the images weren't biblical was a meaningless detail. Not to be misunderstood, hell is real, but the description of hell and its consequences must be biblically based.

Hell in the Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries

Since the eighteenth century, hell has been a tool evangelists and preachers have used to convert sinners and frighten church members into what they deemed righteousness behavior. Unfortunately, many modern religious teachers have isolated the story from its original context and used it as a device for scaring people. Yeshua taught that the Kingdom of God is based on love, but the church with his name developed a theology based on fear. Sin, Hell and Satan became the preoccupation of the church. Love was mentioned only when it spilled out from the page as a Bible passage was read.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741)

Does This Describe the God You Serve?

Jonathan Edwards presided over the "Great Awakening" in America beginning in 1734 in Northampton, Massachusetts. Edwards, through his fire and brimstone messages, brought a great feeling of sinfulness and fear. When he preached the sermon that follows, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," "the congregation screamed and wept." It was reported that they reached for building columns and chair rails to keep from slipping into hell.

"The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment."

"You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment."

Would God, or anyone desire to create a living soul that would be forever tortured? Would this ever be just punishment for the wicked? Does God coerce obedience by fear of Him or by response to His love, righteousness and reconciliation?

Tartarus

Tartarus, ᾅδης (hades): This is the name of the Greek god of the underworld, as well as the name of his underworld domain.

Much of the time the god Hades was seen as the underworld equivalent of Zeus, who at least theoretically ruled aboveground. However, there appear to be portions of the underworld beyond his control, or with which he does not involve himself. In Hellenistic literature the word *hades* was used to mean: a grave or tomb; the domain of the dead; the dead, collectively (*e.g. one's ancestors or forefathers*); The place where dead spirits end up after dying. In terms of the New Testament it means a grave, or more specifically, a “dead end.” Tartarus appears only once in 2 Peter 2:4 concerning fallen angels awaiting judgment. *ταρταρος* (tartaros): This is a portion of the underworld in which those few dead who especially offended the gods during life, are trapped in eternal torment. Here one finds Tantalus, Sisyphus, and others enduring such fates. This word most assuredly refers to everlasting punishment, exactly as it did for the Greeks who told myths about Tantalus and the rest.

Was the Word ‘Hell’ in the Original Bible?

The word "hell" did not appear anywhere in the original Hebrew Bible. “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”⁸⁵ “Behold the day is coming, burning like an oven...[*the wicked*] will be burned up “leaving neither root nor branch.” The wicked shall be “ashes under your feet.” They will die the 2nd death. They will “be as though they had not been”.⁸⁶

Hell Occurs: When; Where; and For How long?

When: At the end of the millennium;

Where: Here on earth, when the fire of Gods’ presence falls upon the wicked and they are destroyed, creating earth a-new;

How long: Humans are not: ‘Naturally’ immortal. Immortality is a gift from God. Man is not indestructible. “Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die”.⁸⁷

“Where the Worm Dieth Not”

Some of these same principles apply to Isaiah 66:24. The meaning is not that unrepentant sinners or worms live forever. If the worms that infest a dead body are not killed, the rotting flesh will be consumed until none remains. Maggots, which are larval flies, go through the process known as pupation and turn into adult flies. These, in turn, deposit additional eggs, and the process is repeated until nothing is left for maggots to feed on. Similarly, any fire which is not quenched—not deliberately put out—will last only as long as there is fuel to keep it burning and then go out. The whole point is that, when a person does not repent of sin, the results are absolute and permanent—eternal oblivion!

⁸⁵ Matt. 10: 28

⁸⁶ Mal.4: 1

⁸⁷ Ez. 18: 4

Soul

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”⁸⁸ “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”⁸⁹ The many coming from the east and west are the Gentiles.

Day and Night Forever

What, then, does Revelation 20:10 refer to when it says Satan, the beast, and false prophet, will be "tormented day and night for ever and ever"? While this world lasts, Satan's power in it will not be wholly destroyed, though it may be limited and lessened. No sooner is Satan let loose, than he again begins deceiving the nations, and stirring them up to make war with the saints and servants of God. God will fight this last and decisive battle for his people, that the victory may be complete, and the glory be His. "If anyone worships the beast and his image . . . he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever.”⁹⁰

God's fire devours them and the effect and consequence is eternal. There is no resurrection from this, the 2nd death. Anyone not found written in the Lambs' Book of Life is cast into the lake of fire.⁹¹ “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.”⁹² The earth is cleansed of sin and sinners.

The Unsaved:

1. Will die⁹³;
2. Will Perish⁹⁴;
3. Will be burned up⁹⁵;
4. Will be utterly consumed⁹⁶;
5. Will be turned into ashes⁹⁷;
6. Will be as though they had not been⁹⁸;
7. Satan himself will be totally destroyed⁹⁹.

Effects of the Pagan Influences:

1. The loss of the Sabbath;
2. The adoption of the concept of the immortality of the soul;
3. The perversion of the teaching of hell.

88 Rev. 20: 13

89 Matthew 8: 11-12

90 Rev. 14: 9-11

91 Rev. 20: 15

92 Rev. 21: 1

93 Rom.6: 23

94 Lk.13 :3

95 Mal.4: 1

96 Ps. 37: 20

97 Mal. 4: 3

98 Ob. 16

99 Ez. 28: 18

Contamination of the Word of God by hypocrisy and corrupted by additions to the word.

What, then, is God's solution to the "rebellion problem"? Is it eternal, never-ending burning and torment in a "lake of fire"? For a finite act of rebellion, would God be constrained to exact an infinite penalty? For an act which occurred in a finite or limited space of time, would He be compelled or forced to punish interminably, forever and ever? Does Satan and his demons possess immortality, and would therefore their punishment require eternal punishing and torment?

Can Angels and Demons "Die"?

Angels and men are created beings. Only God is truly immortal. Jesus said that of those in the resurrection "cannot die any more: for they are equal unto the angels".¹⁰⁰ Do angels never "die" because they are immortal spirit beings? Angels of God in heaven¹⁰¹, who did not rebel against God, who proved themselves to be loyal, cannot "die" a natural death! This means that since they proved themselves loyal to God, He will allow them to live forever, and they will not die. It does not state here, however, that YEHOVAH God could not destroy any being if He chose to do so, and terminate the life of any rebellious being! God creates life and God can take life away.

The principle of Scripture which governs God's punishment for all sin is death¹⁰²; "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord". Sin by definition is lawlessness or rebellion against God.¹⁰³ The penalty of sin, in the Court of Heaven, is simply death -- not burning and torment forever and ever and ever, ages without end! No being can have eternal life apart from God Himself! Anything God "gives," He can take back if the recipient proves to be rebellious and unworthy of the gift! The punishment of Satan, his demons, and all the wicked, will last up to a point until the limit or destination is reached. That is the total annihilation and termination of being; the end of life itself. They will be destroyed completely, till nothing is left. Malachi says "neither root nor branch" [*shall remain*]. The smoke of their torment will rise up "to" the ages; up to that point.

The fate of Satan and the beast and false prophet suffered up to the threshold or edge of "forever". It does not mean they will suffer throughout all eternity, but up to the "edge" or outer limits of eternity. When the elements melt with fiery heat, and the stars and galaxies, and everything physical, is destroyed, the wicked also -- including Satan and his demons -- will likewise be destroyed. Satan will be "devoured" and "shall be no more forever."¹⁰⁴ God, not Satan, is in charge of hell. "The Lord knoweth how to... reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."¹⁰⁵

How Long will the Wicked Suffer in the Fire?

"...The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ...Death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."¹⁰⁶ "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."¹⁰⁷

100 Luke 20: 36

101 Matthew 22: 30

102 Rom.6: 23

103 I John 3: 4

104 Ez. 28: 18,19

105 2 Peter 2: 9

106 Rev. 20: 12,13

107 Matt. 16: 27

“And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.”¹⁰⁸ To say God punishes someone without end portrays Him as a tyrant and sadist. What a terrible misrepresentation of God's righteous judgement and character!

“The Lord is... “longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”¹⁰⁹ For the LORD shall “be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.” “...As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die...? Jesus and His disciples... “entered into a village of the Samaritans” ...”and they did not receive him.” “And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.”¹¹⁰ “He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”¹¹¹

“Shall Mortal Man be More Just Than God?”¹¹²

Does the Phrase “Everlasting Fire” Mean “Unending”?

The Consequences of What Happens in the Fire is Forever. “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”.¹¹³ (apolesai) καὶ σῶμα ἀπολέσαι ἐν γεέννῃ To destroy. The English word “soul” is a translation of the Greek psuche and from the Hebrew word nephesh. Both words mean “a living, breathing creature,” referring to man or animal. “Soul” never means something immortal inside of man or animal. The phrase “immortal soul” appears nowhere in the Bible. “The soul who sins shall die”.¹¹⁴ The word “soul” pertains to the life of any physical being or creature.

The true biblical teaching is neither the original ‘Christian’ view of hell nor the view of annihilation. Our great God is neither a great torturer nor a great annihilator. He is the great Saviour of the world.¹¹⁵

“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell (geennan: Gehenna), into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm (*maggot*) dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell (Gehenna), into the fire that never shall be quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell (Gehenna) fire.”¹¹⁶ Jesus’ purpose in saying, hyperbolically, that sinners should pluck out their eyes or cut off their hands is to magnify in His hearers’ minds the heinous nature of sin. Hyperbole is an obvious exaggeration or an intentional overstatement. Overstatement and extreme exaggeration are still used today in Jewish debate and comparative reasoning.

108 Luke 12: 47,48

109 2 Peter 3: 9

110 Luke 9: 52-56

111 Is. 53: 9

112 Job 4: 17

113 Matt. 10: 28

114 Ezekiel 18: 4, 20

115 John 4: 42; 1 John 4: 14

116 Mark 9: 43-47

An "aeonian fire" does not refer to a fire that never goes out! After this "aeonian fire" completely destroyed and obliterated those ancient cities, it burned itself out when there was nothing else left to consume! However, the effect of that ancient fire is eternal. Even so, God has specifically prepared the final "lake of fire" or Gehenna for the destruction of the devil and his demons, and the wicked among mankind who do not turn from their wickedness. This lake of fire will be on the surface of the earth. It will likewise burn itself out, when it has accomplished its mission of destruction! "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."¹¹⁷

"Surely the day is coming that the earth will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire, says the Lord Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. . . Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things, says the Lord Almighty".¹¹⁸

God Will Try Our Principles by Our Practices

By their works men shall be justified or condemned. Those justified and acquitted by the gospel, shall be justified and acquitted by the Judge, and shall enter into eternal life having nothing more to fear from death, or hell, or wicked men; for these are all destroyed together. This is the second death; it is the final separation of sinners from God. The fate of the evil men will be to be cast into the "outer darkness" where they will as "raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever".¹¹⁹

"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward . . . These [*evil men*] are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots".¹²⁰ These evil men are "twice dead" and will suffer the second death, which is the lake of fire!

Hell is Going to Hell!

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death ".¹²¹ Jude describes false teachers who deceive their way into the Church and seduce members to follow them! These false teachers are compared to "wandering stars" today, in that they wander from place to place, seducing, deceiving, and misleading people. Their eventual "fate" will be "blackness of darkness forever" that is, to have their lives snuffed out in the lake of fire, and to be totally unconscious and dead, forever! "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."¹²²

117 2 Peter 3: 10

118 Mal. 4: 1-3

119 Jude 13

120 Jude 11-12

121 Rev. 20: 14

122 Rev. 21: 8

*[By the greatness of your guilt, by the crimes of your commerce, you have profaned your sacred position; therefore have I made you set fire to yourself, with flames that consume you, and reduced you to ashes on earth in the sight of all who behold you. All who know you among the nations shall be appalled at you. Your fate is awful, there is no future for you].*¹²³

The Hebrew expression לִרְדֹּף שְׁאוֹלָה ("to descend into she'ol") means "to die"; ("to go to the grave"). "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes".¹²⁴

The concepts of an ever-burning hell vs The Biblical teaching of resurrection

Over the centuries there has been a blending of Bible teachings with the teachings and traditions of men. The Bible speaks of resurrection, and death by fire. The compromised view sees the body being resurrected and rejoining its soul again and then both being tormented together by fire.

- * There is no ever-burning hell with an eternity of torture.
- * There is no place called purgatory.

How many times is "hell" mentioned in the Bible? The place of eternal suffering was The Greek Tartarus. This is the only word in the Bible that actually means "hell" in either Greek or Hebrew. Tartarus appears once in 2 Peter 2:4: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment". This verse is about fallen angels awaiting judgment; is not eternal and is not for man.

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."¹²⁵ (*Sodom and Gomorrah are not still burning*). The consequences of their burning is forever and eternal. They ceased to exist.

We 'left our first estate' like the prodigal, and ran away from our Father. God in the flesh wept over our self-inflicted estrangement. God the Father grieves at our wickedness.¹²⁶ "It repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

We have been imprisoned as our own slave to sin

Lucifer and his angels "forsook their own proper dwelling place" in heaven. Peter speaks of the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient when the patience of God was waiting in Noah's days while the ark was being constructed.¹²⁷ This directly links the matter to the account at Genesis 6:1-4 concerning "the sons of the true God" who abandoned their heavenly dwelling to couple with women in pre-Flood times and produced children by them, such offspring being designated as Nephilim.

123 Ezek. 28: 18-19

124 Hosea 13: 14

125 Jude 6,7

126 Gen. 6: 5,6

127 1 Pet. 3: 19, 20

When Did Eternal Torture Begin to be Preached?

The concept of a soul within us that cannot die became a widespread ‘Christian’ doctrine at the end of the second century A.D. Hell had been taught in Greek philosophy long before the time of Jesus, with Plato (427-347 BC). The teaching of an everlasting place of punishment for the wicked is the natural consequence of a belief in an immortal soul. By the year AD 187, it was understood that life, once we have it, is compulsory; there is no end to it, either now or in a world to come. We have no choice as to its continuance, even if we were to commit suicide to end it. This is not a biblical concept or truth.

What is Eternal Fire?

Sodom and Gomorrah are not burning right now. They suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. Eternal fire has eternal consequences. Sodom is the example of eternal punishment.¹²⁸ Eternal punishment, not eternal punishing! Jonah was in the belly of the fish, forever; Samuel was given to the Lord, ‘forever’, until he died.¹²⁹ In Exodus 21:6, the slave is marked to be a slave ‘forever’ until he died, or released after 7 years. Only God lives forever. The 2nd death is the result of personal rebellion against God from which there is no resurrection.

Body and Soul are Destroyed in Hell

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Gehenna).¹³⁰ “And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.”¹³¹ “For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.”¹³²

What Will Happen to the Wicked in Hell Fire?

“For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.”¹³³

The Results of the Final Fire are Eternal

“And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.”¹³⁴ The example is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah which is not still burning, but destroyed out of existence. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise,

128 Matt. 25:46

129 1 Sam. 1:28

130 Matt. 10: 28

131 Malachi 4: 3

132 Obadiah 1: 16

133 Ps. 37: 10,20

134 Rev. 20: 9

and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”¹³⁵ (καυσούμενα) λυθήσεται (*dissolved*). At this time the dead in Christ have risen. All that is left on earth are the wicked.

Unquenchable Fire

“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”:¹³⁶ (πυρὶ ἀσβέστῳ) *fire unquenched*. “But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem,¹³⁷ and it shall not be quenched.”¹³⁸ (*Titus with his Roman legions began to assault and to burn Jerusalem on the Passover of 70 A.D.*) “They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame.” This unquenchable fire will go out after it has finished its work. “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”¹³⁹

How to Live in the Fire of God¹⁴⁰

‘Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?. He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.¹⁴¹ He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.”¹⁴² God is a consuming fire. The upright will dwell with “everlasting burnings” in God’s own presence. The unsaved have refused to live in the fire of God’s love, and they are finally consumed by it. Each person feels God’s love differently, according to their spiritual condition and life experience.

Eternal torture in hell has no Biblical basis and is simply incompatible with a loving God. On the Day of Judgement, all resurrected unbelieving humanity will be cast into Gehenna fire for judgement. The Gehenna fire is God’s age-to-come, age-lasting refining Lake of Fire during the Great White Throne Judgement Age. Gehenna is God’s corrective, refining, merciful and just judgement.

The Fate of Satan Revealed

Satan and his angels try to take by force what they would not receive by grace. Satan wanted the Power of God, but not the Spirit of God. “How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of the assembly . . . I will make myself like the Most High. but you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.”¹⁴³ “You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you.

135 2 Peter 3: 10

136 Matt. 3: 12

137 Isaiah 47: 14

138 Jer. 17: 27

139 Matt. 25: 41

140 Daniel 3

141 Isaiah 33: 14,15

142 1 Jn. 4: 16

143 Isa. 14:12-15

You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you." "Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. . . So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more."¹⁴⁴

What is the Bottomless Pit?

“Bottomless pit” (abussou) is literally the “abyss,” which means “unbounded, the pit, or the immeasurable depth.” Roman mythology featured a similar place called Orcus, a very deep gulf or chasm in the lowest parts of the earth used as the common receptacle of the dead and, especially, as the abode of demons. The bottomless pit of Revelation 9:1-12 holds a unique type of demon. It is also the home of the beast who makes war against the two witnesses¹⁴⁵. At the beginning of the millennial kingdom, the bottomless pit is the place where Satan is bound¹⁴⁶. At the end of the thousand years, Satan is released and promptly leads an unsuccessful revolt against God.¹⁴⁷ The bottomless pit may be associated with a place called Tartarus (ταρταρώ). Tartarus is used only once in 2 Peter 2:4. It refers to the place where “angels who sinned” are reserved in chains of darkness for judgment. These same angels are also mentioned in Jude 6 as the angels who “abandoned their own home”.

If Tartarus is the same as the Abyss, then the inhabitants of the bottomless pit are the same angels who sinned and left their first habitation. God uses the bottomless pit as a holding place for the most evil of angels, including Satan himself and those who tried and failed before the flood to thwart God’s plan to bring the Seed of the woman into the world¹⁴⁸. The inhabitants of the Abyss are released for a very short time during the last three and a half years of the tribulation to fulfill God’s purpose, namely, to torment the wicked¹⁴⁹.

“Fire” represents God’s wrath; Poured out on Jesus at the cross. Is the fire of Gehenna burning now? Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.¹⁵⁰ Who shall be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”¹⁵¹ And shall cast them into the furnace of fire.¹⁵² For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to *tartarus*, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.¹⁵³

Sorrowing

“Sorrowing” and “tormented” come from the word *odynaō* (ὀδυνάω) meaning “very painful sorrow”; to experience intense emotional pain; deep, personal anguish expressed by great mourning. “And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.”¹⁵⁴

144 Ezek. 28:12-19

145 Revelation 11:7-8

146 Revelation 20:1-3

147 Revelation 20:7-10

148 Genesis 3:15

149 Revelation 9:5

150 Mark 9: 43

151 2 Thess. 1: 9

152 Matt. 13: 50

153 2 Pet. 2: 4

154 Luke 16:24

“And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am **tormented** (odun Omai: *in intense, burning pain*) in this flame. The word torment (βασανίζω) “basanos” is defined as a touchstone, which is a black siliceous stone used to test the purity of gold or silver by the color of the streak produced on it by rubbing it with either metal. It later became known to denote an instrument of torture known as the rack in order to divulge the truth.

Josephus describes both righteous and wicked being conscious in Hades, their separation by a chasm, unquenchable, unending fire, and the Bosom of Abraham. In his scheme, the time in Hades is between death and the resurrection. The doctrine of Purgatory was also developed from these ideas. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas taught the idea of an ever-burning, fiery Hell. In 1253 it was formalized as church doctrine. These are simply fabrications introduced into Christian doctrine through pagan myth and superstition.

Eonian a ‘timely’ word

An eon is an "immeasurably or indefinitely long period of time." So is an aion. Aion as "an age, era, or time viewed in relation to what takes place in the period. Ages have to do with time and plurality, while forever is the opposite of time. The thousand-year kingdom reign on earth¹⁵⁵ is "the coming eon."¹⁵⁶ This gives way to a new heaven and a new earth.¹⁵⁷ which is yet another eon.¹⁵⁸ "The gift of God is eonian life."¹⁵⁹ Jesus and Paul spoke of eonian life, or that life which endures through two future eons; The thousand-year kingdom eon and; The new heavens and new earth. The saints live forever, not because of eonian life but because they are made immortal.¹⁶⁰ Eonian life defines life during the coming eons. As the eons end¹⁶¹, so ends the eonian life. The saints live on, for at the consummation of the eons death is abolished.¹⁶² “But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting (*eonian*) God” ...¹⁶³

"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever (*eons of the eons*)." "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."¹⁶⁴ “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”¹⁶⁵

CHAPTER 2

THE PARABLE WITH A PARADOX

The Shammai religious leaders of Jesus' day had what Paul calls a “form of godliness”¹⁶⁶, one that is based on the physical, outward appearance and self-righteousness. As a “fence around the Law,” the oral law was intended to prevent one from transgressing against the Pentateuch. However, by “fencing in” the written Torah with “oral law” regulations,

155 Revelation 5:10; 20: 4

156 Mark 10:30

157 Revelation 21: 1

158 Ephesians 2: 7

159 Romans 6: 23

160 1 Corinthians 15: 54

161 1 Corinthians 10: 11, Hebrews 9: 26

162 1 Corinthians 15: 24-26

163 Romans 16: 26

164 1 Cor. 15: 25

165 Rev. 19: 20

166 II Tim. 3: 5

one is also relieved of the responsibility of spiritual discernment. It is a humanly-devised substitute for a sound conscience led by the Holy Spirit.

First Century Schools of Thought

There were basically four schools of thought in Jesus' day. From the Bible we see the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Zealots. From religious history we also see the Essenes. The Pharisees were the strictest sect of Jews. Their name meant "set apart." However, all too often they clung to their own laws and traditions instead of God's Law. "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."¹⁶⁷ Selfishness, rather than self-less-ness was preferable. Love was considered weakness and boasting was a skill to be desired; Preaching without practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger."¹⁶⁸

JEWISH LAW

Instruction in Righteousness

The law was much more than a set of rules of do's and don'ts. The law was and is instruction in righteousness, revealing God's character and nature. As created in His image, life's meaning purpose and fulfilment are realized as one takes on His likeness. To be 'Christ-like' is to be fully human as God designed. In this one finds perfect peace, fulfilment and "joy unspeakable and full of glory."¹⁶⁹ Man shares in managing creation by exercising dominion.¹⁷⁰ Man lost dominion of the earth to Satan, but Jesus bought it back with His blood.

The written word and the Word that became flesh reveal the highest manifestation and self-communication of Divine love and Divine thought. This truth and grace was given first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. Each ethnic group interpreted and applied this revelation differently because of social and cultural differences. The basic gospel remains the same for all peoples and for all time. The following will illustrate some of the basic differences between Jew and Gentile as relating to the spiritual relationship and commandment of God toward fellow man.

What does the "first shall be last" mean?

"But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."¹⁷¹ The Jews received the promises first but because of their disobedience, they will be last in receiving the promises of the kingdom of God. The law did not teach a living, saving knowledge; but, by its rites and ceremonies, especially by its sacrifices, it pointed to Christ that the faithful might be justified by faith. Then the law, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, becomes the standard for daily self-examination. They learned to depend on the Saviour.

The covenant God made with Abraham, was not done away by the giving the law to Moses. The covenant was made with Abraham and his seed.

¹⁶⁷ Matt. 5:20

¹⁶⁸ Matthew 23:3,4

¹⁶⁹ 1 Peter 1:8

¹⁷⁰ Gen. 1: 26,27

¹⁷¹ Mark 10: 31

Christ abideth forever in His person, and His spiritual seed, who are His by faith. The promises of the law are made to the person of every man; the promises of the gospel are first made to Christ, then by Him to those who are by faith ingrafted into Christ. A great difference must be made between the promise and the law, as to the inward affections, and the practice of life. When the promise is mingled with the law, it is made nothing but the law. Let Christ be always before our eyes and against dependence upon our own righteousness.

Christians become the sons of God. Being baptized into Christ, we are baptized into his death, that as he died and rose again, so we should die unto sin, and walk in newness and holiness of life. The putting on of Christ according to the gospel, consists not in outward imitation, but in a new birth, an entire change.

First century Jews had lived by law and tradition but the advent of Grace and unconditional Love was to them a radically new and revolutionary concept. Jesus was confronted and ridiculed by the established religion more than any other. His message and teaching were a major threat to the status-quo and position of the Pharisee. Christ's rebuke was not accepted and the Pharisee became His greatest persecutor. Jesus' description of their sinful condition was subtle at first: told in metaphor and parable. Later His reprimands were direct and to-the-point as in the following.

Luke, chapters 15 and 16 illustrate Jesus' subtle message to the Scribes and Pharisees concerning their hypocrisy and covetousness. It also was instruction and encouragement to the disciples. "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."¹⁷² The following four parables and discourse on divorce were all describing the hypocrisy and spiritual condition of the Pharisees.

The parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son illustrate how God's people should care for "even the least of these."¹⁷³ These show the church's commission to be the Light to bring all, including those who have strayed from the faith, into the saving grace of God. The next two parables are not-so-subtle in the critique of the Jews and how they have failed in obeying God and loving neighbor.

The parable of the Unjust Steward reproves the hypocrisy of the covetous Pharisees. Whatever we have is the property of God. We must use of it according to the direction of the Lord and for His honour. The true riches signify spiritual blessings; and if a man spends upon himself, what evidence can he have that he is an heir of God through Christ? Jesus was not trying to explain the physical realities of the afterlife but was referring to the unfaithfulness of the Jews regarding their assigned responsibility. As stewards of the special message of truth, they failed to share it with the Gentiles, who were eager to hear it.

"Ye cannot serve God and the world."¹⁷⁴ The Pharisees treated His instructions with contempt. Jesus warned them, that what they considered law, was a distortion of its meaning. This the Lord showed concerning marriage and divorce. Women of Jesus' day had a very low status in Jewish society. They were considered more as property than as with honor and voice. The marriage law was misused and loop-holes were created to give the husband more legal, personal control over the moral and ethical rights of the wife. Jesus is the great liberator of human rights, especially for women and out-casts. Jesus mentions divorce here to show the abuse of the law and disregard for fellow-man,

172 Luke 15: 1,2

173 Matt. 25: 40

174 Matt. 6: 24

but more importantly to illustrate the nations' complacency and lack of mercy for "neighbors" such as the gentile nations surrounding them. The 'other adulterous woman' represents the false doctrine of other gods.

Characteristics of a Pharisee:
As Described in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

- (1) They threw aside God's commandments and made the commandments of men and traditions into doctrines.¹⁷⁵
- (2) They were more concerned with outer purity rather than the purity of the heart. Jesus said that they cleaned the inside of the cup but inside their hearts were full of wickedness!¹⁷⁶
- (3) They tithed on herbs but more important matters like justice and the love for God were overlooked.¹⁷⁷ They "strained out a gnat but they swallowed a camel."¹⁷⁸
- (4) They loved the highest seats and public greetings in the market because they were self-centered and wanted to be seen by people, to the point of enlarging the borders of their clothes.¹⁷⁹
- (5) They made people fall. Jesus said that they were like hidden graves that made unsuspecting people fall in.¹⁸⁰
- (6) They did not want people to be healed on the Sabbath that God made for man but yet they would take out their ox if it fell in a pit on Sabbath.¹⁸¹
- (7) They burdened people with unnecessary traditions and did not raise a finger to help.¹⁸²
- (8) They built the sepulchers of the prophets that their own ancestors killed.¹⁸³ They killed Jesus.¹⁸⁴
- (9) They took away the key of knowledge. They blocked people from getting into heaven and they themselves did not get in.¹⁸⁵
- (10) They devoured widows' houses!¹⁸⁶
- (11) They said long prayers pretending that they were righteous.¹⁷⁵
- (12) They went on land and sea to convert people and they made those converts twice a child of hell as themselves!¹⁸⁷
- (13) They forbade people from swearing by the gold of the temple but they swore by the temple itself!¹⁸⁸
- (14) They talked but not did not do anything.¹⁸⁹ They even praised God with their lips and their heart was far from Him.¹⁹⁰
- (15) They were fools, blind guides and hypocrites.¹⁹¹ John the Baptist called them vipers.¹⁹²
- (16) They loved to tempt, accuse and oppose Jesus.¹⁹³ They continuously tried to entangle Him in His talk.¹⁹⁴

175 Mark 7: 7-9

176 Luke 11: 39; Matt. 23: 25,27,28

177 Luke 11: 32; Matt. 23: 23,24

178 Matt 23: 24

179 Luke 11: 43; Matt. 23: 5-10; Mark 12: 38

180 Luke 11: 44

181 Matt. 13: 11-17

182 Luke 11: 46; Matt. 23: 4

183 Luke 11: 47,48; Matt. 23: 29-31

184 Matt. 12: 14; 21: 33-46; Matt. 27: 20-22

185 Matt. 23: 13, Luke 11: 52; John 12: 42,43

186 Matt. 23: 14

187 Matt. 23: 15

188 Matt. 23: 16,17

189 Matt 23: 3

190 Matt. 7: 6

191 Matt 23: 16-25; Luke 11: 44,46; 12: 1-3

192 Matt. 3: 7

193 Matt. 16: 1; 19: 3; Mark 8: 11; 10: 2; 12: 13; Luke 6: 7

194 Matt. 22: 15

The Gentile/Jewish Disconnect

Religious Traditions

"A Godly man is a person who holds God and man in one thought at one time, at all times, who wishes no harm to others, whose greatest passion is compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair." Religious tradition often develops isolation and separation from those who need the gospel message.¹⁹⁵

Tradition is local while religion is universal;
 Tradition can change and even vanish but religion is forever;
 Tradition doesn't need support of books or experts while religion needs explanation;
 Tradition has limited impact on life while religion is about everything;
 Tradition makes no obligation while religion puts obligation on the believer;
 Tradition is not about right and wrong, but religion is always about right and wrong;
 Tradition is not meant to give peace but religion is meant to give the believer peace.

Accommodation

Jesus accommodates the misconceptions of the Pharisees by speaking to them in terms and theories they believed: Paul in Rome, "to the unknown god." "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."¹⁹⁶

God has made accommodations for every single man that has ever lived. We all fall so very far short of His sovereign glory! God's accommodation is not compromise. His impeccable, absolute righteousness is firmly and eternally intact. We must thank God each day that He made allowance for our many spiritual failures via Christ's atoning blood, Hallelujah! Every man God anointed for a task had weaknesses, faults and sin. The difference being that the fruit of their calling was the result of God's authority and power which overflowed from the willing, yielded vessel of 'clay'. So too may we, in these last days, spring forth with rivers of Living Water!

Message in Symbols

Key Words:

Purple: Jesus' purple robe at trial.¹⁹⁷ Purple is historically symbolic for royalty, authority, and wealth. "And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made cloths of service, to do service in the Holy Place."¹⁹⁸

The Rich man: The Jewish nation¹⁹⁹

Lazarus: The Gentiles will also receive the promise and resurrection. Is Lazarus in heaven?²⁰⁰
 "...Died in faith, not having received the promises."

The Gate: Where Gentiles lay in wait to enter the kingdom.

195 2 Cor. 4: 3-6

196 Acts 17: 23

197 Jn. 19: 5

198 Exodus 39: 1-2

199 Deuteronomy 7: 6

200 Heb. 11: 13

Bosom: Symbol of love and closeness. Heaven (*Place of spiritual promise to be loved and close to God.*)²⁰¹

Gehenna: God's judgment on the Jews disobedience.

The Jews: Arrogance; self-righteousness; disobedience; Boasting; worshiping themselves.

Abraham: "Father" of rich man (*son=Israel*)

Finger (Matt. 23:4) Pharisees won't lift a 'finger' to bless someone (*complacency*).

Five brothers: Judah was born of Leah and she bore (5) more sons for a total of six sons.²⁰²

These five represent the house of Judah and all of the descendants of the Jews from the original covenant. The five books of Moses "testify of Me."²⁰³

The Identity of the Rich Man

It was Lazarus who desired crumbs to be fed but now it is the rich man asking for the tip of a finger to be dipped in water to cool his tongue. "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."²⁰⁴ Jesus accurately portrays the scribes and the Pharisees as religious hypocrites who were complacent with total disregard for 'neighbor'. They didn't practice what they preached and now it is they who are requesting assistance from the Gentiles.

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers. How can ye escape the damnation of [*Gehenna – God's Judgement*]?" These "separated ones" were arrogant, self-righteous and disobedient. They didn't see a need to help others. They boasted about having the law of the prophets, and they worshiped themselves. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."²⁰⁵ They worshiped the outwardly things not realizing that it was God who blessed them and they refused to bless others.

The Pharisees believed many myths and fables so Jesus used their own misconceptions to present this parable. This parable was not meant to be taken literally but to be interpreted symbolically to describe their ungodliness and lack of concern for the Gentiles. The atmosphere was tense because the Pharisees were attempting to find ways to condemn Jesus for claiming to be the Messiah and for breaking the Mosaic law. They cursed Jesus for casting a demon out of another man, instead of rejoicing that he was finally free.²⁰⁶ The problem with the Pharisees is not simply that they preach a false gospel of works. The real problem is that pride and greed and fear will eventually sever one's mind and mouth from one's heart.

Why does the rich man have 5 brothers?

The rich man goes on to plead with father Abraham to witness to his five brothers to prevent them from going to the same place of torment that he is in. In Genesis 35 Judah was born of Leah and she bore (5) more sons for a total of six sons. The whole house of Judah represented the Pharisees, scribes, and all of the descendants of the Jews from the original covenant. Jesus built His appeal on symbolism from the false belief of the Pharisees.

201 Jn. 13: 23

202 Genesis 35: 22

203 Luke 24: 44

204 Matt. 23: 4

205 Rev. 3: 17

206 Matthew 12: 22–24

Like commending the dishonest steward for his greed, Jesus used the beliefs of the Pharisees to help them see their real need. He would not have been recommending their strange beliefs because He had told His disciples to beware "of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

Jesus was talking to them in their own language. If they had not been familiar with the scenario of the parable, their focus would have been on the strange ideas rather than on the message. If they had not at least valued the pagan ideas about death, they would have scorned them as heresy using the encounter to turn the people away from Christ.

Why does Jesus use the example of marriage law in this message to the Pharisees?

The Marriage/Law Scenario

"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."²⁰⁷ A wife who was divorced without the 'divorce certificate' would often resort to prostitution to have food and a survivable livelihood. Remarriage was not considered adulterous when the proper writ of divorcement was made. When a man wants to divorce his wife, "then let him write her a bill of divorcement".²⁰⁸ This is a no-fault document that certifies the fact that a couple is now free to remarry according to Jewish law. Traditional Jewish law (*Halacha*) and Orthodox Judaism require a 'Get' (*official divorce document*) for the dissolution of a marriage before either couple can remarry.

The primary reason this example was given was to rebuke the Pharisees for their cold-hearted, merciless attitude toward others and to expose their false doctrines. Metaphorically in this parable, (*wife*) represents the law; (*Another*) stands for the false doctrine of men. "Whosoever putteth away his wife (*the law*), and marrieth another (*a false gospel*), committeth adultery (*heresy*): and whosoever marrieth her (*aligns with false teachings*) that is put away from her husband (*Christ*) committeth (*spiritual*) adultery. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."²⁰⁹

"And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided (*mocked and ridiculed*) him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."²¹⁰

Marriage and Immortality in Heaven

Luke 20: 34-36 "And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

207 Luke 16: 18

208 Deuteronomy 24: 1

209 James 4: 4

210 Luke 16: 14-17

Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.”

The children of God in heaven have a body so perfect, that they are subject neither to the law of marriage nor to normal physical death, which gave occasion to the succession of brothers in the having to wife the one woman. That shall be a state more firm and lasting than the Adamic state.— ἰσάγγελοι γὰρ, for they are like [equal to] the angels) An Ætiology, assigning the reason why there shall then be no marriages.— (υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ, sons of God) Equally as are the angels.— (τῆς ἀναστάσεως) of the resurrection, an antithesis to die (ἀποθανεῖν).

To them, as to angels, is attributed neither death, birth, nor marriage. It is not to be inferred that the angels are, like men even in their glorified state, of a compound nature, body and soul. Angels are pure spirits, who in becoming visible to bodily eyes invest themselves with a visible body.

The children of God are sons of the resurrection. The opposite of this would be sons of Gehenna, or the grave. (Matthew 23:15) This is in accordance with that Hebrew figure of speech by which a being is said to be a son or child of that to whose nature he is conformed, or to whom he belongs: Son of Belial; Son of perdition; Son of death. They who attain the resurrection in its glorious side are now angel-like, God-like and resurrection-like.

They are sons of God as ‘partakers of the divine nature,’ and hence free from normal death. The same change will occur in believers living at that day. (1 Corinthians 15:51-54; Romans 8:18-23)

(ἀποθανεῖν): marriage, birth, death, go together, form one system of things, that of this world. In the next they have no place. In Romans 1:4 Christ was declared or constituted the Son of God with power by the resurrection. The “sons of God,” (Job 1:6; Job 38:7; Genesis 6:12) are identified with the angels.

Jesus’ responds from the Sadducees misunderstanding of marriage in the afterlife, to their misunderstanding of resurrection in general. He is saying that there is no marriage and there is no death in the resurrection because it is a totally different type of life.

The Sadducees question is based on the law of brother-in-law marriage found in Deuteronomy 25. If there is no death, this law becomes unnecessary. The Sadducees thought the implications of the law made the resurrection absurd, when in fact the implications of the resurrection annul the law. The Sadducees ask: "Whose wife will she be?" They think this is a trick question and want to show that the resurrection leads to absurdities, and is impossible. The law in Deut. 25 exists because of death. There is no death in the resurrection, so that law cannot decide what happens. Moses taught the resurrection of the dead." The implied answer is: She will be nobody's wife.

“Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all.” (Luke 20: 39, 40) Jesus' answer deals with the ignorance, misunderstandings, and sinful heart that motivated it. The response in v40 indicates that his answer silenced the Sadducees and everyone present.

Love Without Truth is a Lie;
Truth Without Love is a Weapon

Preaching the law without first expressing love shows a self-righteous concern for being right, not a true desire for fostering righteousness. Truth administered without love may justifiably be labeled a 'hate crime'.

The Ungodliness of the Pharisees

The purpose of this parable was to rebuke the Jewish leaders and bring conviction to their hearts. The church may take notice of this message today to examine the motives of the heart. A literal interpretation of this parable, without considering the context, will raise questions such as: Is being rich a sin; Is Abraham's bosom heaven; Can a literal drop of water help to quench someone who is being tormented in fire; Can people who are in hell talk to people in heaven; Why is the beggar in this story named Lazarus? If God is benevolent, fair and just, then would He create a person who would live for all of eternity being tortured in a fire that doesn't burn out?

If the promise was enough for salvation, then what purpose does the law serve? The Israelites, though chosen to be God's peculiar people, were sinners as well as others. The law was not intended to discover a way of justification but leads men to see their need of the Promise and a Savior. The law shows the sinfulness of sin²¹¹ and points to Christ through whom alone one may be pardoned and justified. The promise was given by God himself, hence the law could not be designed to set aside the promise. The great design of the law is that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to "whosoever"²¹² believes.

Justification by faith in the finished work of Christ

How can the believer fulfil the law as Jesus did?

The Curse of the Law: The attempt to receive the Spirit and be justified by works of the law; The attempt to be made perfect by the flesh. In Jesus day the Pharisees were worshiping themselves. Focus was on sin rather than Christ and the liberty He would provide which was freedom from the curse of the law. "The strength of sin is the law." The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.²¹³ Jesus said, "There is one who accuses you, even Moses and if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe My words?"²¹⁴ "Did not Moses give you the Law, and [yet] not one of you is [*genuinely*] practicing the Law?"²¹⁵

The curse of the law is against all sinners, therefore against all men; for all have sinned, and are guilty before God. If, as transgressors of the law, we are under its curse, it is vanity to look for justification by it.²¹⁶ Those only are just or righteous who are freed from death and wrath, and restored into a state of life in the favor of God; and it is only through faith in the Giver of Righteousness that one may become righteous.²¹⁷

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law; being made sin, or a sin-offering, for us. He was made a curse for us; not separated from God, but laid for a time under the Divine punishment. Christ, as from the cross, freely invites sinners to take refuge in Him.

211 1 Cor. 15: 56

212 Jn. 3: 16

213 1 Cor. 15: 56

214 John 5: 45-47

215 John 7: 19

216 Gal. 3: 6-14

217 2 Cor. 5: 21

“I say then, hath God cast away His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.” “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”²¹⁸

Inside the Gate

The Jews were inside the gate of the temple but did not appreciate nor give accreditation to the promises and blessings of God. They considered themselves worthy and deserving of their position and salvation.²¹⁹

The Gentiles were at the gate wanting to be inside for they had not received the promises and blessings of God. They considered themselves outcasts, undeserving of any of God's blessings.²²⁰

Jesus was crucified outside the gate.²²¹ He was the most qualified to be in the temple. On the cross He opened the gate to the presence of the Father for whosoever believes.

Now Christ dwells inside the gate of the heart of the believer, qualifying the believer by His sacrifice.

THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE

They asked for a sign to believe when many were already given. If given yet another sign they would not believe.²²² Jesus makes this statement after three and a half years of working miracles, healing diseases and raising the dead! Father Abraham explains to the rich man that his five brothers have the prophets as a witness. “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. They had the witness from the scriptures but they still continued to believe not that Jesus was the Messiah.”²²³

What Old Testament scripture would reveal that Jesus is not the Messiah?

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail which vail is done away in Christ.”²²⁴ Spiritual understanding is foolishness to the natural man.

The rich man explains that if one is raised from the dead they will believe. Jesus used the real name **Lazarus** because He already knew that He was going to resurrect Lazarus from the dead. This would be the last of the miracles that Jesus would perform before his own resurrection.

The “**great gulf**” between the pharisees and the Gentiles is their unbelief. They refused to believe that the Gentiles could qualify to enter the kingdom. This spiritual blindness²²⁵ caused them to shun the Gentiles and to even refuse to talk to them. These blinded minds were described as the “vail upon the heart.”²²⁶ They believed in the traditions and teachings of men rather than the truth of God's word. Being “opinionated” is good as long as one is open to the objective truth of God's word. The student of God is ever learning and growing in the word. One believes in faith, therefore understanding the “unseen”.²²⁷

The Pharisees of the first century were "holier than thou" types who separated themselves, both physically and spiritually from the main body of Jewish worshippers in their day.

218 Romans 11: 1,26

219 Luke 18: 11

220 Matt. 15: 27

221 Heb. 13: 12,13

222 Luke 22: 66, 67

223 Luke 24: 27

224 2 Corinthians 3: 14-15

225 Romans. 11: 25

226 2 Cor. 3: 14,15

227 Hebrews 11: 1

They strained over technical points, missing the loving intent of far larger issues. As a result, they created a gulf between themselves and their fellow Jews and especially Gentiles.

THE JEWISH ATTITUDE

Attitude is mostly determined by perception. With all fairness toward the Pharisees, they had little experience with the type of Grace that they encountered with Jesus. Attitude is: A settled, dogmatic way of thinking or feeling about someone or something; A mental and emotional entity that characterizes a person; An individual's predisposed state of mind regarding a value precipitated through a responsive expression towards a person place or thing, which in turn influences the individual's thought and action. Faith and trust in God's love and nature develops an attitude of submission and conformed conversion to the Spirit of Christ; A Christ-like spirit.²²⁸

THE GENTILES

The Gentiles were mostly excluded by the Jews from an understanding of God's law and the religious traditions. Lazarus represents the Gentiles – the world outside of God's chosen people. The Jews treated the Gentiles like dogs who were full of sores (*spiritual sickness*) and in need of help from God. "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."²²⁹ The Gentiles did not have any of the blessings and spiritual promises of God but desired to have just the spiritual crumbs, the Bread of Life, that fell from the rich man's table. The Gentiles were laid at the gate of the temple which represents the entrance to God, but not allowed to go inside, never to have a relationship with God.

Does 'Abraham's bosom represent heaven?

Abraham, and those mentioned in Hebrews 11, all died "in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off".²³⁰ Being in the bosom of someone is symbolic of love and closeness as when John leaned upon Jesus: "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved."²³¹

The Jews were given this wonderful evidence of the Savior's divinity, but they rejected it. Lazarus rose from the dead and bore his testimony before them, but they hardened their hearts against all evidence, and even sought to take his life. "Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead."²³²

The law and the prophets are God's appointed agencies for the salvation of men. Jews and Gentiles must "give heed to these evidences."²³³ If they do not listen to the voice of God in His word, the testimony of a witness raised from the dead would not be heeded. Those who heed Moses and the prophets will require no greater light than God has given;

228 Romans 6: 6

229 Ephesians 2: 12

230 Hebrews 11: 13

231 John 13: 23

232 John 12: 9-11

233 Hebrews 11: 1

but if men reject the light, and fail to appreciate the opportunities granted them, they would not hear if one from the dead should come to them with a message. They would not be convinced even by this evidence; for those who reject the law and the prophets so harden their hearts that they will reject all light.

THE MESSAGE (Luke 16: 19-31)

An interlinear interpretation of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16: 19 **There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:**

[God's chosen people, the Jews, were spiritually wealthy with the scriptures and the Spirit of God:]

20 **And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,**

[The Gentiles were excluded from worshiping at the temple and were in need of spiritual healing, a resurrection from spiritual death, and were being denied a relationship with God,]

21 **And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.**

[The Gentiles desired the blessings and spiritual promises that the Jews had for they were spiritually sick and in need of help from God.]

22 **And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;**

[The Gentiles were resting in love and closeness to God, awaiting the promise of God: The Jews were also waiting for the resurrection but had failed to proclaim Messiah and the gospel message;]

23 **And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.**

[The Jews realize that the time of God's judgment has arrived and they had not entered the kingdom as had the Gentiles.]

24 **And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.**

[The Jews had failed to lift a finger to help the Gentiles but now it is too late to ask for mercy and relief from the guilt and regret of their failure and complacency.]

25 **But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.**

[God reminds the Jews that they had received the blessings and promises of the covenant but the Gentiles had not: now the Gentiles receive My consolation and you are sorrowing.]

26 **And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.**

[The Jews' unbelief and spiritual blindness created a separation between them and the Gentiles which could not be surpassed.]

27 **Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:**

[The Jew asks Abraham to send the Gentile to heaven:]

28 **For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.**

[For I have all of the descendants of Judah that must be warned so that they will not be tormented here.]

29 **Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.**

[Abraham said to him, they have Moses and the prophets, let them listen to them.]

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

[And he said, not so father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent.]

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

[And he said to him, if they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, then they won't be convinced, even if The Son of God is raised from the dead.]

CHAPTER 3

THE APPLICATION

The application of this parable is for the church today, just as it was for the 1st century believers. The description of the Pharisees' attitude and disbelief also describe the characteristics of the apostate church of today.

THE APOSTATE CHURCH

Jesus Describes the Apostate Church

The Bible gives a clear warning of an end time apostasy and describes the revealing of the 'man of lawlessness'. "Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first". Apostasy means a 'falling away from the true faith'. One commits apostasy by forfeiting the free gift of salvation or by the renunciation of their faith. It can also mean 'defection' from one's belief. Apostate Christianity can be seen as a departure from true biblical Christianity, a departure from true doctrine: Apostasy is the falling away from and the renunciation of fundamental Christian or Biblical doctrines. An apostate person is someone who once believed, had great faith and then rejected God's truth. Apostasy is a rebellion against God because it is a rebellion against truth. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ... they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." "In the later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons ..." "You say 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing', and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked ..."

The apostle John received his revelation from Jesus Christ during his exile on the island of Patmos. It was there that he received the letters to the seven historic churches in Asia. These letters depict the historical progression of the church, with the Laodicean church representing the end time church. Of all the seven types of church, the Laodicean church is the only one not to be commended in some form by Christ. It is the only one not indwelt by Christ; He stands outside, waiting to be asked in by any in that church who repent and ask Him in. 'Laodicea' was a church that was lukewarm and allowed men's opinions to rule in place of God.

The apostate church of the end-times is a powerful political church. "I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast ... the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls ..."

and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, 'BABYLON THE GREAT, MOTHER OF HARLOTS ...' and I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus."²³⁴

"For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."²³⁵ "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."²³⁶ "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."²³⁷

We are warned by the apostle Paul that many will fall away from the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ unto another Gospel. The church is not threatened from the outside but from within. Relying on oppression gives Satan a foothold. One's immoral actions give access to evil forces, perversity and oppression.

Apostasy includes two types: Those who have knowingly turned completely from Jesus Christ and no longer even pretend to be Christians; Those who still claim to be Christians but have departed from the faith. Those who have departed from the faith are the Christians who have taken the world and mixed it with the church resulting in little or no faith in Jesus Christ. This form of carnal Christianity attempts to reduce the concept of God to resemble one's own image. These have deliberately twisted the scriptures perverting the word of God to fit their circumstances and pursue what they want to. This includes the Christians, the teachers, the pastors and all men of God who are searching for share of power, fame and fortune; scoffers preaching what people want to hear so not to offend anyone. These may also be the naive, who are genuinely deceived by false men of Satan dressed in sheep clothes.

What are some of the marks of apostate doctrines?

The apostate doctrines deny the deity of Jesus Christ and the substitutionary work of Christ at the Cross. They believe that the Word of God is fallible, denying absolutes and denying that Jesus is the only way to salvation. They will often deny the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Marriage, family and sexuality may be redefined to conform to political correctness. The apostate doctrine will often include pluralism, secularism, globalism, liberalism as an attempt to replace the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Compromise in spiritual life may allow sin and Satan access to our heart.

Apostates are not Christ-like in their motives. When the New Testament writers say that a person is ungodly, it does not simply mean that the person does not know God,

234 Rev. 17: 5

236 2 Peter 2: 2

235 Jude 4

237 2 Peter 3: 4

it also means that he does not have a character that is consistent with the revealed Person and Nature of God as exemplified by Jesus Christ. They are morally perverted. Promiscuity is translated as “license to commit immorality.” The Greek word rendered as contend, or contend earnestly is (*agonizomai*) from which we derive the word agonize. Because our sinful nature will not easily be transformed into Christlikeness, it can seem agonizing at times to give up certain sins and fleshly desires in order to be more Christlike. The Jesus taught and embraced by an apostate is not the Jesus of the Bible.

Apostates: Past and Present

“Now I want to remind you, though you know all these things: The Lord first saved a people out of Egypt and later destroyed those who did not believe and He has kept, with eternal chains in darkness for the judgment of the great day, the angels who did not keep their own position but deserted their proper dwelling. In the same way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them committed sexual immorality and practiced perversions, just as angels did, and serve as an example by undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. Nevertheless, these dreamers likewise defile their flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme glorious ones.”²³⁸

Apostates defile the flesh in ungodly and unbiblical ways such as homosexuality, drunkenness, gluttony, fornication and domestic violence. Apostates are rebellious and live in and encourage rebellion in others. To refuse to yield to the authority of scripture is to refuse to yield to the Author. Authority entails submission. Apostasy leads to self-destruction. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man and the end thereof is destruction.” “Woe to them! For they have traveled in the way of Cain, have abandoned themselves to the error of Balaam for profit, and have perished in Korah’s rebellion.”²³⁹

The Apostates’ Doom

“These are the ones who are like dangerous reefs at your love feasts. They feast with you, nurturing only themselves without fear. They are waterless clouds carried along by winds; trees in late autumn—fruitless, twice dead, pulled out by the roots; wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shameful deeds; wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved forever!”²⁴⁰ Apostates are: Grumblers; Fault finders; Self-seeking; Arrogant speakers; Flatterers.

The Gentile/Jewish Disconnect

“What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?”

What Happened to the church? Basically, de-Judaization and Hellenization. The de-Judaization of the church is the attempt to detach the church from its’ Jewish and biblical roots. The Hellenization of the church served to bring pagan teachings and ideas into the church and was accelerated with the so-called “conversion” of Constantine in A.D. 312. Today’s Pharisees replace circumcision and keeping of the law with a more accepted evangelicalized list of do’s and don’ts.

The pious encourage Christians to doubt their salvation, and are prompted to prove, keep and/or earn their salvation and favor with God. Salvation is not earned but is maintained²⁴¹ by keeping Christ's commandments.²⁴² Christ "became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him".²⁴³

We could never pay a price big enough to qualify us for anything that God has for us.

End Time Sign

When Jesus was asked by His disciples, 'What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world.'²⁴⁴ The first words were apostasy. "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."²⁴⁵

The Ministration of Death²⁴⁶ V.S. The Ministry of Reconciliation²⁴⁷

The purpose of the gospel is to reconcile people to God and then to each other. There are two covenants contrasted in the Scripture. One may attempt to work one's way into God's favor, or to trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Would one boast one's own self-righteousness and achievements or submit to God's righteousness? "For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory".²⁴⁸ The letter kills, while the spirit imparts life.

How many more are going to die before we "lift a finger"?²⁴⁹

Taking advantage of the commandments, sin works death in those under the law by sowing to, and promoting confidence in the flesh. It leaves man in a constant position of trying to earn God's approval & acceptance through religious works; all of which never changes man's heart. "Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman (*those bound by the law*) and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman (*those under grace*)."²⁵⁰ In Christ, one becomes dead to the law and then can worship God in Spirit and in Truth. This is why the law is not made for a righteous man. When one places themselves under the law, they are proclaiming their own unrighteousness before God and self-righteousness before man.²⁵¹

Condemnation V.S. Redemption

241 Jude 1: 21

242 John 15: 5-10

243 Hebrews 5: 9

244 Mt 24: 3

245 Mt 24: 4-5, 11, 24

246 2 Cor. 3: 7

247 2 Cor. 5: 11-21

248 2 Cor. 3: 9

249 Luke 16: 24

250 Galatians 4: 30

251 Philipians 3: 9

The Ministry of Reconciliation

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”²⁵²

Living in His Presence, rather than by Principles Alone

The renewed man acts upon new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company. The believer is created anew; his heart is not merely set right, but a new heart is given him. He is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Though the same as a man, he is changed in his character and conduct. These words must and do mean more than an outward reformation. The man who formerly saw no beauty in the Saviour that he should desire Him,²⁵³ now loves Him above all things. The heart of the unregenerate is filled with enmity against God, and God is justly offended with him, yet there may be reconciliation. Christ knew no sin. He was made a Sin-offering, a Sacrifice for sin. The end and design of all this was that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; that we might be justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Do we value our church traditions more than God's word? Of the Pharisees, Jesus said, “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men”²⁵⁴ “You have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition”²⁵⁵. It was the religious and legalistic Pharisees who were offended²⁵⁶ and persecuted God's prophets who told them the truth.²⁵⁷ The Pharisees were zealously devoted to a system of man-made traditions. Devotion to these types of extra-biblical standards have nothing to do with righteousness and it is not what Jesus came to establish.²⁵⁸

252 2 Cor. 5: 11-21

253 Is. 53: 2

254 Mark 7: 8

255 Matthew 15: 6

256 Matthew 15: 12

257 Matthew 23: 34

258 Mark 7: 3,4

PRIDE

Pride is that sin which caused Lucifer to lose his place in heaven. Pride looks at another, finds his/her deficiency and then exalts self. It causes one to puff up and think of oneself more than he/she really is. Pride, the oldest known sin, is the truest and surest mark of the apostate. "In the end time there will be scoffers walking according to their own ungodly desires."²⁵⁹

IT IS COMPLETED!

How many virgins will be thrown into the volcano before one realizes that the Ultimate and final Sacrifice has already been made. Jesus' work was completed at the cross. Any attempt to add to His finished work may be labeled "dead works"²⁶⁰ or "rotten fruit". Anything done outside of and apart from cooperation with the Holy Spirit is vain effort. "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"²⁶¹.

Friend of Sinners

Christ was accused many times of being a "friend of sinners".²⁶² He hung around tax-gatherers, prostitutes, and drunkards. Under the law in the Old Testament, we avoided the evil, dark places lest we be contaminated. Under grace in the New Testament, we go to the evil, dark places to sanctify the darkness with the Light of God. Jesus came to call all sinners to repentance.²⁶³ One resembles Christ by befriending sinners, not shunning them. "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you".²⁶⁴ "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'".²⁶⁵ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice sin!'"²⁶⁶

The Spirit of Christ

Those who do not have the Spirit of Christ "are not of Christ."²⁶⁷ "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

259 Jude 17

260 Hebrews 6:1; 9:14

261 2 Peter 1:5-11

262 Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34

263 Luke 5:32

264 John 15:8

265 Matthew 10:34,35

266 Matthew 7:21-23

267 Rom. 8:9,10

Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Those who have the Spirit of Christ bear the good, spiritual fruit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”²⁶⁸ The fruit of the flesh would be the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the flesh is: Lust, drugs, or flesh satisfying activities; Drama and unrest; Impatience; Covetousness and violence; Dishonesty and deceit; Empirical fact-based commitment; Pride; Gluttony and excessiveness. The fruit of the flesh is characterized by: Love and devotion to the gods of this world; Idolizing images of corruption and worldly fame; Disrespect for any and all authority; Practicing immoral speech and behavior; Loving self-first at the expense of everyone else; Taking innocent lives which includes character assassination, disregard for family values or moral standards; Taking anything you want when you want it; Deceitfulness and dishonesty.

Destination

Hosea illustrates Israel’s spiritual adultery and offer of redemption “And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.”²⁶⁹ “Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.”²⁷⁰

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.”²⁷¹ “Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Bethaven, after thee, O Benjamin.”²⁷² “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”²⁷³

New Heavens and a New Earth!

"But the day of the lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein [*including the devil and his demons*] shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [*conduct*] and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness ".²⁷⁴

268 Gal. 5: 22

269 Hosea 1; 2: 18-23

270 Hosea 3: 1-5

271 Hosea 4

272 Hosea 5: 8

273 James 1: 13-15

274 II Pet. 3: 10-13

At that time Messiah will fulfill the prophecy and "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil".²⁷⁵ All who rebel against God, all who have chosen the way of Cain and the path of Balaam, will perish. As David wrote in the book of Psalms, "Or, I say, though you are gods, all sons of the Most High, Yet, like mere men, you shall die, you shall die like a demon".²⁷⁶

"When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory, and all nations will be gathered in front of him; he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, setting the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. . . . Then he will say to those on his left [*the goats, symbolizing the wicked among men*], 'Begone from me, accursed ones, to the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'.²⁷⁷ This final age-ending fire will destroy all the wicked.

Mercy is Above the Law and Judgment

"So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."²⁷⁸

The Penalty of Sin

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."²⁷⁹ "That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he hath done? Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb."²⁸⁰

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and tremble".²⁸¹ A number of demon spirits who possessed a person in Capernaum said to Messiah, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God".²⁸² The same word translated "destroy" here is found in Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Yeshua also used the word in Luke 6:9 where he asked, "Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? To save life, or to destroy it?" The Greek word for "destroy" in these verses is *apollumi* which means "to destroy fully," and is translated in various places as "destroy, perish, die, lose, mar."

Punishment Forever?

Can a just, loving, benevolent God create a person and a place where a they will burn forever in eternity?

275 Hebrews 2: 14

276 Psalm 82: 6-7

277 Matt. 25: 31-41

278 James 2: 12

279 Jn. 5: 28

280 Job 21: 30-32

281 James 2: 19

282 Mark 1: 24; Luke 4: 24

What is the Punishment of the Wicked?

Sodom and Gomorrah: Gen. 19: 17 ...escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. “And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly.”²⁸³

The Result of the Fire is Eternal

When Will the Wicked be Destroyed?

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:²⁸⁴ “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”²⁸⁵

Wheat and Tares

“Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” “And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”²⁸⁶

If the Penalty for Sin is Eternal Burning,
Then Jesus Did Not Pay the Full Price!

How Does the Bible Describe the Destruction of the Wicked?

The Strange Act

“For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.”²⁸⁷ Jesus has a law and His law is not opposed to grace and freedom. In fact, “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age”.²⁸⁸ The grace that brings salvation teaches us to live righteously.

If we resist, God persists;
If we fail, God forgives;
If we lose our faith, God remains faithful.²⁸⁹

Truth or Consequences
(Will the real Jesus please stand up!)

283 2 Pet. 2: 6

284 2 Peter 2: 9

285 Jn. 12: 48

286 Matt. 13: 30,42

287 Is. 28: 21

288 Titus 2: 11-12

289 2 Timothy 2: 13

THE AUTHENTIC CHURCH

Characteristics of the authentic church:

- Reflecting Jesus' priority for the poor and the sick;
- Having a wide and generous understanding of God's grace;
- Understanding Sin as the absence of Love;
- Encouraging Christ-ians to be producers, not consumers;
- Having an intelligent understanding of Scripture;
- Being tolerant and open to all;
- Understanding that forgiveness is how the world is set right.

The authentic church absorbs pain and is empathetic. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."²⁹⁰ The authentic church proclaims hope wherever there is hopelessness and despair. The authentic church points to God's authority. It is the believers' position in Christ that releases Gods' power to heal and to save. The authentic church gives itself lavishly to the needy in time, talents and finance. The authentic church reflects God's character. The authentic church protects the vulnerable with love and concern.²⁹¹ When God shows up, we will be put in our place, if we're not already there. Our place is at the feet of Jesus, on bended knee. Is our position in Christ or are we attempting to put Christ in our position? Are we asking God to bless what we are doing within ourselves or are we fully trusting Holy Spirit to lead us.

Authentic Church Doctrine Dimensions of Spiritual Warfare

Man does not have any excuse for judging another. It only brings condemnation on one's self. Only God can judge according to the truth concerning the sins of others. How can one disallow God's patience and grace when it is His goodness that leads us to repentance?"²⁹² "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."²⁹³

Moses and Elijah were resurrected before their time. There were others who were resurrected before the second coming of Christ, such as Lazarus and those who came from the grave when Jesus died on the cross. These were to affirm that certainly Jesus was indeed the resurrection.²⁹⁴ "And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him."²⁹⁵ Moses was there to represent the Law; Elijah to represent the Prophets. Were they able to be there because their bodies had not been given to corruption through natural death? Moses had died but Elijah had not. Moses was there to represent the saints that will be resurrected. Elijah was there to represent the saints that will be translated or changed at the Rapture without going through the process of death.

Grace that cannot be abused is no grace at all.

290 Matt. 11: 28

291 James 1: 27

292 Romans 2: 1-4

293 Acts 3: 19

294 John 11: 25

295 Matt. 17: 3

Fear & Love

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear (*phobos*) in love (*agape*’); but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.” [Phobos, the Greek god of fear and panic.] “He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”²⁹⁶ Agape’: God’s unconditional, merciful, benevolent love. Agape also means that you love someone unconditionally without expecting anything in return. “The fear [(yirah) ‘awe’ or ‘reverence’] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.”²⁹⁷ “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.”²⁹⁸

Atonement & Redemption

N.T. Redemption was made once and for all by the Lamb of God whose blood covers all sin. Now you are ‘at one’ with God. Grace is greater than the law. Believe and have eternal life. Unbelief denies this gift of eternal life.

God’s Goodness Leads to Repentance

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”²⁹⁹ Man is drawn to God by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Repentance occurs when one realizes who God is and what He has done for us. The light of His Spirit reveals our own depravity, hopelessness and sinful condition. One responds to this Love and becomes aware of the need for a Savior. When one’s heart is changed then one’s spiritual eyes are opened and all motives and desires become new.

The Heart Transplant

Religion often imposes guilt, shame and fear to coerce behaviors and actions that are expected. If the heart has not changed then the individual is still lost and still does not have a relationship with God. When free from these hypocritical enforcements, the unchanged heart will follow the carnal nature. The attempt to obey God’s law out of fear, or to gain God’s favor, denies the liberty that grace provides. To feel the paralyzing guilt and shame of past sins is to consider the atoning blood of Christ insufficient to cover them. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”³⁰⁰

God intended for His chosen nation to be a light to all of the surrounding Pagan nations. They were to be “in the world” but not “of the world.” This separation of cultures and religious doctrine preserved the Word and the cultural heritage identity. The influence of Greek culture and thought introduced many Pagan concepts into the Jewish theology and interpretation of the written word. In many ways this caused misrepresentations of the true character of God.

296 1 Jn. 4: 16-18

298 2 Tim. 2: 7

300 Jer. 29: 11

297 Pro. 9: 10

299 Rom. 2: 4

Kingdom Choices

Decisions to do the righteous things and to walk the righteous path are the ways of God, motivated by His goodness and love to create the selfless heart within the born-again child of God.

Pure Pollen Produces Pure Produce

Jesus constrained or limited Himself when He came to earth as a man. He explained that “he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater (*more*) works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”³⁰¹ Jesus gave up His superpower prerogatives when He came to earth, being born of a virgin. How then did He accomplish His miracles? Jesus modeled how man could receive power from God to heal, cast out demons and raise the dead. As a man, Jesus relied on His Fathers’ power. This is the attitude and submission to the Father that Christians must have to bear the pure, righteous fruit of God.

Jesus ‘emptied’ Himself of His divine power in the Incarnation. To rightfully pay for mankind’s sin, Jesus must first become fully man. “Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.” His heart was perfect, and as such, it was the perfect soil in which the word of God could grow.

From the very beginning, Jesus was identified with the word of God, and the word of God was identified with Him. He is the word of God. It was through obedience to the commandments that God gave Him His authority and power.³⁰² If we choose, we can also walk clean in His Grace, and allow the word of God to grow abundantly in us. We have also been made ‘new wine skins,’ capable of being filled with the Holy Spirit. “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.” Whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”³⁰³

(‘Emptied’ *ekenōsen*) requires an object. Christ “emptied himself” of something. (*Kenōō*): “To empty; To make empty; To make vain or void.” This word is rendered “made void” in Romans 4:14, where Paul stated that “faith is made void.” Faith did not empty itself of anything, rather faith emptied itself. Jesus took the form of a servant and came “in the likeness of men.” The real humiliation of the incarnation and the cross is that the One who was Himself God, who never during the whole process stopped being God, could embrace such a position.

Good fruit of the Spirit only occurs as given by God. Bad fruit is the result of the work of the god of this world which results in death and destruction. To maintain the Godly walk, the believer keeps the mind in purity of Spirit, focusing upon Christ. To reconcile people to God and then to each another is the sole purpose of the gospel. To be the spiritual salt and light requires obedience to Christ. It is then that one becomes a co-laborer with Christ with His power and presence. Jesus gave us this example as He depended upon His Fathers’ Love, Power and Guidance.

Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength³⁰⁴

301 John 14: 12

303 John 15: 16

302 Matt. 28: 18

304 Isaiah 26: 4

The unchangeable promise and covenant of the Lord are the walls of the church. The gates of this city shall be open. “Thou wilt keep him in peace; in perfect peace”,³⁰⁵ inward peace, outward peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, peace at all times, in all events. Trust in the Lord for that peace, that portion, which will be forever. Whatever one trusts the world for, will last only for a moment. Those who trust in God shall receive from Him strength that will carry them to that blessedness which is eternal. Let us then acknowledge Him in all our ways³⁰⁶, and rely on Him in all trials. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”³⁰⁷

The Righteous Heart

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”³⁰⁸ God will make all things new but this time there will be no more sin because Satan and all his followers will be cast into the lake of fire where they will die and shall never exist again. This is eternal death and all who did not take part in the first resurrection will take part in the second.

“Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.”³⁰⁹ “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.”³¹⁰ Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. They that dwell under his shadow shall return.”³¹¹

The Secret Place of the Most High

The Beauty of His Character

Because He loves us, He created us with the ability to “Resist” Him and to Exercise free will. The character of God must be understood in the light of the cross. Here God gave everything for the underserving. God loves us enough to let us suffer the consequences of our own sinful decisions. Many must learn the ‘hard way’ by choosing their own way. The beauty of the Bible is that the reader may learn from the mistakes of others, as well as by the testimony of those who have found life in God’s way.

305 Isaiah 26: 3

306 Prov. 3: 6

307 1 Peter 4: 13,14

308 Rev. 21

309 Hosea 6

310 See: Hosea10: 12,13; 11: 1,4,9-12

311 Hosea 12: 6; 13: 9; 14: 7

What Will Jesus Do For His People?

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”³¹²

Persecution

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.”³¹³ Sinners and demons called out to Jesus, identifying Him as the Son of God, begging Him for mercy and forgiveness. It was the Pharisees who practiced religion, who persecuted Jesus. Jesus was falsely accused of being an anti-government rebel. The plot against Him eventually led to His crucifixion.³¹⁴

The Righteous Will Judge

The righteous will know that God has been just³¹⁵ in all and no one will serve God out of ‘fear’. One day, if faithful, we will be called to be caught up to meet our Lord in the air.³¹⁶ O glorious day! Jesus said: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”³¹⁷

CONCLUSION

Tears of the Father

Our Father has provided all that we need. We were the ones who walked away from home. The father grieved watching the prodigal son suffer. The same divine love was shown when Jesus wept seeing those who willfully ignored His visitation to their spirit, not believing His promises.³¹⁸ Jesus wept because of man’s sin and the death it brings. The Father sorrows when we choose to try to live without Him; Refusing the gifts of salvation, eternal life, reconciliation, redemption, restoration and new birth.³¹⁹ The Father grieved when He watched His own Begotten Son suffer and die,

312 Rev. 21: 4

313 Matt. 10: 34-36

314 Matthew 26:1-5, 14-16; Act 24: 3-8

315 Rev. 15

316 1 Thess. 4: 16, 17

317 John 15: 5-10

318 Matthew 24: 2; Luke 21: 20-24

319 Gen. 6: 5,6

feeling the pain of forsaking His Son who was bearing the penalty and curse of our sin. May we have a contrite spirit in regard to our own sin,³²⁰ and may we have a burden for the lost. May we have a heart like His!³²¹

Not to Decide is to Decide

“Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, Why stay here until we die?”³²² These lepers lived and were greatly blessed because they ‘got up’ and stepped out in faith. There were 10 lepers in Jesus’ day who were all healed because they went to Jesus, the Great Physician. One of them “when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”³²³ We were as the lepers, helplessly condemned by our sin-sickness. Now as the redeemed, may we be a people of His presence, living in and for His glory.

It’s Your Move!

God will show the lost that they have refused His Love for the last time. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”³²⁴ and if God sheds tears over the lost, He will wipe away His own tears. [*You didn’t want to be with Me so, (your will be done). Get away from Me forever!*]³²⁵ You will never come back from the outer darkness. It will be “as if you had never been.”³²⁶ There is nothing else that I could have done to save you. I have shed My last tear for you. We’ve never had a relationship. You have written yourself off so now It’s final. “Depart from Me.”

Good Bye Forever

The estrangement from the presence of God is to be avoided at all costs. The earth shall melt with a fervent heat. It’s ‘hell on earth’. Those that are left behind will be turned to ashes just as in the example of Sodom. There will be a new heaven and earth. As for those who are living in sin in Sodom: It’s time to ‘get out of Dodge’. To the believers before the flood: It’s time to get in the ark. To the Ninevites: It’s time to repent. To those on the Titanic: Stop arranging the deck chairs and get in the Life Boat!

320 Psalm 51: 17; Isaiah 66: 2

321 Psalm 78: 38-40

322 2 Kings 7: 3 3

323 Luke 17: 10-19

324 Rev. 21: 4

325 Matt. 7: 23

326 Obadiah 1: 16

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Be sure to include any scripture reference as relating to the subjects given in this document.

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