

Bible Basics: Essential Doctrines of the Bible

Part 4A

Christology: The Study of Jesus Christ

(also available on-line at ichthys.com)

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The unique Person and work of the Word of God incarnate, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Everything in the heavens and on the earth was created by Him (Jesus Christ), things invisible as well as those visible – whether thrones, authorities, rulers or powers, everything was created through Him and for Him. And He Himself is before everything, and everything subsists in Him.

Colossians 1:16-17

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Introduction: Any study of this sort must of necessity fall short of absolute completeness, for the written word of God is in its every particular about the Living Word of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The better one understands scripture and the completely integrated tapestry of fundamental truth which runs through its entire warp and woof, the more perspicuous this one essential truth becomes, that Jesus Christ is the reason for the Bible, and the Bible is all about Jesus Christ, the Word of God (Jn.1:1-14). The purpose of this study therefore must be limited to explicating the major biblical themes contained in scripture regarding our Savior, His unique Person and His work of salvation on our behalf. For Jesus *is* the truth, the way and the life (Jn.14:6), and the fundamental essence of the testimony of the entire Bible is the divine revelation of Him, who He is and what He has done for us in giving up His very life for us (Rev.19:10). All things were made through our Lord Jesus Christ and for Him (Col.1:15-18). He is thus the cornerstone of the entire plan of God for all of creature history (Eph.3:11).¹ The salvation of all members of the human race who turn to God, as well as the victory over the devil (who had held human beings in his power) have been won through our Lord's sacrifice of Himself on our behalf and could not have been won in any other way (Col.2:14-15).

Therefore Jesus is our ultimate hope (Col.1:27), our highest love (Phil.1:21), and the sole object of our faith (Acts 4:12). Jesus Christ is our life (Col.3:4). Only in Him do we have a full share in the resurrection to come and eternal life (1Pet.1:3-4; cf. Tit.3:6-7), for He is the resurrection and the life (Jn.11:25). Without Jesus we along with the entire human race would be lost, but in Him we have been delivered from the wrath to come (1Thes.1:10). Without Jesus all of human history and our lives in particular would be essentially pointless and meaningless, but in Him we anticipate eternal life and great reward (Rev.22:12). Without Jesus the world is a hard, cold, and bitter place, but in Him we rejoice with boundless joy, for as intimate and everlasting members of His Bride, the Church, we exist for Him (Rom.8:8-39; Eph.1:9-10; cf. 1Cor.8:6; 2Cor.5:14-15; Gal.2:20; Col.1:17-20; Heb.12:2), and will ever be with Him (Jn.14:3). Like all corrupt human flesh we are by nature of our physical birth creatures of wrath, condemned to die, but through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we have been purchased from our sins and eagerly anticipate an eternity with our Master which will be glorious and exquisite beyond all earthly expression or comprehension (Rev.21-22; cf. Jn.14:1-3). Although we were His enemies, with nothing to recommend us and nothing to give Him, He gave His all for us on the cross (Rom.5:8-10). Thanks be to God for His indescribably wonderful gift of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, sacrificed on our behalf (2Cor.9:15)!

I. The Person of Jesus Christ

1. Jesus Christ is truly Divine: Because our Lord had to become a true human being in order to die in our place, His genuine and undiminished deity has, as a consequence, sometimes been falsely and heretically denied. But this lack of faith on the part of some does not change the fact that Jesus is indeed God as well as man. The ultimate means of refutation for all heresies and

¹ See Part 5 of The Satanic Rebellion: Judgment, Restoration and Replacement, section II.1, "The One Central Person of Human History".

heretics who would deny the divinity of Christ is, as always, the Bible. For any impartial observer is forced to admit that regardless of the opinions of those who think otherwise, scripture loudly proclaims the deity of Christ, so that to deny the deity of Christ is to *ipso facto* contradict the Bible:

a. As God, Jesus is explicitly called God (cf. Is.40:3; Rom.1:4; Matt.22:41-46; 28:19; Lk.1:35; 5:20-21; Jn.1:1-18; 5:18; 2Cor.13:14; Col.1:15-20; 2:9; Heb.1:3):

For a child is born to us, and a Son is given to us. Dominion shall rest on his shoulder, and His name will be called “He whose counsel is wondrous”, “**Mighty God**”, “the Father of Eternity”, “the Prince of Prosperity”.

Isaiah 9:6

“Behold, the virgin will conceive and will bear a Son, and they will call His Name ‘Immanuel’, which is translated ‘**God is with us**’”.

Matthew 1:23

(3) For, [if I could save them thereby] I would wish myself to be accursed [and] separated from Christ on behalf of my brethren according to the flesh (4) who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption and the [*shekinah*] glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the [temple] rite and the promises (5) who are [descendants of] the patriarchs and from whom is the Christ, as far as flesh[ly descent] is concerned, **the [very] One who is God** over all [things], blessed forever. Amen!

Romans 9:3-5

(5) You too should have this attitude which Christ Jesus had. (6) Since **He already existed in the very form of God**, equality with God was [certainly] not something He thought He had to grasp for. (7) Yet in spite of this [co-equal divinity He already possessed], He deprived Himself of His status and took on the form of a slave, [and was] born in the likeness of men. (8) He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all].

Philippians 2:5-8

[We] who are awaiting the blessed hope, namely the glorious and majestic appearance of **our God and Savior, Jesus Christ**.

Titus 2:13

But to the Son [the Father says], “Your throne, **O God**, is forever, and the scepter of your Kingdom is the scepter of integrity”.

Hebrews 1:8

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been allotted a faith of equal value to ours in the righteousness of **our God and Savior Jesus Christ**.

2nd Peter 1:1

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us a mind-set for coming to know the truth. And we are in [the One who is] the Truth, even in [God's] Son Jesus Christ. ***This One is the true God*** and eternal life.

1st John 5:20

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

Revelation 22:13 (cf. Rev.22:16)

b. As God, Jesus is worshiped as God² (cf. Zech.14:16-17; Matt.2:2; 2:11; 14:33; 28:9; 28:17; Jn.12:41 compared to Is.6:3; Jn.20:28; Heb.1:6; Rev.14:7 compared to Col.1:13-16):

(50) And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

(51) And it came to pass as He was blessing them that He disappeared from their [sight].

(52) Then, having worshiped Him of their own accord, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

Luke 24:50-52

And he (i.e., the blind man whose sight had been restored) said, “I believe, Lord”, and he worshiped Him.

John 9:38

(9) Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the Name that is above every name (10) that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

(11) And I looked and heard, as it were, the voice of many angels around the throne and [around] the [living] creatures and [around] the [twenty-four] elders, and their number was myriads upon myriads and thousands upon thousands, (12) [and they were] saying in a loud voice, “The Lamb who has been slain is worthy to take the power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing (13) and every created thing in heaven and on the earth and in the sea and everything in them.” Then I heard them saying, “To the One who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb [be] the blessing and the honor and the glory and the power for ever and ever!” (14) And the four living creatures were saying, “Amen!”. And the [twenty-four] elders fell [down] and worshiped.

Revelation 5:11-14

² The Greek word for worship in the New Testament verses above is the verb *proskyneō* (προσκυνέω), having in all of the passages cited and quoted the technical sense of “worship” in the same sense in which we use that word in English as being only appropriate to deity (as Acts 10:25-26; Rev.19:10; 22:8-9 make abundantly clear).

c. As the Creator, Jesus is God, for God created the world³ (Heb.1:2; 1:10; cf. Gen.1-2):

Everything came into being through Him, (i.e., “The Word”, Jesus Christ), and without Him, nothing has come into being which has in fact come into being.

John 1:3

He was in the world, and ***the world came into being through Him***, and [yet] the world did not recognize Him.

John 1:10

(15) He (i.e., Jesus Christ; cf. v.13) is the exact image⁴ of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (16) ***Everything in the heavens and on the earth was created by Him***, things invisible as well as those visible – whether thrones, authorities, rulers or powers, everything was created through Him and for Him. (17) And He Himself is before everything, and everything subsists in Him (cf. Heb.1:3).

Colossians 1:15-17

But for us there is [but] one God, the Father from whom all things [have come into being] (i.e., the Father as architect of creation), and we [now live] for Him, and there is [but] one Lord, Jesus Christ ***through whom all things*** [have come into being] (i.e., the Son as agent of creation), and we [now live] through Him.⁵

1st Corinthians 8:6

d. As One of the Trinity, Jesus is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit (Jn.5:18; 17:5):

³ Jesus Christ is the revealed member of the Trinity, and as such has always been the “face of God” (compare Isaiah 6:1-13 with John 12:41 in the context of John 12:38-41). These issues are covered in detail in part 1 of this series, Theology. For Jesus’ Old Testament appearances, see Bible Basics: Part 1: Theology, section II, “The Persons of God: the Trinity”. For Jesus’ role in the Trinity as its revealed member, see Bible Basics: Part 1: Theology, section II.C, “The Trinity in the Old Testament”.

⁴ That the word translated “image” here, the Greek *eikon* (εἰκών), is expressing genuine exactitude is clear from its use elsewhere in the same book: “The law is only a shadow of the good things – not the **realities** (*eikon* / εἰκών) themselves . . .”: NIV on Hebrews 10:1.

⁵ The roles of planning and effecting creation, often indistinguishable in the Old Testament, have been made distinct in the New. Compare Hebrews 1:10-12, a quotation from Psalm 102:25-27 applied to our Lord Jesus by the writer of Hebrews (cf. Heb.1:8). For more see Bible Basics: Part 1: Theology, section II.B.3, “The Roles of the Trinity in the Plan of God”.

Then Jesus came over and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me, so go and make all nations my followers by baptizing them [with the Spirit] into the Person (i.e., “name”) of the **Father** and [into the Person] of the **Son** and [into the Person] of the **Holy Spirit**, and by teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.”

Matthew 28:18-20a

I and the Father are one.

John 10:30

And now, glorify Me, Father, in your presence, with the [same] glory I possessed in your presence before the world existed.

John 17:5

There are different gifts, but the same **Spirit**; and there are different ministries, but the same **Lord** (i.e., Jesus Christ); and there are different results, but the same **God** who brings about all results in all cases.

1st Corinthians 12:4-6

May the grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and the love of (the [Father]) **God**, and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.

2nd Corinthians 13:14

There is one body and One **Spirit** – just as when you were called it was in one hope that you were called. There is One **Lord** (i.e., Jesus Christ), one faith, one baptism. There is One **God and Father** of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6

Peter, an apostle of **Jesus Christ**, to those who, though outcasts dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, were yet selected in the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, by means of the **Holy Spirit's** consecration, for the obedience in and sprinkling of the blood of **Jesus Christ**. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you!

1st Peter 1:1-2

(4) John, to the seven churches which are in Asia [Minor]: Grace to you and peace from the **One who is and was and is coming** (i.e., the Father), and from **the seven spirits** (i.e., the Holy Spirit) which are before His throne, (5) and from **Jesus Christ**, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

Revelation 1:4-5a

e. Jesus is the one and only Son of God, a title which as it is used in scripture clearly demonstrates His deity (cf. Lk.9:35; Heb.5:5; 1Jn.1:3; 5:20; 2Jn.1:3):

Now once Jesus had been baptized, He immediately came up out of the water, and, behold, the heavens opened for Him, and He saw the Spirit of God coming down like a

dove and lighting upon Him. And, behold, a voice from heaven was saying, “This is **My beloved Son**, with whom I am well pleased”.

Matthew 3:16-17

While [Peter] was still speaking, behold, a cloud suffused with light enveloped them, and, behold, a voice [issued forth] from the cloud, saying, “This is **My beloved Son** with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him!”

Matthew 17:5 (cf. 2Pet.1:16-21)

No one has ever seen God. **God the one and only [Son]** – the One who has always been at the Father’s side – He has made Him known.

John 1:18

(16) For God loved the world so much that He gave [up] **His one and only Son**, [with the purpose] that everyone who believes in Him should not be lost [forever], but have eternal life [instead]. (17) For God did not **send His Son into the world** to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. (18) The one who believes in Him is not being judged, but the one who does not believe has already been judged on the grounds that he has not put his faith in the Name (i.e., the Person) of **God’s one and only Son**.

John 3:16-18

For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, the One who was proclaimed among you through us, through myself and Silvanus (i.e., Silas) and Timothy, did not become “yes and no”, but He became “yes!”. (20) For as many promises of God as there are, are “yes!” in Him (i.e., Jesus Christ). And through Him the “amen!” [is said] to God for [His] glory through us.

2nd Corinthians 1:19-20

(4) But when the fullness of time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, (5) in order that He might redeem those under the Law, in order that we might receive the adoption. (6) And since you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!”

Galatians 4:4-6

(5) For to which of the angels did He ever say, “You are my Son. Today I have begotten you (Ps.2:7).” And again, “I will be a Father to Him, and He will be my Son (2Sam.7:14).” (6) But when He brings back the Firstborn into the world, He says, “And let all the angels of God worship Him! (Ps.97:7b)”. (7) And about the angels He says, “The One who makes His angels spirits, and His servants flames of fire (Ps.104:4).” (8) But of the Son He says, “Your throne, **O God**, is from eternity to eternity, and rod of your kingdom is the rod of uprightness. (9) You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. For this reason God your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions (Ps.45:6-7)”. (10) And, “From the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands. (11) They indeed will

perish, but you remain. And they will grow old like a garment, (12) and like a cloak you will roll them up, like a cloak, and they will [thus] be changed. But you are the same, and your years will not come to an end (Ps.102:25-27).” (13) And to which of the angels has He ever said, “Sit down at my right hand until I make your enemies the footstool of your feet (Ps.110:1)?”

Hebrews 1:5-13

In this God’s love has been revealed in us, that He sent His only Son into the world that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atonement for our sins.

1st John 4:9-10

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: This is what the Son of God says, the One whose eyes are like a flame of fire and whose feet are like white-hot bronze.

Revelation 2:18

f. Jesus is One with God the Father:

I and the Father are one.

John 10:30

(20) And I do not ask concerning these only [Father], but also concerning all of those who believe in Me through their word, (21) so that all [of them] may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I also am in You, so that they also themselves may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (22) And I have given them the glory You have given Me, so that they may be one as We are one.

John 17:20-22

g. As God, Jesus has been “face to face” with the Father since before time began or the world was created, departing from the Father’s presence and entering this world only to save us (Jn.6:62; 17:24):

The Word [Jesus Christ] existed at the very beginning, and there was reciprocity (i.e., “face to face” co-divinity) between the Word and God [the Father]. And the Word was God. This One both existed and enjoyed reciprocity (i.e., was “face to face”) with God **from the very beginning** (i.e., from before the beginning of creation).

John 1:1-2

And the Word became flesh and tented among us. And we beheld His glory, a glory like that of a one and only Son from [the] Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

No one has ever seen God. God the one and only [Son] – the One who has always been at the Father’s side (i.e., in heaven from eternity past) – He has made Him known.

John 1:18

(27) For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I have come forth from God. (28) I came forth from [being with] the Father and have come into the world. I am leaving the world again and going back to the Father.

John 16:27-28

(1) Jesus said these things and having lifted up His eyes to heaven said, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you, (2) just as You gave Him power over all flesh, so that everything you have given Him might have eternal life. (3) And this is the eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and [Him] whom you sent, Jesus Christ. (4) I have glorified You on the earth, having completed the work you have given Me to do. (5) And now glorify Me, Father, with your own glory, [that glory] ***which I had in your presence before the world existed.***”

John 17:1-5

(1) What we have seen from the beginning, what we have heard and seen with our eyes, what we have observed and touched with our hands – this is about the Word of life, [Jesus Christ]. (2) And this life appeared, and we have seen [it], and we bear witness [to it], and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was in the presence of the Father and [then] appeared to us.

1st John 1:1-2

h. As God, Jesus claims, shares, and demonstrates the divine attributes of God (Matt.28:18; Jn.1:48; 10:31-39):

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. The one who comes to Me shall not hunger, and the one who believes in Me shall not thirst forever”.

John 6:35

And I am giving them eternal life, and they will not perish forevermore, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

John 10:28

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even if he dies. And everyone who lives and believes in Me will surely not die forevermore.”

John 11:25-26

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

i. As God, Jesus is described as the “exact image of God” (Col.1:15; cf. 2Cor.4:4):

[Jesus] is the [very] shining forth of [the Father's] glory, the precise image of His essence, the One who sustains the universe by His mighty Word . . .
Hebrews 1:3a

j. As God, Jesus is eternal:

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, too small to be numbered among the clans of Judah, from you I will bring forth the One who is to rule over Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, even from the days of eternity.
Micah 5:2

Jesus Christ, yesterday and today the same, and unto the [end of] the ages.
Hebrews 13:8

k. As the very Word of God, the embodiment of the message and truth from the Father, Jesus is God (Deut.18:18; Jn.8:55; 14:10; 14:24):

Grass withers. Flowers fade. But the Word of our God will stand forever.
Isaiah 40:8

In the beginning, there was the Word.
John 1:1a

For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he might instruct Him? But we possess the very mind of Christ (i.e. the Holy Spirit illuminating the scriptures which are Christ's very thinking).
1st Corinthians 2:16 (cf. v.12-13)

For God who said, "Let light shine forth from the darkness!", is He who has shone forth [His light] into our hearts to illuminate our knowledge of God's glory in the Person of Jesus Christ.
2nd Corinthians 4:6

(1) God, from antiquity having communicated to our fathers in the prophets at many times and in many ways, (2) has in these last days communicated to us in a Son, [the One] whom He has appointed heir of all things, [the One] through whom He created the universe. (3) He is the [very] shining forth of [the Father's] glory, the precise image of His essence, the One who sustains the universe by His mighty Word . . .
Hebrews 1:1-3a

l. In accordance with the prophecies that God will judge the world, as God Jesus is the Judge, since all judgment has been handed over to Him:

(13) I kept looking during my vision of that night, and behold – with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming up, and He approached the Ancient of Days (i.e., the

Father) and they brought Him before Him. (14) And to Him was given dominion and honor and a kingdom, so that all nations and peoples and tongues should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away, and His kingdom one which will not be destroyed.

Daniel 7:13-14

Then Jesus came over and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.”

Matthew 28:18

(22) For neither does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to the Son, (23) in order that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father.

John 5:22-23a (cf. Jn.5:27)

[This examination of Rom.2:11-15 will take place] on the day when God will judge the secret things of men through Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Romans 2:16

May it never be [that God be considered unrighteous]! Otherwise, how will God judge the world?

Romans 3:6

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you also belittle your brother? For we will all stand before God’s tribunal as it is written: “As I live”, says the Lord, “every knee will bow to Me, and every tongue will praise God” [Is.45:23]. So then each of us will give an account to God concerning himself.

Romans 14:10-12

For we must all stand before Christ’s tribunal, so that each of us may receive recompense for what he has accomplished through this body, whether it be good or worthless.

2nd Corinthians 5:10

(9) Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the Name that is above every name (10) that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

In light of all of the above, whatever anyone may say, it is nonetheless dishonest to claim that scripture at least is not altogether clear on this subject. The Bible clearly proclaims the divinity of Jesus Christ regardless of any other false representations. Indeed, it is really not too much to say that the Bible in effect breathes forth the divinity of Jesus Christ at almost every breath, and that it is only by ignoring or diminishing its testimony that one can come to any different conclusion. Thus Jesus Christ is the great divider between those who are being saved and those who are perishing (Matt.10:32ff; 1Jn.2:22). Unless one confesses “Jesus as Lord”, which

necessarily includes acknowledging His divinity and humanity, His whole person and His work on the cross, there can be no salvation (Rom.10:9). He is a true man but He is not only a man; He is also God, for “in Christ all the fullness of Deity lives in bodily form” (Col.2:9). Ultimately, no one who believes the Bible can doubt that Jesus is God, for this we even have from our Lord Himself:

(57) So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham?!” (58) And [Jesus] said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham existed, **I AM**” (cf. Ex.3:14).
John 8:57-58 (cf. Lk.22:70; Jn.8:24; 8:28)

2. Jesus Christ is truly Human: Perhaps the most profound wonder in universal history – of surpassing glory from the ages to the ages and rivaled only by His dying for our sins on the cross once He had become God in human form – is Jesus’ taking on of true humanity in the first place, a necessary step in order to accomplish the Father’s plan of redemption. In our present finite and limited condition and until we “know as we are known” (1Cor.13:12), it is impossible even to begin to grasp the wonder and the glory, the graciousness and the mercifulness, the cost and the sacrifice involved in our Lord Jesus becoming a true human being.

You too should have this attitude which Christ Jesus had. Since He already existed in the very form of God, equality with God was [certainly] not something He thought He had to grasp for. Yet in spite of this [co-equal divinity He already possessed], He deprived Himself of His status and took on the form of a slave, [and was] born in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all].
Philippians 2:5-8

Although we cannot this side of heaven truly understand the depths of it or truly appreciate what He gave up for us, yet we should never fail to willingly accept in faith the truth and reality of it, and to stand in thankful awe of all this glorious act of becoming a man as well as God implies. For the fact that God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has become in addition to deity a genuine, living, breathing human being has changed **everything** in the universe forevermore. For through the incarnation Jesus has in His now absolutely unique Person permanently wed undiminished deity to humanity. The implications of this truth are at once staggering and mind-boggling. When one considers the transcendent magnitude of the divine and contrasts it with the physical universe which is so pathetically puny and transitory by comparison, the news that God has now irreversibly joined Himself to this material universe in the Person of His one and only Son is breathtaking. While all of the implications are at present impossible to digest, at the very least we who have believed in the Son of God for salvation should never fail to appreciate that while God in His good pleasure could well have constructed a trillion times a trillion universes a trillion times larger and more complex than the one we presently inhabit without the slightest effort, He has in fact now through His Son irrevocably committed Himself to **us**. This is a truth which should never fail to humble and awe each and every one of us, and cause us to fall to our knees in praise and thanksgiving. For now that Jesus has become, in addition to God, one of us

in every way only without sin, we can know of a certainty that we are no experiment or afterthought or one of many such developments, but that we instead have always been a part of His unchangeable purpose. We are absolutely unique because *He*, the unique one and only Son of God, has cast His lot with us and for us in this overwhelming, awe-inspiring and unchangeable way.

a. Christ's taking on of true humanity was necessary in order to provide our salvation: Beyond all argument, everything in the plan of God ultimately comes down to Jesus Christ, and nothing in the plan of God can be disaggregated from Him and His sacrificial work on the cross for our salvation. That is why, for example, the "cross of Christ" can serve as an all encompassing symbol for the gospel (e.g., Matt.10:38; 16:24; 1Cor.1:17; Gal.6:14; Eph.2:16; Col.2:14), the good news about salvation and our eternal relationship with Jesus through faith on the basis of His gracious sacrifice (Eph.2:8-9). Simply put, for us who believe "Jesus is everything", all that He is for us is intimately and inseparably tied up with His death for us on the cross:

(15) [Jesus Christ] is the exact image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (16) Everything in the heavens and on the earth was created by Him, things invisible as well as those visible – whether thrones, authorities, rulers or powers, everything was created through Him and for Him. (17) And He Himself is before everything, and everything subsists in Him. (18) And He Himself is the Head of the Body, [that is,] the Church. [Even] He who is [its] Ruler, the Firstborn from the dead, [thus resurrected] to the purpose that He Himself might become the One who occupies the first place in all things. (19) For it was [God's] good pleasure for the fulfillment [of His plan] to reside entirely in [Christ], (20) and so through Him to reconcile everything to Himself, having made peace through Him, through the blood of His cross, whether things on earth, or things in heaven.

Colossians 1:15-20

While the wonder and the glory of Jesus in His eternal capacity as God cannot be underestimated nor with our present limitations more than dimly understood, scripture is very clear about the fact that He had to take on true humanity in order to accomplish eternal salvation for us. God cannot suffer; God cannot die; God cannot become a sacrifice for sin or atone for sin or indeed in His perfect holiness have direct contact with sin. Only a human being, a perfect human being, could possibly fulfill the role of becoming our sin-bearer. As sinful human beings, absent intervention by God on our behalf, we were destined to face the "wrath to come" and the eternal damnation final judgment inevitably entailed. But the indescribably good news of the gospel is that Jesus incurred this judgment for us, bearing all of our sins in His own body on the cross. To accomplish this for us, He had to be a human being, and a perfect one at that, a genuine human spirit in a genuine human body, wherein He would bear the sins of the world on the cross (Jn.2:21; Rom.7:4; 1Cor.11:27; cf. Matt.27:50; Lk.23:46; Jn.19:30-42):

And having taken the bread and blessed it, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is *my body* which is being given on your behalf. Be doing this to remember Me".

Luke 22:19 (cf. Matt.26:26; Mk.14:22; Jn.6:51-59; 1Cor.11:23-25)

The cup of blessing which we bless – is it not fellowship in the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break – is it not fellowship in *the body of Christ*? For one bread, one body we many are, since we all partake of that One Bread.

1st Corinthians 10:16-17

For He Himself is our peace, for He has made both [Jews and gentiles] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, that is, the enmity between us, by discharging the Law of the commandments and its requirements *in His [own] flesh*, so that He might re-create the two into one new Man by making [this] peace, and might reconcile both in one Body to God through His cross, having by means of it abolished the enmity [between God and mankind].

Ephesians 2:14-16

You were once alienated from God – your very thoughts were hostile towards Him and your deeds were evil. Yet God has now made peace with you through the death of Christ *in His physical body* so that you may stand before Him as holy, without blemish and free from accusation.

Colossians 1:21-22

For in Him (i.e., Jesus Christ), dwells all of the fullness of deity *in bodily form*.

Colossians 2:9

Therefore since these children (i.e., of v.13) have a common heritage of *flesh and blood*, [Christ] too partook of these same [common elements] in a very similar fashion (i.e., not identical only in that He was virgin born and so without sin), in order that *through His death* He might put an end to the one possessing the power of death, that is, the devil, and might reconcile those who were subject to being slaves their whole lives long by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Unlike the [human] high priests, [Jesus] has no need of making sacrifice day by day, first on behalf of His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. For this [latter] He did once and for all when *He offered Himself* [as a sacrifice].

Hebrews 7:27

(5) Therefore as [Jesus Christ] was coming into the world (i.e., at His birth) He said, “You [Father] did not desire sacrifice or offering, but you have *prepared a body* for Me. (6) In burnt offerings for sin you have taken no pleasure. (7) At that time (i.e., His birth) He [Jesus Christ in His deity] said, ‘Behold, I have arrived (i.e., been born) – in the scroll of a book it is written of Me – to do your will, O God’”. (8) Above when He speaks of sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings for sins [as things which] “You did not desire nor take pleasure therein”, [these are the things] which are being offered according to the Law. (9) [But] “Then”, He has added, “Behold, I have arrived to do your will”. [God the Father] is [thereby] taking away the first [covenant] in order to establish the second one,

(10) [and it is] by [His] will [in this matter] that you have been sanctified, **through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ** once and for all.

Hebrews 10:5-10

He Himself bore our sins **in His body** on the tree, in order that we might die to sins and live to righteousness. By His wound you are healed.

1st Peter 2:24

b. Christ's taking on of true humanity was necessary for victory over the devil:

The one who is committing sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. **For this reason** the Son of God appeared, that He might put an end to the devil's deeds.

1st John 3:8

The cross and the crown are integrally related. Jesus had to endure the cross in order to win the Messiah's crown, and the crown was won on the basis of the cross.

[For by means of the cross, God] has stripped [demon] rulers and authorities [of their power] and subjected them to public humiliation, having triumphed over them in [Christ].
Colossians 2:15 (cf. Rom.16:20; Heb.2:14; 1Jn.3:8b)

Our Lord's sacrificial death in a genuine human body on Calvary's hill for us all thus forms the necessary basis for His defeat and coming removal of the devil, and that ultimate victory (along with all the glories it entails for us) is no small part of the purpose of His victory on the cross.

Therefore since these children (i.e., of v.13) have a common heritage of **flesh and blood**, [Christ] too partook of these same [common elements] in a very similar fashion (i.e., not identical only in that He was virgin born and so without sin), in order that through His death He might put an end to the one possessing the power of death, that is, the devil, and might reconcile those who were subject to being slaves their whole lives long by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Evil had to be defeated at the cross in order for it to be removed from God's universe so that the eternity of the New Heavens and New Earth might begin, and only by Jesus' atoning for our sin could this blessed victory be won and reconciliation effected between God and those willing to turn to His mercy.

For it was [God's] good pleasure for the fulfillment [of His plan] to reside entirely in [Christ], and so through Him to reconcile everything to Himself, having made peace through Him, through the blood of His cross, whether things on earth, or things in heaven.

Colossians 1:19-20

Satan's rebellion had set in motion the string of events that necessitated the creation of mankind, and, with our corporate fall in Adam, the necessity of the Last Adam's substitutionary death in our place as well. Only as a true human being could Jesus win the victory of the cross, and it is as a true human being that He will rule forever as a result of His ultimate victory over the devil when our Lord Jesus Christ returns in glory at the second advent (Rev.11:15; cf. Heb.10:11-13).

These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, because He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and called, and elect – and faithful are those with Him.
Revelation 17:14

It is as a result of His victory and His descent to Hades and subsequent ascension into the presence of the Father in His resurrected and thoroughly genuine human body that we, the Body of Christ, share in that victory and the gifts and rewards that flow from it.

(7) And to each of us this grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (8) For it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive (i.e., He brought pre-cross believers to heaven). He gave gifts to men." (9) Now [as to] this [phrase] "He ascended", what can it mean except that He had also [previously] descended into the lower reaches of the earth (i.e., Hades, from whence He brought the pre-cross believers to heaven)? (10) The One who descended is also the One who ascended above all the heavens (i.e., into the third heaven, the place of the Father's residence), in order to fulfill all things (i.e., complete the victory won at the cross; cf. Ps.110:1).
Ephesians 4:7-10

Although it is doubtful if the devil and his angels realized it, from the very moment of the incarnation, salvation was assured and Satan's defeat a certainty. Satan had corrupted a third of angelic kind through their desire to know the pleasures of having physical bodies,⁶ but Jesus took on a human body not for sensual experience but, after having experienced the sorrows of this world beyond measure, to suffer and die for us on the cross in order to save us (Is.52:13 - 53:12). This is the great victory upon which our salvation and our adversary's dethronement depends, one which necessitated our Lord coming to earth in the flesh.

The seventy-two returned and said with joy, "Lord, even the demons obey us in your Name!" And Jesus said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like a star".
Luke 10:17-18

Now the God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet.
Romans 16:20

⁶ See Part 1 of The Satanic Rebellion: Satan's Rebellion and Fall, section IV.3.b, "Satan's Revolutionary Platform".

[God the Father], who rescued us from the power of darkness and delivered us into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

Colossians 1:13

(31) Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the prince of this world be driven out.

(32) And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to Myself.

John 12:31-32 (cf. Jn.16:11)

(21) For since death [came] through a man, resurrection of the dead also [had to come] through a man. (22) For just as in Adam, all die, so also in Christ, shall all be made alive.

(23) But each [will be resurrected] in his own echelon. Christ [is the] first-fruits (i.e., the initial person and echelon of resurrection). Next [will be] those belonging to Christ at His coming (i.e., all believers at the 2nd Advent). (24) Then the end [of human history – the resurrection of millennial believers], when He will hand the Kingdom over to the Father, after He has brought an end to all rule, all power, and all authority (i.e., hostile human and angelic control). (25) For He must rule until He has placed all His enemies under His feet.

1st Corinthians 15:21-25 (cf. Psalm 110:1)

c. Christ's taking on of true humanity was necessary for fulfilling God's prior promises and prophecies: In respect to the fulfilment of all of God's promises to us it was also necessary for our Lord to take on true humanity. For indeed, all of God's promises to us are dependent upon the ultimate promise of salvation in Jesus Christ.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcision for the sake of God's truth, that is, *to confirm the promises* (i.e., covenants) made to their ancestors – and also so that the gentiles might glorify God for His mercy (i.e., in providing salvation through Jesus).

Romans 15:8-9b

As many promises of God as there are, *in Him*, [Jesus Christ, they are] “Yes!” So also through Him the “Amen!” [we say] to God results in [His] glory through us (i.e., our faith in His promises ratified in Christ).

2nd Corinthians 1:20

God's promises are abundant, and they never fail (Josh.21:45; Rom.9:6; Tit.1:2; Heb.13:5-6), because our Lord has empowered them through His death for us as a true human being on the cross. For all of the promises of God are based upon what Jesus did for us: grace of every sort is a result of Christ's work on the cross (Rom.3:24; 5:15-21; Eph.2:5-8; Tit.3:7; cf. Jn.1:16-17). Time would fail us if we attempted to relate here all of the promises of the Word of God (cf. Jn.21:25; Heb.11:32ff.), for there is a promise on every page of the Bible. What concerns us here is how those promises, predictions, and prophecies of the Word relate to the incarnation of our Lord. Herein we may focus on three particular areas of promise that require the provision of a person who must of necessity be God as well as man, but true man nonetheless: 1) to fulfill the promise of a prophet greater than Moses whose words would be perfect in leading to salvation;

2) to fulfill the promise of a priest greater than any prior high priest, all of whom were all unable to do any more than represent the sacrifice which would cleanse us from our sins; 3) to fulfill the promise of a king who would rule forever, a son of David who would somehow be greater than David and be David's Lord as well. Only by Jesus Christ, true God come to earth by taking on true humanity, could these promises be fully realized, for each represents one of three critical aspects of God's plan of salvation, announced through prophecy, effected through priestly sacrifice, and realized in all its blessedness in the coming reign of the Messiah.

1) Jesus fulfills the promise of the Prophet to come, embodying in His Person the entire message of God's prophetic revelation of salvation (He is *the* Prophet):

“The Lord Your God will raise up from your midst, from among your brothers, a Prophet like me (i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ). You must give heed to Him, just as you requested from the Lord your God at Horeb (i.e., Sinai) on the day of your assembly [there], when you said, ‘May I not hear the voice of the Lord My God any longer, nor see this great fire lest I die!’ Then the Lord said to me, ‘They have done well in what they have said. I will raise up for them from the midst of their brothers a Prophet like you. And I will put My words in His mouth, and He will tell them everything I command Him. And it will come to pass that the person who does not listen to My words which He will speak in My Name, that I will require it of that person’ (i.e., hold him responsible for rejecting salvation).”

Deuteronomy 18:15-19

Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, “We have found the One whom Moses wrote about in the Law and [whom] the prophets [wrote about too], Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth.”

John 1:45

If you had believed Moses, you would have believed in Me. For He wrote about Me.

John 5:46

So the people who saw the sign He had performed were saying, “This is truly the Prophet who is [prophesied to be] coming into the world.”

John 6:14 (cf. Matt.21:11; Jn.7:40)

(19) So repent and turn back [to God] for the blotting out of your sins, (20) so that times of refreshment may come from the Lord, and so that He may send to you the One acknowledged as the Christ [Messiah], [namely] Jesus, (21) who must remain in heaven until the times of the restoration of all things of which God has spoken through the mouths of His holy prophets from of old. (22) For Moses said, “The Lord God will raise up for you from among your brothers a Prophet like me”.

Acts 3:19-22b (cf. Acts 7:37)

The prophets spoke the Word of God, but Jesus *is* the Word of God and the fulfillment of this and all of the rest of God's promises prophesied in the scriptures.

2) Jesus fulfills the promise of the High Priest to come, along with all of the prophecies and rituals which taught and proclaimed the need for a "better sacrifice" (He is *the* High Priest in the order of Melchizedek):

When He had accomplished the cleansing of [our] sins, He took His seat (i.e., beyond the veil) at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Hebrews 1:3b

For this reason He had to be like His brothers in every way, in order to become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things relating to God in order to propitiate the sins of the people (i.e., through the sacrifice of Himself).

Hebrews 2:17

Since we have, therefore, a Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens (i.e., as through the veil), [even] Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our profession [of faith in Him].

Hebrews 4:14

(19) And this hope [truly] is what "anchors" our lives, a secure and solid [anchor of hope] which penetrates [behind] the veil (i.e., the heavens) into the inner place (i.e., the heavenly holy of holies) (20) where our vanguard, Jesus, has entered on our behalf, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 6:19-20

(23) Now the others who have become priests are [of necessity] many since they are prevented from remaining [in office] because of their mortality. (24) But He, [Jesus Christ], because He abides forever, possesses the priesthood irrevocably. (25) For this reason He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, since He lives forever making intercession for them. (26) This is just the sort of High Priest we needed, holy, without fault, without imperfection, completely separated from sinners, and having ascended higher than the heavens [into God's presence]. (27) Unlike the [human] high priests, [Jesus] has no need of making sacrifice day by day, first on behalf of His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. For this [latter] He did once and for all when He offered Himself [as a sacrifice].

Hebrews 7:23-27

The sum of what we have said is this: we have a High Priest of such [amazing] quality that He has [actually] taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of Majesty in heaven, a Minister of the holy things and of the true tabernacle which the Lord has pitched, not man. For every priest is appointed to present offerings and sacrifices. Wherefore it was necessary for Him also to have something to offer. Now if He were [ministering] on

earth, He would not have been a priest, inasmuch as there are already those who present offerings according to the law [of Moses]. These minister in [what is a] copy and a shadow of the [actual] heavenly [tabernacle], just as command was given to Moses as he was about to complete the tabernacle. For He says, “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain (i.e., Sinai).”

Hebrews 8:1-5

But Christ has already arrived [in heaven] as [the true High] Priest of the good things to come, [having passed] through the [veil of the] greater and more perfect tabernacle, that is, the one which is not of this creation (i.e., through the heavens and into the third heaven). Nor was it through the blood of goats and bullocks, but through His own blood (i.e., His death) that He entered once and for all into the [heavenly] holy of holies, having wrought eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:11-12

(23) For this reason (i.e., the inability of the blood of animals to cleanse us from sin) it was necessary for the heavenly exemplars of these earthly representations to be cleansed with better sacrifices than these [earthly ones]. (24) For Christ did not enter into a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one. Rather, He entered into heaven itself, so as to present Himself before God [the Father] on our behalf.

Hebrews 9:23-24

A priest ministers to God, but only Jesus in His humanity could present Himself as the ultimate sacrificial offering and so fulfill the promise of the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

3) Jesus fulfills the promise of the King and all of the prophecies of the messianic kingdom (He is *the* King):

And the Lord declares to you that the Lord will produce a house for you. When your days are fulfilled and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your Seed after you, [One] who will come from your own loins, and I will establish His kingdom.

2nd Samuel 7:11-12

(12) And He said to me, “Thus says the Lord of Hosts: Behold a Man – ‘Branch’ is His name (i.e., the Messiah; cf. Is.4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Zech.3:8). And He will branch out from His place and will build [up] the temple of the Lord. (13) For it is He who will build [up] the temple of the Lord. And He will raise up [its] glory. And He will sit and rule [as King] upon His throne. And He will [also] be Priest upon His [kingly] throne. For there will be a [unity of] consultation between the two [offices].”
Zechariah 6:12-13

(1) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, (2) saying, “Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? For in the east [where we live] we saw His star, and we have come to worship Him.”
Matthew 2:1-2

(37) And as soon as He was nearing the descent of the Mount of Olives the entire crowd of His disciples began to rejoice and praise God, (38) saying, “Blessed is the One who is coming, the King [who is coming] in the Name of the Lord”.
Luke 19:37-38b (cf. Jn.12:13)

Nathaniel replied to Him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel!”
John 1:49

Then Pilate said to Him, “So you are a king then?” Jesus replied, “You say [rightly] that I am a King. For I have been born for this purpose, and have come into the world in order to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”
John 18:37

These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, because He is Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and called, and elect – and faithful are those with Him.
Revelation 17:14

And He has a Name on His robe and on His thigh: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
Revelation 19:16

Kings rule in God’s stead, but only God’s very own Son is qualified to be His Regent over the entire world when He returns in glory at the Second Advent.

d. Christ’s taking on of true humanity was necessary for Him to become our Mediator:

For as God is One, so there is [only] One Mediator between God and Man, Christ Jesus in His humanity, who gave Himself as a ransom for all [mankind] . . .
1st Timothy 2:5-6a

The idea of a third party intervening to mediate a dispute between two estranged parties is one to which we can all relate. Thus the biblical concept of Christ the Mediator is inextricably linked to

the doctrine of reconciliation, where by Christ intervenes to dissolve the barrier of enmity that separates God from sinful mankind (Eph.2:14-18; cf. Col.2:14). But there are three points in which the mediation accomplished by our Lord is vastly different from the resolution of most human conflicts. First, God and Man are nothing like equal parties, with mankind moreover being entirely at fault in this “dispute” so that the satisfaction required for resolution must be directed toward God alone (i.e., we have no basis whatsoever for complaint against God, something Job would have done well to remember: Job 9:33). The role of Mediator between the King and His offending subjects can only be played by someone who is on a par with both the Father-King and His creature-subjects: only a Son (incarnate) can be sent on such a mission of reconciliation (cf. Matt.21:33-40). Second, since the problem requiring resolution is the universal sinfulness of mankind, and, further, since mankind, flawed because of sin, has absolutely no way of paying off the least part of the debt for sin, the Mediator Himself had to be the one to provide satisfaction to the offended party if reconciliation were to occur. This our Lord did on our behalf when He was judged for all of our sins in the darkness on the cross. Thus, thirdly, in order to accomplish the payment of this “ransom”, Jesus had to become a true human being, since only a true human being, and one sinlessly perfect at that, could pay the price for all of humanity’s sins. It is by His work for us on the cross that Jesus has fulfilled His role of mediation, opening up the offer of reconciliation for every human being, an offer that is accepted through faith in the One who made the offer possible through His blood (Rom.5:10-11; 2Cor.5:18-21; Eph.2:16-17; Col.1:20-23). For it is by faith in His Son who died for us that we accept and receive God’s “peace offer” (Lk.2:14; Jn.14:27; Rom.5:10; Eph.2:12-14; 2:17; Col.1:20; cf. Rom.5:1).⁷

e. Christ’s taking on of true humanity is proven by scripture: The Bible’s testimony as to this important teaching of Jesus’ advent in true human flesh is unmistakably clear. Despite heresies to the contrary, if we put our faith in scripture, we are left in no doubt as to the genuine humanity of our Lord, possessing a truly human body (Heb.10:5-10) and spirit (Matt.27:50; Mk.2:8; 8:12; Lk.23:46; Jn.11:33; 13:21; 19:30) just as all of us have (though in His case apart from sin).

You too should have this attitude which Christ Jesus had. Since He already existed in the very form of God, equality with God was [certainly] not something He thought He had to grasp for. Yet in spite of this [co-equal divinity He already possessed], He deprived Himself of His status and took on the form of a slave, [and was] born in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all].

Philippians 2:5-8

⁷ Moses as the mediator of the first covenant (in contrast to Christ the Mediator of the new “better” covenant: Gal.3:19-20; Heb.8:6; 9:15; 12:24) provides a very informative typological picture of the mediator’s role, pleading with God on our behalf (Ex.32:11-14), while sternly remonstrating with us that we might be reconciled to God (Ex.32:19-20).

1) This is shown by His genuinely physical birth:

(22) And all this has happened to fulfill what was said by the Lord through the prophet [Isaiah], saying, (23) “Behold, the virgin will conceive and will give birth to a Son, and you shall call His Name ‘Immanuel’”, which translated means ‘God [is] with us’.
Matthew 1:22-23

And the Word became flesh and tented among us, and we saw His glory, a glory like that of a father’s one and only child, full of grace and truth.
John 1:14

(10) And the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid! For behold, I am giving you a message of great joy which will belong to all the people. (11) ‘Today in David’s city a Savior has been born for you, [even Him] who is [the] Messiah (i.e., “Christ”) [the] Lord’”.
Luke 2:10-11

(3) [The gospel] which is about [God’s] Son, the One who was born of the seed of David according to His flesh, (4) and marked out as God’s Son by the power of the Spirit of Holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Romans 1:3-4

For to which of the angels did He ever say, “You are my Son. Today I have given begotten you.”?
Hebrews 1:5a

2) This is shown by normal human experiences of His life and death:

And having fasted for forty days and forty nights later (i.e., since being led into the wilderness by the Spirit), [Jesus] was *hungry*.
Matthew 4:2

And [Jesus] Himself was in the stern [of the boat], *sleeping* on the cushion.
Mark 4:38

“But the Son of Man has come *eating* and *drinking*, and you say . . .
Luke 7:34

And having taken [*Jesus’ body*] down [from the cross], [Joseph] wrapped it in linen and placed Him in a tomb [which has been] carved out [of the rock] where no one had [ever] yet been lain.
Luke 23:53

And Jacob's well was in that place. So Jesus, *having become fatigued* from the journey, accordingly sat down at the well.

John 4:6

Jesus *wept*.

John 11:35

(33) And next, [the soldiers] came to Jesus. [But] when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. (34) But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance, and there came forth immediately *blood and water* (i.e., "serum").

John 19:33-34

3) This is shown even in His resurrection:

"Behold, my hands and my feet, [and see] that it is [really] me. Touch me and see that a spirit does not have *flesh and bones* as you see that I have".

Luke 24:39

Jesus thus not only is truly human, having become a genuine man in order to die for our sins on the cross, but He also knows precisely what we are going through in this world, having endured the worst of it and having drunk its tears by the bucket full (Is.53:3), yet without sin:

For we do not have a High Priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, since He too was put to the test in all things just as [we are], [only] without sin.

Hebrews 4:15

(7) [Jesus our High Priest] who in the days of His flesh[ly life] (i.e., while He was on earth prior to the resurrection), having offered up prayers and petitions with powerful shouting and with tears to the One who was able to save Him from death, and having been hearkened to on account of His devoutness, (8) although being [God's one and only] Son, nevertheless came to understand [firsthand in His humanity] from what He suffered [what] obedience to God [truly is] (i.e., what it takes for a human being to be obedient to God), (9) and, once He was perfected (i.e., perfectly completed His course), became the source of eternal salvation for all who are obedient to Him (i.e., believers).

Hebrews 5:7-9

3. Jesus Christ is truly Unique:

At the end of these times (i.e., of verse one), God spoke to us by a Son, whom He appointed heir of everything, and through whom He [the Father] made the ages.

Hebrews 1:2

Here we see the uniqueness of our dear Lord unimpeded. He is God's one and only Son, a title that at once embraces all of the human and divine facets of His unique Person. And He is in His

humanity the heir of all things as a result of His victory at the cross, having won the battle over Satan (Col.2:15; Rev.5:5), having won the hand of His Bride, the Church (Eph.5:25), and having won eternal redemption for all mankind, all who are willing to accept it (Heb.9:12). And He is in His deity the One through whom the Father brought about the creation of the universe, space and time. In His unique Person, therefore, Jesus Christ, God incarnate, binds all things together, whether they be of this creation or transcend it.

(19) For it was [God's] good pleasure for the fulfillment [of His plan] to reside entirely in [Christ], (20) and so through Him to reconcile everything to Himself, having made peace through Him, through the blood of His cross, whether things on earth, or things in heaven.

Colossians 1:19-20

Jesus is the unique “bridge” between all that is material and all that is immaterial, and one can scarcely comprehend or appreciate the graciousness of the Father in offering His own dear Son for this role or our Lord's incomparable and ineffable sacrifice in accepting it. Suffice it to say that through His becoming truly human forever at the same time that He remains divine in an undiminished way, Jesus has wed Himself and therefore has wed the divinity to save mankind forever, having poured out His life on the cross to accomplish this merciful deliverance of us all. Thus the fundamental transformation of what was before creation, what creation meant (because of what in the grace of God it was going to entail in terms of Jesus' sacrifice), and what now will endure to the ages of the ages is completely bound up in the unique Person and work of Jesus Christ, through whom we have become partakers of the divine nature (2Pet.1:4), and because of Him God will forever, on that blessed day of days when time ends and eternity begins, make His abode with saved humanity forevermore (Rev.21:3).

For in Him (i.e., Jesus Christ), dwells all of the fullness of deity *in bodily form*.

Colossians 2:9

Here we see deity and humanity combined in an absolutely unique way. Jesus Christ is truly a man (since His incarnation: Phil.2:6-11). Jesus Christ is also truly God (Col.2:2 Greek). Only by having a body could our Lord deliver us from our sins, because only in this way could God die for our sins. This is the mystery of the gospel (Col.2:2), the plan and power of God for saving sinful mankind (Rom.1:16). Therefore Jesus *is* the plan of God, the Cornerstone of all that God has purposed to accomplish (Matt.21:42; Eph.2:20; 1Pet.2:6-7; cf. Rom.5:6; 8:29-30; 1Cor.8:6; Col.1:17-20; Heb.9:26).

. . . . in all wisdom and understanding [God] has made known to us the mystery He has willed (*according to His own benevolent purpose which He determined in [Christ]*) for administering this [present] fulfillment of the epochs: namely *the incorporation of all things in Christ*, things in heaven, and things on earth –

Ephesians 1:8b-10

As the ages were designed *for* our Lord Jesus Christ as well as *through* Him (Col.1:16-17), there is scarcely any respect in which the scriptures do not reflect this distinctive uniqueness of the One who saved us through His death. While it is thus not possible to comprehensively delineate every single way in which our Lord's uniqueness is essential to the plan of God, the mention here of a sample of some prominent areas in which that uniqueness is critical is appropriate:

a. That uniqueness is shown by the fact that only by being God and man could Jesus be the **Firstborn**, the One who would *earn* the **privileges** of rulership, priesthood, and double portion (Rom.8:29; Col.1:18; Heb.1:6; Rev.1:5; cf. section I.5.f.4.c below):

He is the exact image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
Colossians 1:15

Since Jesus is the *one and only* Son of God (Jn.1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 3:18; 1Jn.4:9), His status of firstborn refers not to any order of birth but rather to the privileges that fall to the lot of the firstborn, namely, rulership (Dan.7:13-14; Matt.22:41-45; 28:18; Col.1:18; Heb.2:10; 3:1-6; Rev.2:27), priesthood (Heb.5:6; 7:13-14), and double portion of inheritance (Rev.19:9; cf. Deut.21:15-17). As with His priesthood and His Messiahship, Jesus' status of "firstborn" is a privilege *earned* through His sacrificing of Himself for us all on the cross, for He is the "firstborn *from the dead*" (Col.1:18; Rev.1:5), indicating that it is His death for us that forms the basis for His receiving all of the rights and privileges of firstborn status (cf. Gen.49:4; and Heb.12:16, where it is made clear that this privilege is based upon merit).

I will also *appoint* Him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth.
Psalm 89:27 NIV

We have discussed above Jesus' rulership and priesthood, the first two benefits of firstborn status (and it a wondrous thing to contemplate that we, His Church, share in all of these by virtue of our sharing in His status of "firstborn": Heb.12:23). As to the third, the firstborn's double-portion of inheritance, in our Lord's case, this consists of His dearest possessions, the Bride (i.e., the Church consisting of all pre-second advent believers: Rev.21:9; cf. Eph.5:22-33; Rev.19:7-8; 21:2; 22:17), and "the Friends of the Bride" (i.e., the equal number of millennial believers: Ps.45:14-15; Rev.19:9). Our Lord's uniqueness is thus pellucidly clear in His unprecedented rulership of the world which only the Messiah can attain (Matt.22:41-45; Heb.3:1-6; Rev.1:5-7; 5:4-5; 11:15), the eternal priesthood "according to the order of Melchizedek" which required the sacrifice which only God's Son could provide (Heb.7:26; cf. Heb.2:15-17), and in the fulfillment and possession of the Bride and her Friends, which only the God-Man will achieve (Rom.8:29; Heb.2:13).

b. That uniqueness is shown by the fact that only by being God and man could Jesus be our **Sin-bearer**, the One who would *pay* the **penalty** for our sins on the cross (Matt.16:21; 17:12; Mk.8:31; 9:12; Lk.9:22; 17:25; 22:15; 24:26; 24:46; Acts 1:3; 3:18; 17:3; 26:23; Rom.8:17; 2Cor.1:5; Phil.3:10; 1Pet.4:1):

My God, My God, why did You forsake Me?
Psalm 22:1

(3) He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with suffering. Like a person people hide their faces from, He was despised, and we did not hold Him of any account. (4) For He bore our sicknesses and He carried our weaknesses. And yet we considered Him as [the One who had been] punished, smitten and afflicted by God. (5) But [in fact] He was made subject to torment on account of our transgressions, and He was crushed because of our collective guilt (lit., “guilts”). The punishment [required] for making peace [with God] on our behalf [fell] upon Him. Because of His wounding, we have been healed.

Isaiah 53:3-5

(9) But now we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor on account of *the death He suffered*, even He who became “a little lower than the angels” [for a brief span] so that by the grace of God He might *taste death on behalf of us all*. (10) For it was fitting for [the Father] to make complete *through sufferings* Him on whose account all things exist and through whom all things exist, namely, the Captain of their salvation, even Him who has led many sons to glory, [our Lord Jesus Christ].

Hebrews 2:9-10

For because He has suffered, He is able to help those who are being tested, since He Himself was [also] put to the test.

Hebrews 2:18

For we do not have a High Priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, since He too was put to the test in all things just as [we are], [only] without sin.

Hebrews 4:15

(7) [Jesus our High Priest] who in the days of His flesh[ly life] (i.e., while He was on earth prior to the resurrection), having offered up prayers and petitions with powerful shouting and with tears to the One who was able to save Him from death, and having been hearkened to on account of His devoutness, (8) although being [God’s one and only], nevertheless came to understand [firsthand] from what He suffered [what] obedience to God [truly is] (i.e., what it takes for a human being to be obedient to God), (9) and, once He was perfected (i.e., perfectly completed His course), became the source of eternal salvation for all who are obedient to Him (i.e., believers).

Hebrews 5:7-9

Therefore Jesus also suffered outside of the gate, in order to sanctify the people through His blood (i.e., His death on the cross).

Hebrews 13:12

For it is to this [sharing in the sufferings of Christ] that you have been called, for Christ also died on your behalf, leaving you an example so that you might follow in His

footsteps: He committed no sin, nor was any guile found in His mouth. He did not return slander when He was slandered, did not threaten when He suffered, but entrusted Himself to the One who judges righteously.

1st Peter 2:21-23

But to the degree that you are [truly] participating in Christ's sufferings, be joyful about it, so that at His glorious revelation, you may also rejoice with great gladness.

1st Peter 4:13

c. That uniqueness is shown by the fact that only by being God and man could Jesus be the *Messiah*, the One who fulfills the *duties* of the Father's mission:

At that time (i.e., His birth) He [Jesus Christ in His deity] said, 'Behold, I have arrived (i.e., been born) – in the scroll of a book it is written of Me – to do your will, O God''.

Hebrews 10:7 (Ps.40:7)

Jesus is the One whom the Father sent into the world to save it (Lk.2:25-35; Jn.3:16; 3:34; 7:18; 7:28-31; 17:18; Rom.8:3; Heb.3:1; 1Jn.4:9-10; cf. Gen.49:10; Is.8:6; Zech.2:9; 2:11; 4:9; 6:15), the Messiah (Hebrew: *Meshiach*, משיח), the One prophesied to come into the world and deliver it from sin by dying in its place (the cross: Is.52:13 - 53:12), and to deliver it from evil by reigning over it in perfect righteousness (the crown: Ps.2; 45; 72; 110). The Hebrew title Messiah, translated into Greek as "Christ" (*Christos*, Χριστός), means "Anointed One", and reflects the Hebrew custom of demonstrating through an anointing with oil that a person had been officially commissioned into an extraordinary office (as in Samuel's anointing of Saul: 1Sam.10:1; of David: 1Sam.16:13; or Moses' anointing of Aaron: Ex.28:41). In all such cases, this anointing with oil is symbolic and represents divine empowerment through the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Num.11:17-29; 1Sam.10:6; 10:9-10; 11:6; 16:13). While never symbolically anointed with oil, Jesus was symbolically "anointed" with our sins (the meaning behind His unique water-baptism: cf. Mk.10:38-39; Lk.12:50), after which He immediately received a special and dramatic symbol (i.e., the Spirit descending upon Him in the form of dove) of the unction of the Holy Spirit He possessed from birth by virtue of His unique status as *the* Anointed One.

His status of anointing is unique both in terms of its exceptional degree (Is.11:2-3; Jn.3:34; cf. Matt.3:16; Mk.1:10; Lk.3:22; Jn.1:32), and also in that it demonstrates the Father's pleasure with Him in the undertaking of His earthly mission (Matt.3:17; Mk.1:11; Lk.3:22; cf. Matt.17:5; Mk.9:7; Lk.9:35; Jn.12:28). And it was essential for the Messiah, the Anointed One, to be both God and man to fulfill His mission because 1) only the God-man can be the sin-bearer who redeems mankind; 2) only the God-man can be the Father's regent to rule over redeemed mankind forever; and 3) only the God-man can mediate between the Father and sinful mankind as high-priest. Thus our Lord was Ruler, Redeemer, and Mediator by right of birth as the firstborn, won the right for us to share with Him in His rulership by being our sin-bearer, and discharged (redeeming us at the cross), is discharging (mediating for us even now), and will discharge (ruling the world at His return) each of these offices in fulfillment of the Father's mission in His status as Messiah, with each accomplished in its proper time.

4. The Names of Jesus Christ reflect His perfect Person and His perfect Work:

a. The Three Primary Names: “Lord Jesus Christ”:

1) Lord: This primary name is the Greek word *kyrios* (κύριος) which translates what is often called the “tetragrammaton”, that is, the unpointed four consonant Hebrew name “LORD” as explained at Exodus 3:13-15 (YHVH: יהוה).⁸ Therefore this title is clearly expressive of Jesus’ divinity (Matt.22:41-46; Jn.20:28; cf. Ps.110:1).

2) Jesus: This primary name is a transliteration of the Hebrew name often vocalized “Joshua” (יֵשׁוּעַ), meaning “The LORD saves”, and is the name which Joseph and Mary are instructed to use “because He will save His people from their sins” (Matt.1:21; Lk.1:31). Therefore this name is clearly expressive of the work which our Lord accomplished on the cross in dying for the sins of the entire world. As such, it represents Him as both human and divine, since only God could remit our sins, and only a perfect human being could die for them (cf. Matt.9:2-6; Mk.2:9-10; Lk.5:20-24; 7:48-49).

3) Christ: This primary name is the Greek word *christos* (Χριστός) which translates the Hebrew name “Messiah” or “Anointed One” (*meshicah*: משיח), thus referring to our Lord’s special commissioning by the Father as the unique One who will fulfill prophecy and accomplish salvation. Therefore this title is evocative of Jesus’ unique Person, the God-man, the very Son of God, who has been sent into the world to save it (Jn.3:16; 1Jn.4:9-10; cf. Matt.3:16-17; Acts 4:27; Heb.1.8-9).

b. Other Names: This list makes no pretense at being complete. To make such an attempt would require a separate study of its own, and a lengthy one at that. For example, since Jesus is God, all of the various and sundry names, appellations and unique descriptions of God occurring in the Old Testament would need to be considered in such a study (e.g., *El, Elohiym, Yah, El `Elyon, El Ro`i, El Shaddai, Jehovah-nissi*, etc.), not to mention specifically Messianic passages which refer uniquely to Jesus and His coming millennial reign:

For a child is born to us, and a Son is given to us. Dominion shall rest on his shoulder, and His name will be called “He whose counsel is wondrous”, “Mighty God”, “the Father of Eternity”, “the Prince of Prosperity”.

Isaiah 9:6

In the New Testament as well, since Jesus is the revealed person of the Trinity and the focal point of all scripture, one finds innumerable descriptions of Him which, even if they fall short of being a “name” or “title” in some precise sense of those words, are certainly worthy of inclusion in any

⁸ For more discussion of this name, see Part 1 of this series, Theology: the Study of God, footnote #1.

comprehensive treatment (as, for example, where He is called in Hebrews 3:1 “the Apostle . . . of our faith”, in Hebrews 2:10 the “Captain of their salvation”, and in Hebrews 12:2 “the originator and completer of our faith”), not to mention the various self-descriptions our Lord uses for Himself in His address to the seven churches of Revelation alone:

To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write: “This is what the One who has the mastery over the seven stars (i.e., churches) in His right hand says, the One who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.”

Revelation 2:1

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: “This is what the One who is the first and last says, He who died and came to life.”

Revelation 2:8

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: “This is what the One who has the sharp two-edged sword says.”

Revelation 2:12

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: “This is what the Son of God says, the One whose eyes are like a flame of fire and whose feet are like white-hot bronze.”

Revelation 2:18

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: “This is what the One who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars says.”

Revelation 3:1

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: “This is what the One who is holy and true says, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will lock, who locks and no one opens.”

Revelation 3:7

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: “This is what the Amen says, the reliable and truthful Witness, the origin of God’s creation.

Revelation 3:14

In addition to the fact that a number of these names and titles are covered elsewhere in this study, since many such appellations only occur once or twice, or are largely expressive of doctrinal principles which will be explained elsewhere, and are also in any case deserving of a full-treatment best left to commentary on the specific verses in which they occur, the list which follows will restrict itself to some of the more common names and titles of our Lord. As this standard of exclusion and inclusion is necessarily subjective, the reader’s indulgence is requested for any and all cases of omission that may be deemed inappropriate.

1) Advocate: As the One who bought us by giving up His precious life for us through His death on the cross on our behalf, Jesus has earned the right to advocate on our behalf, interceding

with the Father before the throne of grace (Rom.8:34; 1Jn.2:1; Heb.7:25; cf. Job 16:19; Jn.14:13-14; 1Tim.2:5).

My children, I am writing these things to you so that you won't sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate to [approach] the Father [on our behalf], Jesus Christ the righteous.
1st John 2:1

2) Alpha and Omega: This title, used of our Lord at Revelation 22:13, is also used for the Father (i.e., at Rev.1:8 and 21:6), a fact which constitutes no contradiction since Father and Son are “one” (Jn.10:30). Being the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet respectively, the name Alpha and Omega stresses the fact that Jesus is “the first and the last” (Rev.1:17), the One who comprises all things from one end of the universe and from one end of eternity to the other (Col.1:16-19; 2:3; 2:9).

3) Arm of the Lord: As the second person of the Trinity, Jesus is the One who carries out the plan of God directly and personally (Lk.1:51): He is the One who made the universe (Jer.27:5; 32:17; cf. Ps.8:3), and He is the One who has saved us from eternal condemnation by personally coming into the world as a human being and dying in our place for our sins (Is.53:1 in the context of chapter 53; cf. Jn.12:37-38). He will also be the One through whom the Father will retake direct control of the earth at the second advent (Ps.98:1; Is.30:30; 40:10; 51:5; 51:9; 52:10; 59:16-20; 63:5-6; cf. Is.48:14-15; Ezek.20:33-34). As the instrument by which the Father carries out His plan, the title “Arm of the Lord” is very descriptive and appropriate (Ps.89:13). It shows, moreover, how inextricably linked the purpose and the action of the Trinity are as three Persons sharing a single essence, especially visible in the redemption of the people of Israel from Egypt, an action highly symbolic of our redemption from death (cf. Deut.7:19; 9:29; 2Kng.17:36; Ps.89:10; Ps.136:10-15; Jer.32:21; Acts 13:17; cf. Ps.44:3).

Where is He [the *Father*] who brought them (i.e, the Israelites) up from the [Red] Sea with the leaders of His people? Where is He [the Father] who set among them His *Holy Spirit*, who [also] made His Glorious *Arm* of power [Jesus Christ (cf. Heb.11:27)] to go [along with them] at Moses' right hand?
Isaiah 63:11b-12a

4) Branch: This is essentially a Messianic title which identifies our Lord as the promised offspring of David destined to rule the world in righteousness (Is.53:2; Jer.23:5; 33:15; Zech.3:8; 6:12; cf. Ezek.17:22ff.; Rom.1:3; Rev.5:5), unappreciated in His first advent (Is.11:1), but glorious in His second coming (Is.4:2).⁹ Since the title is primarily Messianic, we should

⁹ Compare the similar use of the plant analogy to illustrate the concept of the family of God generally, of which Israel is the rootstock (Rom.11:13-24), and our organic union with Jesus as branches in Him, the true vine: Jn.15:1-8; see below under “Vine”). It is also likely that the term “Nazarene” (Matt.2:23) finds its main prophetic application here (beyond the residence of

understand it also to be connected to the use of the palm branch as a symbol of the victorious Messiah as implied in the festival of *Sukkoth*,¹⁰ our Lord's final first advent entry into Jerusalem (cf. Ps.118:25-27 with Matt.21:8-9; Mk.11:8-10; Jn.12:13; cf. Lk.19:37-38), and the martyrs with palm branches in hand at Revelation 7:9. Finally, it is also important to see this title as tying our Lord to the symbolism of the menorah, the seven branched lampstand which illuminated the Holy Place in the Tabernacle and Temple. Jesus is the light of the world and life itself (Jn.1:4; Jn.14:6). Since the menorah connects the coming Messiah with the original tree of life, it is likely that we are meant to see this symbolism of light and life shining through in the title "Branch" as well.¹¹

5) Bridegroom: Jesus is the Last Adam, and we, the Church, are, so to speak, His "Eve" (1Cor.15:45; 2Cor.11:2-3; cf. Rom.5:14). Jesus died for us, purchasing us from death with His blood, His sacrificial work in dying for our sins on the cross (1Cor.15:3; 2Cor.5:21; 1Pet.2:24). Having been purchased in this unique way (1Pet.1:18-19), we belong to Him forever and will be "wedded" to Him as His Bride forever on His return (Matt.9:15; Matt.25:1-13; Mk.2:19; Lk.5:34; Jn.3:29; 2Cor.11:2-3; Eph.1:22-23; 5:22-33; Rev.21:2-4; 21:9ff.; 22:17; cf. 1Cor.15:23; Ps.45:9-17).

"Let us rejoice and be jubilant, and let us give glory to [God], because the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has prepared herself. And it has been given her to wear a pure, resplendent [gown] of the finest material (now this fine material represents the righteous acts of His holy ones [believers])." And [the angel] said to me, "Write this down: Happy are those who have been called to the wedding of the Lamb".
Revelation 19:7-9

6) Builder: In the Trinity's assumed roles, the Father is the Architect of creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator or Builder through whom all things come to have their being and in whom all things subsist (Col.1:16-17; Jn.1:3; see section I.1.c above). We find a similar attribution in Hebrews applied to the Church of Jesus Christ, whose building we are:

Jesus' family in Nazareth), based upon the Hebrew word for branch, *netser* (רֵיחַן), and referring to the use of that word at Isaiah 11:1b. Isaiah 11:1 expresses the growth of our Lord (i.e., His growing up, something He did in near complete obscurity) as a natural process analogous to a sprout growing up. The nation of Israel expected the Messiah to come directly in a blaze of glory and, as we know from the gospels, did not expect Jesus to come the way He came; one of the reasons He was under-appreciated.

¹⁰ For the symbolism of the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, see part 5 of the Satanic Rebellion series, section II.8.c.III.7, "Booths (Tabernacles)".

¹¹ For the symbolism of the menorah, see part 1 of the Satanic Rebellion series, section II.5.b, "The Illustration of the Tabernacle", and part 2B of Coming Tribulation, section I.2.b, "The Golden Lampstand".

(3) This One [Jesus Christ] is worthy of greater glory than Moses inasmuch as the One who builds the house has greater honor than the house itself. (4) For every house is built by someone, but God is the One who has built all things (i.e., creation). (5) And while Moses was faithful as a servant in all of his house as a witness to the [truths] that would be spoken [in the future], (6) Christ [was faithful] as a Son over His house – whose house we are, if indeed we hold fast to the hope [in which we] boast firm until the end.
Hebrews 3:3-6

7) Firstborn: [see section I.3.a above]

8) Gift of God: This name needs little explanation. Without God the Father giving us the inestimable gift of His own dear Son to die in our place, instead of the eternal life we anticipate, we would have only judgment in prospect. And Jesus agreed to have Himself given over to be judged in our place (Gal.1:4; Ep.5:2; 5:25; 1Tim.2:6; Tit.2:14; cf. Rom.3:24; 6:23; Eph.4:7). Only because of the glorious gift of Him do we have eternal life.

Thanks be to God for His inestimable gift!
2nd Corinthians 9:15

(15) But the offense [of the former, Adam] is not at all like the *favor* [of the Latter, Christ]. For though it is true that the human race is perishing on account of the offense of that one man [Adam], how much more has the grace of God and His gracious *Gift* of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to this same human race! (16) Indeed, the *Gift* is not at all like [the universal death that came] through [that] one person who sinned. For [in the former case] the [divine] judgment [that resulted] from one [person led] to [universal] condemnation, but the [divine] *favor* [based upon the sacrifice of the One has led] to the accomplishment of [universal] justification in response to many offenses. (17) For though it is true that on account of the offense of the one death reigned through that one (i.e., by Adam passing down his sin to his progeny), how much more will those who receive this abundance of grace, even this *Gift* of righteousness [through justification] rule in [eternal] life through [the sacrifice of] the One, Jesus Christ!
Romans 5:15-17

For you have been saved by (God's) grace through faith (in Christ); and this did not come from you – it is God's gift. Nor did it come from what you have done, lest anyone should boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9

9) Head of the Body, the Church: The Church is often referred to in the New Testament as “the Body of Christ” (e.g., 1Cor.12:12), of which our Lord Jesus is “the Head” (1Cor.11:3; 12:21; Eph.4:15-16; 5:22-33; Col.1:18; 2:10; 2:19). This name stresses the intimate connection between Jesus and those He loves, being so close to Him as to be just as indistinguishable from Him as the head is from the body.

(22) And [the Father] subordinated all things under [Christ's] feet and gave Him [as] Head over all things in the Church (23) which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills up all things in all ways.

Ephesians 1:22-23

10) High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek: [see section I.2.c.2 above]

11) The Holy One of God: This title, one used of Christ even by the demons (in Mk.1:24; Lk.4:34), identifies Jesus as the one and only specially sanctified One ordained by the Father (cf. Ps.16:10; Is.5:19 with Is.6:1 compared to Jn.12:41), and sent into the world by Him to save the world through faith in Him (cf. Lk.1:35; Acts 4:27; 1Jn.4:9-10; Rev.3:7).

(67) Then Jesus said to the twelve, “You don’t wish to leave too, do you?” (68) Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, (69) and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God”.

John 6:67-69

12) Immanuel: This name, meaning “God is with us”, demonstrates that Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of the virgin birth of the Messiah, who is in every way “God with us” (Is.7:14; cf. Is.8:8):

(22) And all this has happened to fulfill what was said by the Lord through the prophet [Isaiah], saying, (23) “Behold, the virgin will conceive and will give birth to a Son, and you shall call His Name ‘Immanuel’”, which translated means ‘God [is] with us’.

Matthew 1:22-23

13) Judge: In anticipation of His sacrifice and victory on the cross (Lk.10:22; Jn.3:35; 17:2; cf. Matt.9:6; Mk.2:10; Lk.5:24), and as a result of that sacrifice and victory (Eph.1:22-23; Phil.2:8-11), all authority has been handed over to Jesus Christ (Matt.28:18; cf. Dan.7:13-14; 1Cor.15:27). He is therefore “the Judge”, both of the Church in time and in eternity (Rom.14:10-12; 2Tim.4:8; cf. Jas.4:12; Rev.2:5-6; 3:1-3; 3:19-20), and, at the last judgment, of all mankind, saved or unsaved (Acts 10:42; Rom.2:16; 2Tim.4:1; 1Pet.4:5).

Brothers, do not grumble against one another so that you may not be judged [for it]. Behold, the Judge [Jesus Christ] is standing in front of the door (i.e., His return and our final judgment are imminent)!

James 5:9

For we must all stand before Christ’s tribunal, so that each of us may receive recompense for what he has accomplished through this body, whether it be good or worthless.

2nd Corinthians 5:10

14) King of Kings and Lord of Lords: As in the case of “Alpha and Omega” this title found at Revelation 19:16 for our Lord is also used of the Father (1Tim.6:14-16). Variations on

this title occur rather frequently in scripture (e.g., Deut.10:17; Ps.136:2-3; Dan.2:47; Rev.17:14), a title which emphasizes the totality of our Lord's authority over all human and angelic authority as He returns to rule the world with a "rod of iron" (Ps.2:9; Rev.2:27; 12:5; 19:15; cf. Ps.2:1-12; 110:1-2; Phil.2:9-11).

15) The Lamb of God: The title "Lamb of God" reminds us of the Old Testament sacrifices regarding sin (which all speak of our Lord's death on the cross), and calls attention to Jesus as the only perfect substitute and sacrifice for our sins, a "lamb without blemish" (1Pet.1:19; cf. Is.53:7) who took away "the sins of the world" (Jn.1:29). Jesus, of course, offered up His life, not literally His blood (cf. Heb.8:3: "something to offer"). For "the blood of Christ" is a symbol of Jesus' sacrifice just as "the Lamb of God" is a title symbolic of His sacrifice in being judged for our sins in the darkness on the cross (2Cor.5:21; 1Pet.2:24). This title figures prominently in the book of Revelation because it is through His sacrificial death on our behalf that He has won the right to rule the world (Rev.5:6; 5:8; 5:12-13; 6:16; 7:9-10; 7:14; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1; 14:4; 14:10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7; 19:9; 21:9; 21:14; 21:22-23; 21:27; 22:1; 22:3).

16) The Last Adam: Through the first Adam, sin entered the world, but through the Last Adam, grace for salvation has been made available for all who believe in Him (Rom.5:12-14; 1Cor.15:21-22; cf. Gen.3:15; Gal.3:19). For Jesus is "a life-giving spirit" for all who place their trust in Him for eternal life (1Cor.15:45). Thus the name "Last Adam" not only calls attention to our Lord's true humanity, but also to the fact that through His own sacrificial death on our behalf He has solved the universal problem plaguing humanity ever since Adam's fall, namely, the problem of sin and resultant death. For only through faith in the Last Adam, will we live forever and avoid the common heritage of our race of eternal death following spiritual and physical death.¹² Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, is the One who has taken away the curse upon the first Adam and upon us his progeny, and made it possible for us to reenter Eden, not a temporary, worldly Eden, but the New Jerusalem where we shall live with Him forever (cf. Rev.22:1-5).

17) Life: As our Creator and Savior, the giver of life and the only One in whom we have eternal life, Jesus Christ is Life itself, the very source of the life we enjoy now and shall forever enjoy in union with Him (Jn.5:26; 6:33-35; 6:48; 6:51; Acts 3:15; Rom.5:10; 8:2; 2Cor.4:10-11; 1Jn.5:11; cf. Deut.30:20b; Ps.36:9; Jer.10:10; 1Thes.1:9). Because He gave Himself unto death for our sakes, we have life eternal in Him, having been born again through the Spirit by obedience to the gospel of life in Jesus Christ (Matt.19:28; Jn.1:13; 3:3-8; 1Cor.4:15; Gal.4:29; Tit.3:5; Heb.12:9; Jas.1:18; 1Pet.1:3; 1:23; 1Jn.2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1; 5:4; 5:18).

(3) Everything came into being through Him, [Jesus Christ], and without Him, nothing has come into being which has in fact come into being. (4) In Him was life, and this life was the light of men.

John 1:3-4

¹² See section VI of Bible Basics 3A: Anthropology: "The Last Adam".

(25) Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even if he dies. (26) And everyone who lives and believes in Me will surely not die forevermore.”

John 11:25-26a

I am the way: the truth and the life.

John 14:6

For you are already dead, and your [eternal] life has been hidden away with Christ in God. When Christ – your [eternal] life – is revealed, then you too (i.e., with your new eternal life) will be revealed in glory with Him.

Colossians 3:3-4

What we have seen from the beginning, what we have heard and seen with our eyes, what we have observed and touched with our hands – this is about the Word of life[, Jesus Christ]. And the Life appeared, and we have seen and testify to and proclaim to you the Eternal Life who was face to face with the Father and appeared to us.

1st John 1:1-2

And we know that the Son of God has come and has given to us a means of thinking to know the truth. And we are in the Truth, in His Son Jesus Christ. This One (i.e., Jesus Christ) is the true God and Life Eternal.

1st John 5:20

It is I, the First and the Last, even the Living One. And although I died, behold, I am alive forever and ever! Indeed, I possess the keys to death and Hades.

Revelation 1:17b-18

18) Light: As God, Jesus *is* light (1Jn.1:5; cf. Jas.1:17; Rev.22:5). Light is a very important biblical symbol because it stands for life, for holiness, and for truth, and does so in a way to which we human beings can easily and thoroughly relate (cf. Jn.3:19-21). When the devil rebelled, darkness, which had previously had no part in God’s creation, came into being. In contrast to darkness which symbolizes death, evil, and the absence of truth, Jesus is the Light (Matt.4:16; Lk.2:32; Acts 26:13; 1Jn.2:8; Rev.21:23), because He is the holy One (Mk.1:24; Lk.1:35; 4:34; Jn.6:69; Acts 4:27; Rev.3:7; compare Jn.12:40-41 with Is.6:1-10), and He is truth itself and life itself (Jn.8:12; 9:5; 12:46).

In Him was life, and this life was the light of men. And this light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not quenched it.

John 1:4-5

In Jesus, the true Light (Jn.1:9), as “children of light” (Jn.12:36; Eph.5:8; cf. Lk.16:8; Matt.5:14), we enter the kingdom of light and exit the kingdom of darkness (Col.1:12-13; cf. Acts 26:18), having put our faith in the life-giving truth of the One who came into a world of darkness to bring us safely into the light of eternal life (1Pet.2:9; cf. Acts 26:23).

I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

John 8:12b

I have come into the world as a light, in order that everyone who believes in Me may not abide in darkness.

John 12:46

19) Lord of Hosts: As with the titles “Alpha and Omega” and “King of Kings and Lord of Lords”, “Lord of Hosts” is also a designation which may be applied to both the Father and the Son. For while at times this title seems clearly to represent the Father (Is.9:7; Zech.6:12-13), at other times we see it clearly referring to our Lord Jesus Christ as the Father’s visible representative (Zech.2:8-9). At John 12:41, for example, John attributes to Jesus Isaiah’s vision of the Lord surrounded by the Seraphs who cry out “holy, holy, holy” (Is.6:1-13). Along with being Head of the Church (Eph.1:22; 4:15; Col.1:18), the Lord Jesus Christ is also Head (and Creator) of all angelic kind (Eph.1:21; Col.1:15-20; 2:10; Heb.1:1-4), and this title emphasizes our Lord’s status as Commander in Chief of the angelic armies (“host” being a translation of the Hebrew *tsabhabh*, abj, “army”; cf. Ps.84:3; Is.6:5; Am.5:14-16; Zech.1:3-17).

I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and his left.

1st Kings 22:19 NIV

20) Mediator: [see section I.2.d above]

21) Messiah: [see section I.3.c above]

22) Mystery: Jesus Christ is the linchpin of human history on which everything depends, but the full reality of this was concealed before His first advent (cf. 1Pet.1:10-12), a “mystery” before the cross, but revealed after the cross (Eph.1:9-10; 3:9-10; Col.1:26-27). For although predictions of the coming Messiah are frequent in the Old Testament, the exact *nature* of the Messiah (i.e., that He would be human and divine), and the exact *manner* of His coming (i.e., that He would come twice, first as the Servant to expiate sin, second as the King to eradicate evil), were shrouded in mystery until Jesus came in the flesh. The mystery of God’s solution to sin, and all of the other mysteries about which scripture speaks (the mystery of the Church preeminently: Eph.3:1-11; 5:25-32), are all revealed in the face of Jesus Christ come in the flesh, having died for us on the cross for our redemption, and having been resurrected on the third day for our justification (cf. Rom.4:25).

(1) I want you to know what a great struggle I am engaging in on your behalf and on behalf of those in Laodicea and [on behalf of] as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, (2) [struggling] that your hearts may be encouraged, being strengthened by love and [led] into all the [spiritual] wealth which confident understanding [of the truth brings], [led, that is,] into the full acknowledgment (i.e., *epignosis*, “knowledge made real through

faith”) of the *mystery* of God the Father, [namely] Christ, (3) in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

Colossians 2:1-3

23) The Prophet: [see section I.2.c.1 above]

24) Rock: Jesus is the bedrock of all creation, the Founder and Foundation of the universe and of our salvation. The tangible qualities of solidity and dependability inherent in the name “Rock” are obvious, and our Lord is the one and only Rock upon which a secure foundation for eternity can be built (Matt.7:24-27; Lk.6:47-49). The frequency with which this particular title and metaphor is used in scripture of God in general and of Jesus in particular highlights its importance (cf. Ex.17:6; Num.20:8; Deut.32:4-37; 1Sam.2:2; 2Sam.23:3; Ps.18:2; 18:46; 19:14; 144:1; Is.8:14; 17:10; 44:8; 51:1; Matt.7:24; Hab.1:12). We must understand that everything depends and rests upon Jesus Christ. He is the Rock upon which the Church is founded (Matt.16:18),¹³ and, individually, He is the Cornerstone of our existence, of our faith, and of all our hopes.

The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone.

Psalm 118:22

(44) And in the days of those kings (i.e., in the end times), the God of Heaven will establish a Kingdom which will not be destroyed forever. Nor will that kingdom be surrendered to another people. It will crush and put an end to all those other kingdoms, but this [Kingdom] will endure forever. (45) And in that you saw that a Stone was cut out without [human] hands from the [living] Rock [of a mountain] and that it crushed the iron and the bronze and the clay and the silver and the gold [of the statue], the Great God has made known to the king what will happen after this [in the future] (i.e., when Christ crushes the kingdom of antichrist).

Daniel 2:44-45a

And I tell you that you are Peter [the little rock] (*petr-os*), and upon this [mighty] Rock (*petr-a*, i.e., upon Christ Himself; cf. 1Cor.3:11) I shall build My Church (cf. Dan.2:44-45), **and the gates** (i.e., the fortified defenses) **of Hades** (i.e., the devil’s kingdom) **will not** [be able to] **resist it**.

Matthew 16:18

Thus it has been written: “Behold, I am placing in Zion a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of tripping up. But he who puts his faith in Him will not be put to shame.”

Romans 9:33 (Is. 28:16; cf. Is.8:13-15)

For no one can lay [any] other foundation (i.e., for salvation, spiritual growth and production) [other] than the One which has [already] been laid, namely, Jesus Christ.

¹³ See Peter #2: “Peter: the Apostle of Suffering”.

1st Corinthians 3:11

And all of them (i.e., the Exodus generation) drank the same spiritual drink (i.e., divinely provided water). For all of them drank from the spiritual[ly significant] Rock which followed them – for that Rock was Christ.

1st Corinthians 10:4

[It is Jesus] to whom you have come, a Living Stone, rejected by men, but with God elect and highly honored.

1st Peter 2:4

25) Savior: In Greek, “Savior” is the word *soter* (σωτήρ, cf. Soteriology), a word whose root means “safe” and whose Latin adjectival equivalent is *salvus* (cf. “salvation”). The key idea in the agent noun “Savior” is “He who makes safe/delivers”. This Greek word (found at, e.g., Lk.2:11; Jn.4:42; Tit.3:6) is thus a nominal equivalent to what we find where the English word “Savior” is used in the Hebrew Old Testament (found at, e.g., Ps.106:21; Is.60:16; 63:8; Hos.13:4) to translate the word *moshia*’, (i.e., the hiphil participle of *yasha*’, יָשָׁע). All this is a roundabout way of saying that the name “Jesus” (also transliterated from the hiphil of *yasha*’, יֵשׁוּעַ) and the word “Savior”, while completely different in English, are nearly identical in their ultimate derivation. For “Jesus” means “He will save” in Hebrew, while the Hebrew participle translated “Savior” in the English versions of the Old Testament (and represented by the Greek *soter*, σωτήρ in the Greek New Testament and also translated “Savior”) means “One who saves”. The main difference is that while “Jesus” is a prophetic name, “Savior” attributes the ability to save directly to our Lord. Jesus is the One who *has* saved us from the lake of fire, from eternal death and condemnation, and who has opened the gate to eternal life for all willing to enter by faith in Him. In Jesus we have been saved from our sins and their eternal consequences, rescued from death by His sacrificial life and atoning death in our place. A greater act of salvation and a greater Savior are truly unimaginable.

26) The Servant of God: This title for our Lord demonstrates the height and the depth and breadth of the love God has for us, for it focuses upon our Lord’s self-accepted humiliation in coming into this world as a genuine human being, without glory, to drink to His fill the tears of this world and to suffer for us in our place, even to His death for us on the cross, that we might not die but live forever with Him (Is.49:3-11; 52:13 - 53:12; Rom.15:8-9).

You too should have this attitude which Christ Jesus had. Since He already existed in the very form of God, equality with God was [certainly] not something He thought He had to grasp for. Yet in spite of this [co-equal divinity He already possessed], He deprived Himself of His status and *took on the form of a slave*, [and was] born in the likeness of men. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all].

Philippians 2:5-8

(1) Behold *my Servant* – I will support Him. My chosen One – my soul (i.e., heart) takes pleasure in Him. I have placed my Spirit upon Him. He will bring forth justice for the nations. (2) He will not cry out nor will He lift up His voice in the street. (3) He will not shatter a reed [which is already] crushed (i.e., He will be merciful to the faint of spirit), nor will He extinguish a smouldering wick (i.e., He will encourage the weak of faith). [But] He will bring forth justice in truth. (4) He will not lose His ardor, nor will He proceed too hastily until He establishes justice on the earth. And in His teaching the islands will put their hope. (5) Thus says God the Lord, who creates the skies and stretches them out, who fashions the earth and its produce, who gives breath to the people upon it, even a spirit to those who walk upon it. (6) I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and shall take You by the hand, and guard You, and appoint You a covenant for the nations and a light for the gentiles, (7) to open the eyes of the blind, to bring forth the prisoner from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from their place of captivity (i.e., physical and spiritual redemption).

Isaiah 42:1-7

27) The Good Shepherd: We are all like sheep who have gone astray (Ps.119:176; 1Pet.2:25), but our God has mercifully gone out of His way to bring us back to Himself through the Good Shepherd He has appointed to care for us and guide us. The powerful image conveyed by the picture of the Shepherd who guards and guides us is ubiquitous in the scriptures, conveying the truth that our Lord is our merciful protector and provider, ever present to comfort and take care of us (Gen.48:15; Ps.28:9; 80:1; Eccl.12:11; Jer.31:10; 49:19; 50:44; Ezek.34:23; 37:24; Zech.13:7; Matt.2:6; 25:32; 26:31; Mk.14:27; Jn.10:2-16; 1Pet.5:2-4), even to the point of laying down His life on our behalf (Jn.10:11).

“[Joseph’s] bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.”

Genesis 49:24 NIV

The Lord is the One shepherding me. Therefore I will not be lacking [anything I need].
Psalm 23:1

See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flocks like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Isaiah 40:10:11 NIV

(2) But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, too small to be numbered among the clans of Judah, from you I will bring forth the One who is to rule over Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, even from the days of eternity. (3) For He will give them over until the time when she who is about to give birth gives birth (i.e., His mother, Mary: the first advent), and the rest of His brothers return to the sons of Israel (i.e., Jewish repentance at the second advent). (4) Then He (i.e., the Messiah) will arise and will shepherd His flock

in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the Name of the Lord His God. And they will dwell [in peace], for then He will be great to the ends of the earth. (5) And He will be their peace.

Micah 5:2-5a

I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sake of the sheep.

John 10:11

(20) And the God of peace, the One who led up from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep in the blood of the eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, (21) will fit you out with every good thing in order that you may do His will, [even] as He produces in us what is well-pleasing through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen!

Hebrews 13:20-21

For you were once like sheep going astray, but you have now turned back to the Shepherd and Overseer of your lives.

1st Peter 2:25

“Because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will *shepherd* them and will lead them to fountains of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Revelation 7:17

28) The Son of David: Jesus is David’s literal “son” as a direct descendant through the mother of His humanity (Luke’s genealogy: Lk.3:23-38), and legal heir as a direct descendant through His step-father Joseph (Matthew’s genealogy: Matt.1:1-17). Jesus is also the prophetic “greater Son” of David, the Messiah, the promised coming King who would provide the ultimate fulfillment of the promises made to David by the Lord, the “Davidic Covenant” (Ps.89:13-37). In His capacity of “Son of David”, Jesus is David’s “seed” (Rom.1:3) and the “Lion” of the tribe of Judah, and “the root of David” (Rev.5:5; cf. “Branch” above #4).

“The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

2nd Samuel 7:11b-13 NIV

29) The Son of God: This title bespeaks our Lord’s divinity [see section I.1.2 above, “Jesus is the one and only Son of God”]. The title “Son of God” also expresses Jesus’ unique role in human history of being the Trinity’s visible Person, the One sent into the world to rescue

and redeem sinful mankind, and to win the victory of the cross whereby eternal life and the eternal kingdom to come are provided for all who believe.¹⁴

30) The Son of Man: This title hearkens back to Genesis 3:15 and *protoevangelium*, the first promise of the gospel in the prophecy of the coming Seed who would crush the devil's head. Jesus is that Seed (Gal.3:16-19; cf. Lk.1:55; Acts 3:25; Rom.4:13-18), the "Last Adam" (Rom.5:12-14; 1Cor.15:21-22; 15:45; cf. Gal.3:19), and the title is a clear indication of His perfect and genuine humanity (Mk.8:31; Jn.5:27), coming into the flesh in Adam's line. The specific name under consideration here, "The Son of Man", marks out Christ as *the* Seed and *the* unique "Son" (as opposed to all other human beings). As such, the title is clearly prophetic of the Messiah (as was clearly recognized by our Lord's contemporaries when He used this title for Himself (Jn.9:35-38)).

(13) I kept looking during my vision of that night, and behold – with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming up, and He approached the Ancient of Days (i.e., the Father) and they brought Him before Him. (14) And to Him was given dominion and honor and a kingdom, so that all nations and peoples and tongues should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away, and His kingdom one which will not be destroyed.

Daniel 7:13-14

And [God the Father] has given Him[, Jesus Christ,] authority to render judgment [on the world] because He is [*the*] Son of Man.

John 5:27

31) The Truth: Jesus not only speaks the truth, He *is* the truth:

I am the Way: the *truth* and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

As this verse makes clear, Jesus is the only real truth worth knowing (cf. Heb.13:8), and all that is genuinely true is at its core fundamentally subordinate to Him who is the ultimate and all-encompassing *truth*. For this reason, Jesus Christ and His words are ubiquitously and regularly described in terms of truth (Matt.14:33; 27:54; Mk.15:39; Lk.4:25; 12:44; 21:3; Jn.1:17; 4:42; 6:14; 6:32; 6:55; 7:40; 8:16; 8:40; 8:45; 15:1; 16:7; 18:37; 1Jn.2:8; 5:20; Rev.3:7; 3:14; 19:11):

The *true* Light which illuminates every human being was coming into the world.

John 1:9

¹⁴ The doctrine of the Trinity and our Lord's specific role as "The Son of God" are discussed in detail in Bible Basics: Part 1: Theology, respectively in section II, "The Persons of God: the Trinity", and section II.B.3.b.2, "The Son of God".

And the Word became flesh and tented among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of a one and only Son of His Father, full of grace and *truth*.

John 1:14

For the Law was given through Moses, but grace and *truth* came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17

32) The Vine: This highly descriptive image teaches us about our organic connection to our dear Lord Jesus from the point we first put our faith in Him (cf. Ps.80:8-11). We live in Him and He lives in us so long as we continue to walk in faith.

(1) I am the true vine and my Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch [that is] in Me which does not bear fruit (2) He removes, and every branch which does bear fruit He prunes so that it might bear more fruit. (3) You have already been pruned because of the Word I have spoken to you. (4) Stay part of Me, and I will [stay] part of you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it remains part of the vine, so you too cannot [bear true fruit] unless you stay part of Me. (5) I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in Him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. (6) If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

John 15:1-6

33) The Way: Jesus is the only “way” to get to God. In fact, He is *the* Way:

I am the *Way*: the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

Comparing salvation to physical progress along a route is common in scripture (e.g., Ps.84:5-7; 118:19-27; 119:176; Matt.7:13-14; 21:32; 22:16; Mk.12:14; Lk.13:24-25; Jn.14:4; Acts 9:2; 19:9; 19:23; 22:4; 24:22). But what all of these travel metaphors have in common is the gospel: only through Jesus Christ can we approach God (Eph.2:14-18; 4:7-10; Col.2:13-15; Heb.9:24). He is the Gate through which those who are truly His sheep enter (Jn.10:7-9). He is the only true Door which leads not to death but to eternal life (Rev.3:21; 4:1). Only through Him, and in Him, and by following Him where He has gone (Heb.6:19-20; cf. Heb.2:10 [Greek]; 12:2), can we too enter into the heavenly holy of holies for fellowship eternal with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit forevermore (Matt.27:51; Lk.23:43; Heb.10:19-20).

34) Word of God: Jesus Christ is the living Word of God:

The Word [Jesus Christ] existed at the very beginning, and there was reciprocity (i.e., co-divinity) between the Word and God [the Father]. And the Word was God.

John 1:1

What this means is that there is absolutely no discrepancy or disparity between Jesus and the Father, or between Jesus and any of the “words of God”. For He is the embodiment of the truth, God’s Word, and is the Truth, manifest in God’s written Word. For this reason, the ministry of the Spirit to believers is described by our Lord as one where the Spirit will “take what is mine and will make it known to you” (Jn.16:15), and by Paul as the very “mind of Christ” (1Cor.2:16). To know Jesus is to know the Word of God; to know the Word of God is to know Jesus Christ (Jn.5:39; cf. Jn.1:1-14; Heb.1:1-4; 1Jn.1:1-4; Rev.1:2). Praise God for that blessed day of days to come when we shall “know, even as we are known” (1Cor.13:12).

And He was clothed in a cloak splattered with blood, and His Name stands [forever]:
“The Word of God”.
Revelation 19:13

5. The Life of Jesus Christ

a. Introduction:

Jesus is God, a co-equal, co-eternal, con-substantial member of the Trinity. Jesus is also the Word of God, the Mind of Christ, God’s entire revelation meant for us in this life contained in the completed canon of scripture and revealed to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (1Cor.2:16). Therefore it is important to point out at the commencement of this section that by “the life of Christ” we are concerned not primarily with the deity of Jesus Christ but with His humanity as it was foreshadowed in the Old Testament and became a reality with His incarnation in the form of a genuine human being in the New Testament. Few subjects in scripture are more important than attention to our Savior’s life, because it is only through Him, through faith and faithful following of Him, that we realize the promise of eternal life. And Jesus’ life is, among many other things, the ultimate exemplar for all Christians (Matt.8:22; 9:9; 10:38; 11:29; 16:24; 19:21; Mk.1:17; Lk.9:23; Jn.1:43; 13:15; 21:19-22; Eph.4:15; Phil.2:5; Heb.6:20; 1Pet.2:21-25; Rev.14:4). Jesus is, after all, the archetypical perfect human being who did God’s will to the full without fail, and in this way was qualified to bear our sins on the cross:

For just as through the disobedience of the [first] man[, Adam,] the human race found itself sinful, so through the obedience of the One[, Jesus Christ,] the human race will find itself [accounted as] righteous (i.e., justified), [through faith in Him].
Romans 5:19

b. Old Testament Appearances of Jesus Christ:

Jesus Christ is the revealed member of the Trinity. As such, just as He is the One who is revealed in the flesh from the incarnation onward, He is also the One who manifests the Person and presence of God to believers before the incarnation (cf. Heb.1:1-2). Old Testament appearances of God are often termed “Theophanies”, whereas those Old Testament appearances which can clearly be shown to be of Jesus are called “Christophanies”. Much of what we now know about the Trinity was purposely veiled during Old Testament times for a variety of

reasons,¹⁵ however, as the following passage shows, many such appearances of God in the Old Testament which one might assume on a casual reading are of the Father were, in fact, of Jesus Christ representing the Father:

(37) Even though He had performed so many [miraculous] signs in their presence, they did not believe in Him, (38) in order that the word of *Isaiah the prophet* might be fulfilled which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the Arm of the Lord been revealed?” (39) For this reason they were not able to believe, because [as] Isaiah also says, “He has blinded their eyes and disabled their heart so that they might not see with their eyes and understand in their heart and turn and I would heal them.” (41) These things *Isaiah said* because *he saw His glory* (i.e., “holy, holy, holy” in Isaiah 6:1-3) and spoke about Him (i.e., in Is.6:1-10 since this second quote is from Is.6:10).

John 12:37-41

Perhaps the most common Christophany is the appearance of “*the* angel of the Lord”, where the word “angel” is used to express a manifestation of Christ rather than an angelic creature per se.¹⁶ This can be clearly seen, for example, in passages such as Exodus 14:19 where the angel is called “*the* angel of God”, or Judges 2:1-5 where the angel speaks of “My covenant”, or Zechariah 1:20 where the angel of the Lord who has been speaking with Zechariah is described as “the Lord”. Without indications to the contrary we should generally understand appearances of God in the Old Testament, as in the case of the “Lord God” speaking with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden in Genesis chapter three, to be Christophanies, that is, appearances of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father’s representative and the revealed member of the Trinity.¹⁷ Jesus has always been the Savior of the world, and His centrality to God’s plan of salvation was just as crucial in the Old as it is in the New Testament economy, despite the fact that before our Lord took on true humanity and was thus revealed in the flesh many of the particulars of salvation were obscured from view (Lk.24:25-27; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 7:52; 17:3; 26:23; Eph.3:5; 3:9; 1Pet.1:11; 1:20; cf. Rom.3:25-26).

c. Old Testament Typology:

In addition to the Old Testament appearances discussed immediately above, the coming of our Lord, His incarnation, and His work for us on the cross were foreshadowed in a variety of ways

¹⁵ See Bible Basics: Part 1: Theology, section II.C, “The Trinity in the Old Testament”.

¹⁶ In both Greek and Hebrew the words we translate as “angel” means “messenger”, and therefore does not necessarily have the technical meaning of “angelic creature” as one might suppose from English.

¹⁷ For more, see Bible Basics: Part 1: Theology, section II.C,3, “Appearances of Christ in the Old Testament”.

in Old Testament times. Jesus has, in fact, always been the heart and soul of prophecy (Rev.19:10), *the* message of God as the Word of God (Jn.1:1-3).

God, from antiquity having communicated to our fathers in the prophets at many times and in many ways, has in these last days communicated to us *in a Son*, [the One] whom He has appointed heir of all things, [the One] through whom He created the universe. He is the shining forth of [the Father's] glory, the precise image of His essence, the One who sustains the universe by His mighty Word . . .

Hebrews 1:1-3a

In addition to specific scriptures and prophecies which taught about or foreshadowed the Messiah and His two advents (see section I.5.d immediately below), the coming of the Messiah and the sufferings of the Christ were also taught via what we call “typology”, that is, symbolic representations of the Person and the work of Jesus, occurring occasionally in the lives of special individuals (e.g, the kingship of David and of Solomon being symbolically applicable to the millennial reign of Christ; cf. Zech.3:8-10), and ubiquitous in the symbols behind the paraphernalia and practice of the Mosaic Law, especially where sacrifices are concerned (as these always relate to our Lord's death on the cross for our sins).¹⁸ One instance in which both of these two sorts of typology come together is the sacrifice of Isaac, where Isaac represents or “is a type of” Christ, being sacrificed for our sins (where Isaac's impending physical death through the shedding of his physical blood on the altar represents Christ's spiritual death in dying for our sins in the darkness as He is judged for them in our place on the cross):

(6) Then Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on [the back of] Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. And the two of them went [up Mount Moriah (i.e., the future place of Jerusalem)] together. (7) And Isaac said to Abraham his father, “Father.” And Abraham replied, “Yes, my son.” And [Isaac] said, “Look, here is the fire and wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” (8) And Abraham replied, “God will provide for Himself (lit., “see for Himself”) the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And [so] the two of them went [up] together.

Genesis 22:7-8

Later in this passage, Abraham is stopped by the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ, from actually sacrificing Isaac. But the dramatic and poignant story in these verses of the father about to sacrifice his one and only son gives us some small idea of the sacrifice the Father actually did make in giving over unto death His one and only beloved Son on our behalf, something at once so terrible and marvelous that it could not even be contemplated were it not absolutely essential to secure the salvation of all of His other children.

¹⁸ See Part 1 of The Satanic Rebellion series, section II.5.b, “The Illustration of the Tabernacle”, and Part 2B of Coming Tribulation in section I, “The Earthly Tabernacle and Temple as a Type of the Heavenly Temple”.

(17) By faith Abraham offered up Isaac when he was tested, and was on the point of offering up [in sacrifice] his one and only son, the one [about whom he] had received the promises, (18) about whom it had been said, “In Isaac shall your seed be called”, (19) [for Abraham was] reckoning that God was able to raise [him] from the dead, whence (i.e., from the dead) he did receive [Isaac] back even metaphorically (i.e., Isaac was as good as dead but God delivered him through the substitute of the ram, a type of Jesus Christ).
Hebrews 11:17-19

For in the sequel, as Hebrews recalls, after preventing the sacrifice of Isaac, the Lord provides a ram for Abraham to sacrifice in Isaac’s stead (Gen.22:13-14), and here we have a very clear picture of Jesus, the Lamb of God, being sacrificed in Isaac’s place (and in the place of all mankind for the sins of all mankind). For this reason it is said “On the mountain of the Lord (i.e., Mt. Moriah, the same exact place as the future Jerusalem where our Lord died for us) [God] will provide” (Gen.22:14). This same essential symbolism, namely, of an animal shedding its physical blood representing Christ being judged and dying for our sins, is behind all animal sacrifice in the Bible (cf. Judg.13:19-20), from the sacrifice of righteous Abel (Gen.4; Heb.11), to the millennial sacrifices which will memorialize Jesus’ work for us on the cross (e.g., Ezek.40-48). The Old Testament is, in fact, replete with types to such a degree that it would require several additional books to exhaust the study. To take but a few prominent examples which are overtly referenced as types in the New Testament, the tree of life in the Garden is a picture of our Lord who died on Calvary’s tree to give us life (cf. Rom.11:11-24); Noah’s ark is a picture of Christ in whom we are saved (cf. 1Pet.3:18-22); Jonah in the whale presents a picture of our Lord’s resurrection (cf. Matt.12:39-41); Melchizedek is a type of Christ as we have already seen (Heb.7:11-17). And these and similar types are all notwithstanding the voluminous typology of everything related to the Tabernacle, its furniture, its sacrifices, and all of the other aspects of the Law (Rom.15:4; cf. Rom.10:6-7; 1Cor.9:9-10; 1Tim.5:18).¹⁹

d. Old Testament Prophecies:

It is fair to say that the great majority of Old Testament prophecies about our Lord coming in the flesh are focused on His Messiahship and therefore at the very least include His second advent in their purview. For this reason, the first advent of Jesus Christ as distinct from the second was a matter of some mystery, even to the inspired writers who penned the words given by God which do in fact predict the first advent:²⁰

¹⁹ For prophetic typology in general, see part 1 of Coming Tribulation, section IV.1.d, “Typology and Sequence in Old Testament Prophecy”. For the typology of the Tabernacle and its furniture in particular, see part 1 of The Satanic Rebellion, section II.5.b, “The Illustration of the Tabernacle”; and part 2B of Coming Tribulation, section I, “The Earthly Tabernacle and Temple as a Type of the Heavenly Temple”.

²⁰ e.g., in Isaiah 42, the two advents are knit together seamlessly, with verses 1-9 concerned primarily (though not exclusively) with the first advent and verses 10-17 focusing on

The prophets diligently investigated and inquired about this salvation, when they prophesied about this grace [that was to come] to you. For they were eager to discover the precise time the Spirit of Christ within them was signifying as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. For it was revealed to them that in prophesying these things, they were not so much serving themselves as they were you – and these same things have now been proclaimed to you through those who gave you the gospel through the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven – even angels want to look into these things.

1st Peter 1:10-12

Not unrelated to this issue of our Lord's coming to die on the cross before He comes to take up the crown of world rulership is the fact and necessity of His becoming a genuine human being in order to be able to die in our place. The need to take on true humanity might possibly be argued as not theoretically necessary for a glorious appearance of God's Messiah to rule the world, but our Lord most certainly could not die for our sins without a human body in which to bear them (1Pet.2:24; 4:1; cf. 2Cor.5:21; Heb.9:26-28). This is the "stumbling block" which many Jews and the "folly" which many gentiles have been unable to accept to their eternal harm (1Cor.1:23; Matt.21:42 cf. Ps.118:22-23). But of the fact that the Messiah would be a true human being (as emphasized in His first advent) at the same time as He is truly God (seen so clearly in His second advent) our Lord Himself made abundantly clear:

As the Pharisees were gathering together, Jesus put a question to them, saying "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They answered Him, "David's son." Then He said to them, "Well then, how can David, speaking in the Spirit, call Him Lord? For he says,

The Lord said to My Lord,
'Sit down at my right hand,
until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' [Psalm 110:1]

So if David calls Him Lord, how is He his Son?" And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare to question Him any longer from that day forward.

Matthew 22:41-46

Indisputably, if the Messiah is literally a "son" of David, then He must be a human being, while if He is "Lord", as David calls Him in Psalm 110:1 which Jesus quotes, then He must be God as well. Both elements of our Lord's unique nature, divine and human, are essential for the accomplishment of God's plan to redeem humanity and restore eternal peace to the universe. For the rulership of the world on the part of the Messiah depends upon His prior removal of the problem of sin, that is, His victory over death on the cross which opens the way for the devil's removal and for our redemption and salvation. That the Messiah's suffering – something which is of course impossible without the fact of His possession of true humanity – is taught in the Old

the second; whereas in Isaiah 9:1-8 the two advents are thoroughly intermingled.

Testament, is put beyond all question by, for example, by Isaiah in chapters 52-53 (of which this excerpt will suffice here to make the point):

(4) For He bore our sicknesses and He carried our weaknesses. And yet we considered Him as [the One who had been] punished, smitten and afflicted by God. (5) But [in fact] He was made subject to torment on account of our transgressions, and He was crushed because of our collective guilt (lit., “guilts”). The punishment [required] for making peace [with God] on our behalf [fell] upon Him. Because of His wounding, we have been healed. (6) We have all gone astray like sheep. Each of us has turned to his own way. And the Lord caused the guilt of us all to strike Him. (7) Though He was oppressed and afflicted, like a lamb led to slaughter He did not open His mouth, and like a ewe before her shearers He did not open His mouth. (8) By repressive judgment He was taken away, and who gave any thought to His posterity? For He was cut off from the land of the living. He was punished for the transgression of my people. (9) And they assigned Him a grave with the wicked (pl.) and with a rich [man] in His deaths (*sic*). Not for any violence that He had done. Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. (10) For it was the Lord’s good pleasure (i.e., “will”) to crush Him, to subject Him to torment. But though you make His life a guilt offering, He will see His seed, He will lengthen His days, and the good pleasure (i.e., “will”) of the Lord will prosper in His hand. (11) [Released] from the trouble [inflicted] upon His life, He will [again] see [the light of life] and be satisfied (i.e., in resurrection). My righteous Servant will provide righteousness for the great [of heart] (i.e., believers) through the[ir] acknowledgment of Him, and He Himself will carry their guilt (lit., “guilts”). (12) Therefore I will allot to Him [the plunder] among [His] many [brothers], and He will apportion plunder to the mighty [among them]. Because He lay bare His life unto death, and was dealt with as transgressors [are], so that He bore the sin of the many, and substituted [Himself] for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:4-12

Indeed, the entire message of the gospel and the necessity for the Christ to suffer on behalf of the sins of the world was taught in various ways throughout the Old Testament, even if that message was reluctantly received and insufficiently understood before the cross. Our Lord Jesus Himself makes this very point to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (cf. Lk.24:25-27; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 7:52; 10:37; 17:3; 26:23; Eph.3:5; 3:9; 1Pet.1:11; 1:20):

(25) Then He Himself said to them “O you ignorant men, and slow to believe all the things which the prophets spoke. (26) Wasn’t it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things [first], and [then] come into His glory?” (27) And taking His start with Moses and all of the prophets, He thoroughly explained to them the things [written] about Himself in ***all the scriptures.***

Luke 24:25-27

For the sake of illustration, a few more of the more well-known passages prophesying the coming of the Messiah are included below, but an all-inclusive treatment would require its own separate study nearly as voluminous as in the case of Old Testament typology (cf. Jn.21:25).

1) His incarnation foretold:

For a Star will march forth from Jacob, and a [Ruler's] scepter [will arise] from Israel. Numbers 24:17b (Matt.2:1-13; cf. Gen.49:8-12; Deut.33:7; Lk.1:78; Rev.12:5)

(6) You have taken no pleasure in sacrifices and offerings, [but instead] You have pierced My ears (i.e., “given Me a body and marked Me as a voluntary Servant”; cf. Ex.21:5-6; Deut.15:16-17). You have not asked for burnt offerings or sin offerings. (7) [But] then I said, behold, I have come [into the world (i.e., as the true sacrifice)]. In the scroll of the Book it has been written about Me. (8) It is My good pleasure to do what pleases You, My God. For your Law is in My inmost parts.

Psalms 40:6-8 (cf. Heb.10:5-10)

Therefore the Lord will Himself give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive and will give birth to a Son, and you shall call His Name “Immanuel” (i.e., “God is with us”). Isaiah 7:14 (Matt.1:23)

(6) For a child is born to us, and a Son is given to us. Dominion shall rest on his shoulder, and His name will be called “He whose counsel is wondrous”, “Mighty God”, “the Father of Eternity”, “the Prince of Prosperity”. (7) To His dominion and its prosperity there will be no limit or end. He will establish it and lay its foundation on David's throne and over his kingdom, in justice and righteousness, now and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:6-7

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, too small to be numbered among the clans of Judah, from you I will bring forth the One who is to rule over Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, even from the days of eternity.

Micah 5:2

2) His suffering foretold:

“And I shall place hostility between you and the woman, that is, between your seed and her Seed. He will attack you head-on, but you will attack Him from behind” (lit., “crush His heel”, a reference to the cross).

Genesis 3:15

(12) [Like] many bulls they have encircled Me. [Like] strong bulls from Bashan they have surrounded Me. (13) They open their mouths against Me [like] roaring lions about to pounce on their prey. (14) I am poured out like water, and all My bones are being stretched apart. My heart has become like wax. It is melting inside of Me. (15) My strength is evaporating like a broken piece of pottery, and My tongue is sticking to the roof of My mouth [with thirst]. For You (cf. vv.1-2) have set Me ablaze in the dust of death. (16) For they have surrounded Me [like] dogs. [This] congregation of evil-doers

has encompassed Me. They have pierced My hands and My feet. (17) I can count all My bones. [While] they look on and stare at Me, (18) they are dividing up My clothes for themselves, and for My garments they are casting lots.

Psalm 22:12-18

For they mixed gall with what they gave Me to eat, and for My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.

Psalm 69:21 (Matt.27:34; 27:48; Mk.15:23; 15:36; Lk.23:36; Jn.19:29)

Thus says the Lord, “To Him who despised His own life, to Him who became an abomination to His own nation, to the Servant of rulers – kings will rise up when they see You, even high officials will bow down [before You], on account of the Lord who is faithful, even the Holy One of Israel, for He has chosen You.

Isaiah 49:7

Marshal your troops, O city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod.

Micah 5:1 NIV (Lk.22:63; Jn.18:22)

3) His resurrection foretold:

For You will not abandon My soul (i.e., “life”) to hell (lit., *sheol*). You will not give your Holy One over to see decay.

Psalm 16:10 (cf. Acts 2:31; 13:35)

[The Lord] will restore us, [Israel], after two days (i.e., after the Church age), and will raise us up on the third day (i.e., the Millennium), that we may live in His presence (i.e., with the Messiah, who personifies this prophecy in His resurrection on the third day).

Hosea 6:2 (cf. Lk.24:46; 1Cor.15:4)

4) His second advent foretold:

(1) Why are the nations forming into a mob and the peoples [of the earth] grumbling idly.

(2) The kings of the earth are assembling and its princes are gathering together – against the Lord and His Anointed One, (3) [saying] “Let us pull off Their chains, and cast Their cords from us!”

Psalm 2:1-3

But as for Me, I have anointed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.

Psalm 2:6

The Lord said to My Lord, “Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

Psalm 110:1

And He said, "It is too small a thing for you to be My servant, to establish the tribes of Jacob and to restore the sanctified ones of Israel. Therefore I have appointed you as a Light for the nations, to be My [instrument of] salvation to the ends of the earth."

Isaiah 49:6

In those days and at that time, I will make a Branch of righteousness sprout forth for David, and He will accomplish justice and righteousness on the earth.

Jeremiah 33:15

Thus says the Lord: I will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And Jerusalem will be called "the City of Truth", and "the Mountain of the Lord, the Mountain of Holiness".

Zechariah 8:3

Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion. Shout [for joy], daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your King will come to you. Righteous and victorious He is; humble and riding on a donkey, even on a colt, a donkey's foal.

Zechariah 9:9

And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be the only One and His Name the only Name.

Zechariah 14:9

When we combine the Christophanies or appearances of our Lord in the Old Testament with the ubiquitous typology which teaches about His Person and His work, and with the specific prophecies of His Messiahship, incarnation, suffering, resurrection and second advent, we see clearly that Jesus Christ has been the true message of scripture since the very beginning of the Bible.

"We have found the One about whom Moses wrote in the Law and all the prophets as well, Jesus, the son of Joseph, the One from Nazareth!"

John 1:45

(24) By faith, Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) and chose instead to suffer maltreatment with the people of God rather than to enjoy the transitory pleasures of sin, because he considered the reproach [suffered *on behalf*] of *Christ* greater riches than the treasure vaults of Egypt. (26) For he was looking to his reward.

Hebrews 11:24-26

e. The Hypostatic Union and *Kenosis*:

Since the point of His birth, Jesus Christ, who has always *been* true God, has also *become* a true human being. The proper, orthodox understanding of the fact that Christ now possesses both of

these natures, divine and human, without any diminution of the quality or quantity of either, and is yet a single, absolutely unique Person, is often called in theology “the hypostatic union”. The first word in this somewhat unhelpful phrase is taken from Hebrews 1:3 where our Lord’s unique Person composed of two natures, human and divine, is described as “the [very] shining forth of [the Father’s] glory, the precise image of His *essence*”. In this verse, “essence” is the Greek word *hypostasis* from which the adjective “hypostatic” is derived. In Hebrews 1:3, since Jesus is the “shining forth of the glory” of God, He is God and possessed of the identical *essence* which the Father and the Spirit share. As a true human being, however, Jesus is the “precise *image*” (Greek *character*, *χαρακτήρ*) of that essence, and by this is meant that our Lord’s humanity is a perfect mirror or representation of that divine essence (the Greek word *character* meaning the exact stamp or impression of a minted coin, for example). Thus Hebrews 1:3 teaches that between the divinity of Christ and the humanity of Christ there is complete harmony and integrity with no rift of personality whatsoever in the One undivided Person of Jesus Christ despite the fact that He now possesses two natures, human and divine. While somewhat technical, this description is nevertheless important, since failures to accept various parts of this complex truth have resulted in many deadly heresies, past and present (and no doubt to come in the future as well).²¹ However, it does go without saying that this is a somewhat difficult concept for mere human beings to grasp, since in truth we are incapable of fully comprehending God’s divine nature and what it really means (let alone being able to understand except in general terms the wonder of the combination of the two natures in the Person of Christ).²² What we should at least appreciate at the very outset here, however, is the marvelous truth that by wedding Himself to the human race in such a personal and irrevocable manner, our Lord has given us the clearest and most convincing proof that we are special to Him in ways that we can scarcely begin to fathom.

While the fact of Jesus’ divinity, humanity, and uniqueness in combining the two natures since the incarnation may be relatively easier to understand now that He has been glorified (see for example the description of Him as He appeared to John at Revelation 1:12-20), it remains to discuss what scripture has to say about the manner in which these two natures coexisted during His first advent. For while from the resurrection forward there is no limitation, compartmentalization, or separation of His divine and human nature, it is the case that, during His first advent, our Lord had to suffer in the same fashion as we do (and indeed far beyond, not only in every other aspect of His earthly life but especially when He was judged for our sins on the cross). This self-imposed limitation of deity in respect to the support given to His humanity

²¹ See the discussion of various past heresies in “what the Trinity is not” under Bible Basics: Part 1: Theology, section II.A, “Definition of the Trinity: God is One in Essence, Three in Person”.

²² The Essence of God is explored in part 1 of this series, Theology, section I, “The Essence of God: Nature and Characteristics”.

is known in theology as *kenosis*,²³ another Greek word taken this time from Paul's discussion in his letter to the Philippians of the subject of our Lord's sacrificial life:

(5) You too should have this attitude which Christ Jesus had. (6) Since He already existed in the very form of God, equality with God was [certainly] not something He thought He had to grasp for. (7) Yet in spite of this [co-equal divinity He already possessed], He **deprived** Himself of His status and took on the form of a slave, [and was] born in the likeness of men. (8) He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all].

Philippians 2:5-8

The word translated "deprived" above is the Greek verb *kenoo* (κενῶω), "to make void", from which our technical term *kenosis* is derived. This deprivation, as the next verse makes clear, involved great humiliation for our sakes, even to the point of our Lord's sacrificial death for us on the cross. Clearly, the suffering and abuse Jesus took for us throughout His life, accelerating through His extensive thirty year preparation, His ministry "against such opposition by sinners against Himself" (Heb.12:3; cf. Jude 1:15), the gauntlet He ran for us even to get to the cross, and the death He died to sin for us in the darkness on the cross, would have been incompatible with His deity *apart* from the self-imposed limitation of its function on behalf of His humanity, a condition which, as mentioned above, is traditionally called *kenosis*.

As can be seen from the preliminary discussion above, *kenosis* is essentially a set of "ground rules" wherein Jesus voluntarily refrained from using His deity to help His humanity during the first advent in accordance with the Father's will (Jn.4:34; 5:30; 6:38).

1) The reason why Christ's *kenosis* was necessary: Being perfectly just, God could not as God forgive the sins of mankind unless they were appropriately paid for. And only a perfect human being would be able to pay the price for sin and have that payment be acceptable to God's perfect justice. Jesus is that unique, perfect sacrifice, the "Lamb without spot or blemish" (1Pet.1:19), a reference to the symbolism of the Old Testament sacrifices wherein no animal with a defect was acceptable as an offering to the Lord (e.g., Ex.29:1; Deut.17:1; Mal.1:6-14). In the analogy, the perfect body of the animal represents the fact that Jesus was a perfect and perfectly acceptable substitute for us, qualified in every way to be our sin-bearer. Part of this perfection rested in the fact that, unlike all of the rest of us, He lacked a sin nature, and, unlike all of the rest of us, He never committed a single personal sin (subjects about which we shall have more to say below). But in addition to preserving the perfection of His body, our Lord was also required to demonstrate and preserve the perfection of His human spirit as well, and that required complete integrity in the exercise of His human free will from the moment of physical birth to the moment of physical death.

²³ Or, alternatively, as "the humiliation of Christ".

There is a principle of leadership which proclaims that a commander should never require more of his men than he himself would be willing to do in their place. Never has this principle been carried out more completely or more faithfully than in the case of our Lord Jesus, “the Captain” of our salvation (Heb.2:10), who not only lived a perfect life of selfless sacrifice far beyond anything we are capable of imagining, but who even more amazingly died on the cross for all of our sinful failures. But without *kenosis*, it would have been impossible for our Lord’s human free will to be put to the extreme and honestly unimaginable tests He had to endure (all of which He accepted and passed in perfect fashion). That is because with the help of His deity they would not have been tests at all. And without *kenosis*, it would have been impossible for our Lord to die on the cross at all, because on the one hand He would not have been able to die physically (since deity cannot die), and because He could not have come into contact with our sins in order to die for them on the other (since deity can have no contact with sin). In short, without *kenosis*, there would have been little point to the incarnation in the first place. In order to be an acceptable substitute for us, our Lord would have to do more than “merely” refrain from sin: He would have to exercise His human free will in this world just as we do, but do so in an absolutely perfect way; then, having done so throughout His life, He would have to go to the cross for us, suffer and die for us, all from that same, genuinely human free will.

So while it is common in theological treatments of this sort to concentrate on our Lord’s sinless life, it was His perfect, daily response to the Father in carrying out all the *positive* actions that were required of Him that was arguably something which required far greater effort than “merely” avoiding the negative ones. This is unquestionably true when it comes to the most difficult exercise of free will any human being has ever dreamed of attempting, namely, our Lord’s obedient willingness to go to His death for us on the cross, a sacrifice which Jesus had to agree to undertake every step of the way, a decision which was challenged every step of the way, and an incomparably blessed wonder that cannot be compared to any other event in the history of the universe. Indeed, our Lord’s free will acceptance of God’s judgment for our sins *is history*, the cornerstone event upon which everything else depends (whether or not we fully appreciate at present the extent to which this is true). Simply put, our Lord took on true humanity for a purpose, namely, to carry out the Father’s plan of salvation, and since the carrying out of that plan was impossible without Jesus’ humbling of Himself as the Servant of God, *kenosis*, the temporary state of living in humiliation without the glory He possessed from before the world was created (Jn.10:30), was necessary for us to be saved (Is.49:7; 52-53; Lk.22:27; 2Cor.8:9; Phil.2:5-11).

“Just so the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, even to give His life as a ransom in behalf [of the lives] of many”.

Matthew 20:28

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although He was rich (i.e., divine), He made Himself poor (i.e., human and under the restraints of *kenosis*), in order that you might become rich (i.e., have eternal life) through His impoverishment (i.e., humble life and death on the cross for us all).

2nd Corinthians 8:9

For what the Law could not accomplish (i.e., solving the sin problem) because it was weak on account of [its dependence on sinful human] flesh, God [did accomplish]: having sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for the purpose of [expiating] sin, [God] rendered summary judgment on [all] sin in [Christ's] flesh.
Romans 8:3

One important result of our Lord's incarnation and of His walking through this world in the complete humiliation of *kenosis* is that He has personal experience of what it is like to be a human being, and of what it takes to do the will of God in this world.

(10) For it was fitting for [the Father] to make complete through sufferings Him on whose account all things exist and through whom all things exist, namely, the Captain of their salvation, even Him who has led many sons to glory, [our Lord Jesus Christ]. (11) For the One who sanctifies and those who are sanctified belong to One [Father], and for this reason [Christ] is not ashamed to call them His brothers, (12) as He says:

I will proclaim Your name to My brothers. In the midst of the assembly I shall praise you.

(13) and elsewhere,

I [too] shall put My confidence in Him (i.e., the Father).

and elsewhere,

Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me.

(14) Therefore since "these children" (i.e., believers given to Christ by God: v.13) have a common heritage of flesh and blood, [Christ] too partook of these same [common elements] in a very similar fashion (i.e., not identical only in that He was virgin born and so without sin), in order that through His death He might put an end to the one possessing the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and might reconcile those who were subject to being slaves their whole lives long by their fear of death. (16) For it is certainly not angels He is giving aid to, but He is giving aid to the seed of Abraham (i.e., believing humanity). (17) ***For this reason, it was essential for Him to be like His brothers in every respect***, in order for Him to be a merciful and faithful priest (i.e., go-between) in matters concerning God so that He could expiate (i.e., "cover") the sins of the people. (18) For because He has suffered, He is able to help those who are being tested, since He Himself was [also] put to the test.

Hebrews 2:10-18

For we do not have a high-priest who is unable to identify with our weaknesses, but One who was tested in every way in a similar fashion [to us] – [but] without sin.

Hebrews 4:15

Now of course Jesus is God in His own right, and in His humanity He perfectly fulfilled the will of the Father for His life in every single respect (e.g., Is.42:19; Jn.10:30). And it must also never be forgotten that the "testing" He underwent was in every way and on every level far more intense than we can even conceive, right down to the gauntlet of the cross and of His death on

our behalf (things the like of which we will never be called upon to endure). But in all that He was called to do, Jesus did it perfectly in perfect response to the Father's will. Jesus' earthly life was thus also an example to us of what we ought to do as well: always putting the Father's will, the Father's plan, ahead of personal plans, desires, and weaknesses. Naturally, we will never come close to duplicating what our Lord accomplished in exercising perfect Human will from His humanity without the help of His deity (an area of temptation with which we are not even able to identify), but we can and should emulate Him to the best of our ability.

2) The role of Christ's divine nature during the period of *kenosis*: In Matthew's account of Jesus' arrest, there is a passage which reveals much about the nature of the voluntary restriction by our Lord of the use of His deity. After Peter in his misguided zeal struck with a sword one of those who had come to arrest Jesus, Matthew tells us that our Lord said, "Do you assume that I am not able to entreat my Father, and that He will not immediately bring more than twelve legions of angels to my aid?" (Matt.26:53). Though God in His own right, even in this extreme situation our Lord demonstrates deference to the Father, maintaining His attitude of humble obedience in the carrying out of the Father's plan. Jesus did not actually make this hypothetical request (to which He gives voice only for the benefit of Peter and the other disciples), yet we see clearly from the emphatic nature of His words that He was in absolutely no doubt that as God's Son, co-equal, co-eternal, and consubstantial with the Father, the request would certainly have been granted, had He decided to make it. Given our perfect Lord's absolute surety about this amazing potential deliverance, we can ascertain that the only thing standing between Jesus' humanity and the full use of His deity on behalf of that humanity was at all times during the first advent the righteous exercise of His human free will alone responding to the plan and the mission on which He had been sent. We may therefore further discern that the "barrier" between the two natures which we are calling *kenosis* was not something imposed "from above" by His deity. Rather it was a conscious limitation undertaken by His humanity in consonance with His deity, a fact which makes our Lord's successful completion of His life without violating the restrictions of *kenosis* all the more amazing (for which of us if possessed of any remotely similar "power" could realistically be expected to refrain from using it?). Jesus knew full well that He was God, yet He did not "access" His divine nature on behalf of His human nature in violation of the principle discussed above, for to do so would essentially have invalidated the acceptability of His sacrifice on our behalf. Therefore our Lord's humiliation for our sake involved far more than perfect separation from sin or even perfect use of His human free will in all the ways with which we are familiar: it also involved perfect self-restraint in voluntarily refraining from using His deity ***day by day, moment by moment, test by test.***

Seen from the point of view of His divine essence, *kenosis* means that, until His glorification, by becoming human Jesus took on a material existence and eschewed the use of His omnipotence in that material humanity. By becoming human Jesus subjected Himself to time and eschewed the use of His omniscience in that humanity. And by becoming human Jesus limited Himself to finite space and eschewed His omnipresence in that humanity. The cost to Him and the difficulty of the human life thus undertaken can scarcely be appropriately described, let alone even marginally appreciated. Suffice it so say that Jesus' love for us knows no bounds. As to what

these limitations meant in the playing out of His thirty three years on earth, we shall limit ourselves to two examples which are instructive in demonstrating the boundaries within which this restriction on the exercise of His deity operated.

In His temptation in the desert, Satan dared our Lord to turn stones into bread (Matt.4:3). Now Jesus was extremely hungry, having just fasted for forty days (Matt.4:2). From the context, it would appear that the fast and ordeal to which He had been led by the Spirit (Matt.4:1) had ended or was on the point of ending. Furthermore, eating is legitimate in any case, and would certainly be so and be all the more necessary at the conclusion of a lengthy and difficult fast of this sort. And Jesus could indeed have called upon His deity to do what the devil suggested. We know from our Lord's words and actions here, however, that to do so would have been wrong. For He was clearly not authorized to use His deity to aid His humanity even under these abnormally stressful and trying circumstances. In all such instances, our Lord endured far beyond the point where you or I would no doubt have given in. And He did so because "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt.4:4). In other words, God the Father's will was paramount to our Lord, and He never violated the restrictions which He was charged to observe. Throughout His earthly life, He suffered in the same way in which we must do – save of course for the fact that what He endured and suffered even before the gauntlet that led up to the cross is beyond our ken, even without figuring in the strain of knowing He was God and yet refraining from making use of His divinity.

A second incident illustrative of the boundaries imposed by *kenosis* is found in Luke 4:16-30, the story of His rejection at the hands of his countrymen in Nazareth. After our Lord upbraided them for their unbelief (Lk.4:23-27), they became enraged and dragged Him off to the cliff upon which the town was built in order to throw Him down to His death (Lk.4:29). But Jesus "passed through the midst of them and went His way" (Lk.4:30). This certainly implies the use of supernatural power, and the distinction between this situation and that of Matthew chapter four could not be more clear. In the first instance, Jesus would have been making His own lot easier when it was not absolutely necessary. But in this case, had our Lord allowed the crowd to throw Him down the cliff, the prophecies of the manner of the Messiah's death would be negated – as would our eternal salvation.

We see then this basic principle at work throughout the first advent, namely, of our Lord using the power and gifts given to Him only in accordance with the Father's will in order to advance the Father's plan of salvation (for example, all of His miracles, healing, and raising of the dead in fulfillment of the scriptures), but ***refraining*** from the use of His divinity in any way whatsoever when it came to the possibility of relieving His own inconvenience, need, fatigue, toil or suffering – all the way to and through the ultimate suffering of the crucifixion and His death in the darkness on the cross for us all. Thus our Lord is permitted to turn water into wine for the benefit of others and a sign to His disciples, but not to turn stones into bread for His own benefit. He may walk on the water as a sign to others and in the furtherance of the Father's plan (delayed by necessary work and prayer, and now catching up to the disciples), but He still *walks*. He can overturn the incredibly heavy tables in the temple with superhuman strength to fulfill the

prophecies, but He offers no defense whatsoever to those who come to arrest Him in Gethsemane. He can disappear through crowds to maintain His life to be sacrificed at the proper time, but He does not seek to avoid the cross.

3) Kenosis and the cross: Our Lord Jesus Christ “came into the world to save sinners” (1Tim.1:15), and this overarching purpose of saving us by His death for us on the cross constituted the single most important act of His human free will in response to the Father’s divine will.

(5) Therefore as [Jesus Christ] was coming into the world (i.e., at His birth) He said, “You [Father] did not desire sacrifice or offering, but you have prepared a body for Me. (6) In burnt offering and sin offerings You took no pleasure”. (7) At that time (i.e., His birth) He [Jesus Christ in His deity] said, “Behold, I have arrived (i.e., been born) – in the scroll of a book it is written of Me – to do your will, O God”. (8) Above when He speaks of, “sacrifices and offerings” and [says] “burnt offering and sin offerings You did not desire” – which are things offered through the Law’s prescription – (9) then He has stated, “Behold, I have arrived to do your will”. He removes the first [covenant] in order to establish the second. (10) It is by this *[free] will* [act of Jesus in dying for our sins] that we have been sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once and for all. Hebrews 10:5-10

While *every* single decision our Lord made from His humanity during His first advent was perfectly responsive to God the Father, without His willingness to go to the cross and die for our sins in our place we would still be lost. The difficulty of this decision and the incredible load it placed upon our Lord may be seen from two sayings of Jesus, both uttered and both recorded for *our* benefit rather than for His (a fact often poorly understood even in orthodox Christian circles). These are 1) His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane on the night He was betrayed, and 2) His quotation of Psalm 22:1 just before He breathed out His Spirit.

In Gethsemane, Jesus prays that the “cup of the cross” might be taken away “*if it be Thy will*” (Matt.26:39; Mk.14:35-36; Lk.22:41-42; Jn.12:27). Now our Lord knew very well what the Father’s will was, that it was in fact “for this very hour and purpose” that He came into to the world at all (Jn.12:27; cf. Jn.3:16). Therefore this prayer, far from being an indication of any doubt or second thoughts on our Lord’s part, was prayed and recorded entirely for *our* benefit, that *we* might understand on at least some superficial level what an immense thing it was to anticipate and then follow through on the Father’s will to die for the sins of the world on the cross.

Secondly, when He had accomplished our eternal redemption through His blood, that is, through the bearing of our sins in the darkness on the cross, our Lord said, “My God, My God, why did You forsake Me?” (Ps.22:1). This is also most definitely *not* a statement of confusion or discouragement – far from it! Our Lord quoted Psalm 22:1 just before He gave up His human spirit *for our benefit*, in order that *we* might know that He of His own free will in His humanity had voluntarily given Himself over to be forsaken and to be judged in the darkness for *our* sins in

order that *we* might have eternal life. For our Lord knew very well why it was that He had to be forsaken and judged by His loving Father: in order that *we* might have eternal life.

Therefore these two statements of our Lord immediately before and after His suffering for our sins, though often misunderstood, are in reality clear and deliberate proclamations of the fact that Jesus did what He did entirely of His own genuinely human free will in perfect responsiveness to the will of His Father and ours in order that we might be saved through His righteous act of sacrificing Himself on our behalf.

From this we can see that our Lord's human free will was precisely the same as ours – except that He used it perfectly and in perfect response to His Father's will. In terms of our subject of *kenosis* here, then, we may say that in His humanity Jesus' will was completely consistent with the will of His divine nature and with the Father's will, but that in His humanity He had to make these perfect decisions at every step along the way throughout His perfect life. This completely correct decision-making on the part of His humanity is often termed "impeccability" (lit., "an inability to sin"). However, that particular term suffers from two flaws: 1) emphasizing the negative (i.e., not sinning) rather than the much more important positive (i.e., the necessity to keep doing all that was required, moment by moment, day by day, no matter how difficult – and in light of the difficulty of going to the cross, this makes the avoidance of sin pale by comparison), and 2) the false implication that our Lord was unable to make bad decisions had He chosen to do so: while it is certainly true that our Lord's success was never in doubt because of who He is, it is nevertheless a mistake to suggest that His human free will was different from ours in any way, or that His perfect record of good decisions from that human free will was not difficult in the extreme. Indeed, it is precisely because His humanity was genuine in every way that His suffering was likewise entirely genuine, and it is precisely because He was tested and tempted just as we are that He can sympathize with us perfectly as someone who has actually gone through the very crucible we are now negotiating (yet without sin, and to a degree beyond what we can even imagine, culminating in the cross):

He humbled Himself, becoming *obedient to the point of death*, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all].

Philippians 2:8

(8b) For in subordinating the world to him, He left nothing that was not subordinate to him. However, we do not now yet see the world in subordination to him. (9) But now we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor on account of the death He suffered, even He who became "a little lower than the angels" [for a brief span] so that by the grace of God *He might taste death on behalf of us all*. (10) For it was fitting for [the Father] to make complete through sufferings Him on whose account all things exist and through whom all things exist, namely, the Captain of their salvation, even Him who has led many sons to glory, [our Lord Jesus Christ].

Hebrews 2:8b-10

For we do not have a high-priest who is unable to identify with our weaknesses, but One who *was tested in every way* in a similar fashion [to us] – [but] without sin.
Hebrews 4:15

f. The Incarnation and Virgin Birth:

1) The nature of the incarnation: Our Lord's taking upon Himself of true humanity and thus becoming a genuine human being as well as undiminished deity is often called "the incarnation", a word based upon the Latin *caro / carnis* meaning "flesh" (because Jesus came into the world "in the flesh"). As we have already pointed out, our Lord's irreversible wedding of Himself to our kind in this way, God that He is, was in and of itself a stupendous event, especially when one considers what that event necessarily entailed, namely, His fulfilling of His mission and the Father's will by dying for our sins. From the point of the incarnation onward, Jesus is both God and Man, the unique God-Man, undiminished deity and true humanity in One perfect Person forever. Scripture calls this time the "conjunction of the Ages" (Heb.9:26; cf. Rom.5:6; Gal.4:4; 1Tim.2:6; Tit.1:3; Heb.1:1-2; 1Pet.1:20), and so it is, for Jesus' physical birth marks the postponement of the Jewish Age (cf. Matt.11:12; Mk.1:15; Lk.12:49ff.), while His death, resurrection and ascension to heaven signal the imminent commencement of the Church Age (Acts 1:4-5; cf. Matt. 27:51; Mk.7:27; Jn.2:4; 7:8; Heb.9:10).²⁴

2) The conception of Jesus' physical body and the fact of the virgin birth: Both Jesus' conception and His birth were absolutely unique in the history of the world. While Adam and Eve were made directly by God, Jesus is the only human being who has or will ever be conceived by the agency of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. Both of these facets of our Lord's incarnation need to be considered in their own right, and it is significant that the first prophecy to address the issue directly mentions both aspects of our Lord's entrance into the world as a true human being:

Therefore the Lord will Himself give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive and will give birth to a Son, and you shall call His Name "Immanuel" (i.e., "God is with us").
Isaiah 7:14

"Behold, the virgin will conceive and will bear a Son, and they will call His Name 'Immanuel', which is translated 'God is with us'".
Matthew 1:23

Without divine agency, virgin conception is, of course, an impossibility. Mary was therefore not rebuked for her questioning of the angel on this point (Lk.1:34), whereas Zechariah was (since in his case, the miracle was not only precedented but also fell within normal human parameters: compare Lk.1:18-20 with Gen.18:10-14). Unlike any other human being before or since, the

²⁴ See the discussion in part 5 of The Satanic Rebellion: Judgment, Restoration and Replacement, section II.9.a.i, "The Birth of Christ".

engendering of our Lord's human body came about not through the agency of any created thing, not through any man or any angel, but through the Creator Himself, specifically, the Holy Spirit.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened in this way. While His mother, Mary, was engaged to Joseph, [and] before the two of them had come together [as man and wife], she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit.
Matthew 1:18

“Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For that which has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit”.
Matthew 1:20b

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. For this very reason that which is going to be born [of you] will be called holy, [the] Son of God”.
Luke 1:35

As can be adduced from all three of these quotes, while the conception of our Lord's human body was supernatural, as in the case of all human beings it is His birth rather than His conception which marks the beginning of His human life, the beginning, in His unique case, of the incarnation.²⁵

And the Word became flesh and tented among us. And we beheld His glory, a glory like that of a one and only Son from [the] Father, full of grace and truth.
John 1:14

(6) For a child is born to us, and a Son is given to us.
Isaiah 9:6a

(9) For You are the One who cut Me out of the womb. You are the One who made Me trust in You on my mother's breasts. (10) I was cast upon (i.e., made to rely upon) You from the womb (i.e., immediately after birth). [Since the moment I came] from out of the womb You have been my God.
Psalm 22:9-10

Therefore as [Jesus Christ] was coming into the world (i.e., at His birth) He said, “You [Father] did not desire sacrifice or offering, but you have prepared a body for Me”.
Hebrews 10:5

²⁵ This is the point where He becomes a “life-giving spirit” (1Cor.15:45), since the human spirit is given at birth. See Bible Basics 3A: Anthropology, section II.3.c, “The human spirit is implanted by God at birth”.

At that time (i.e., His birth) He [Jesus Christ in His deity] said, “Behold, I have arrived (i.e., been born) – in the scroll of a book it is written of Me – to do your will, O God”.
Hebrews 10:7

(6) You have taken no pleasure in sacrifices and offerings, [but instead] You have pierced My ears (i.e., “given Me a body and marked Me as a voluntary Servant”; cf. Ex.21:5-6; Deut.15:16-17). You have not asked for burnt offerings or sin offerings. (7) [But] then I said, behold, I have come [into the world (i.e., as the true sacrifice)]. In the scroll of the Book it has been written about Me. (8) It is My good pleasure to do what pleases You, My God. For your Law is in My inmost parts.
Psalm 40:6-8 (cf. Heb.10:5-10)

3) The Necessity for the Virgin Birth: In addition to the need for fulfilling the prophecies discussed above, it no doubt goes without saying that the virgin conception described in quotations above (Lk.1:35 in particular) along with the virgin birth that followed was also the only way for God to become man, for our eternal Lord Jesus Christ to take on a genuine human body and share in the flesh and blood we all possess. Since His coming into the world was absolutely necessary for us to be saved, this is certainly the primary reason that necessitated His conception and birth take place in this miraculous way. But there is a secondary reason as well, which, if not as primarily critical, would in and of itself likewise necessitate Jesus being virgin born: only a pure and sinless Jesus Christ would be qualified to bear our sins and so atone for them on the cross (2Cor.5:21; 1Pet.2:22-24; Heb.2:14-18; 4:15; 7:26; 1Jn.3:5; cf. Is.53:9). Without a human father (Heb.1-2; cf. Jn.19:34-35; 1Jn.5:6-8), the potential problem of the passing down of the sin nature through the line of Adam could be and was thus avoided. Indeed, since the sin nature is universally passed down from Adam through the male line, a virgin birth was the only way in which our Lord could be at the same time truly and completely human, and yet be born without a sin nature. For Jesus’ mother, Mary, an exceptional woman of exceptional spirituality,²⁶ was nevertheless human and thus possessed a sin nature as we all do.²⁷ It was Adam who “brought sin into the world” by sinning in cognizance. Even though Eve too had sinned, she did so in ignorance. Since it was Adam who thus caused “death to spread to all mankind”, not Eve, the sin nature is passed down through the male line, not the female line:

²⁶ This can be clearly seen from her willingness to accept this charge and is reflected in her hymn of praise at Luke 1:46-55 (also known as the *Magnificat*), which is very reminiscent of Hannah’s song (1Sam.2:1-10), and bespeaks great spiritual growth and a deep relationship with God very rare at any age and in any place

²⁷ This issue is explored in full in Bible Basics 3B: Hamartiology, section I.2.3, “The virgin birth of Jesus Christ”. The appellation sometimes translated “full of grace” in Luke 1:28, a perfect participle better rendered “having received grace”, while likewise demonstrating Mary’s exceptional spirituality (as well as pointing to the exceptional honor she was about to receive), does not indicate in any way that she was sinless or lacked a sin nature.

So just as through *one man* sin came into the world and, through sin, death, and *thus* (i.e., Adam physically passing on his sin nature resulting in universal spiritual death) *death spread to all mankind* – for [obviously] everyone sins, . . .
Romans 5:12

Thus, by being Virgin-born, Jesus did not receive the transmission of a sin nature in the manner of the rest of Adam's progeny.

4) The birth of Christ:

a) The birth of Christ Prophesied: We have already seen (in section I.5.d.1 above) that the historical birth of Christ was prophesied extensively in the Old Testament.

Therefore the Lord will Himself give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive and will give birth to a Son, and you shall call His Name “Immanuel” (i.e., “God is with us”).
Isaiah 7:14 (Matt.1:23)

b) The date of the birth of Christ: To begin with, we know from Luke 3:1 that John began baptizing “during the fifteenth imperial year of Tiberius” (i.e., from August 19th of A.D. 28 to August 18th of A.D. 29).²⁸ Since Luke states that Jesus was “about thirty” at the commencement of His public ministry (Lk.3:23), an event that post-dates the time when John began baptizing, there can be little doubt that the birth of Christ is to be fixed ca. 1-2 B.C. To place Christ’s birthday any later would make Him “twenty-something”, not “about thirty”. Moreover, this phrase is best taken (and arguably can only be properly taken, especially given Luke’s penchant for precision: cf. the precise dating of John’s ministry at Lk.3:23) to mean that while Christ had not yet reached His thirtieth birthday, He was very close to doing so, that is, He was 29 and set to turn thirty that same calendar year.²⁹ If we accept December as Christ’s birth-month, therefore, He will then have been born in 2 B.C. (only one year earlier than supposed by the Christo-centric calendar we now use, established by Dionysius Exiguus ca. 525 A.D. at the

²⁸ The life of the emperor Tiberius is relatively well documented, and this date certainly represents his fifteenth year of sole rule. Proponents of an earlier date (i.e., 26/27) can only argue that dating should begin from a period of “joint rule” between Augustus and Tiberius on the basis of similar co-regency ascension dating in other ancient cultures. Given the hostility of Augustus and Tiberius towards each other, the cloud that still hangs over Tiberius’ ascension (so well documented by Tacitus), and the otherwise unparalleled notion of co-regency dating among the Julio-Claudians, it seems best to stay with the date A.D. 28/29.

²⁹ This is important, because thirty was the age generally associated with the maturity necessary for service to God (cf. Num.4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47; 1Chron.23:3). Incidentally, as is clear from Luke 1:26, John was six months older than Jesus, and therefore also “about [but not yet] thirty” when he began his ministry.

behest of Pope John I).³⁰ It is impossible within the scope of this study to detail all of the chronological details and arguments connected with Christ's birth, but the 2 B.C. date, in addition to being based on the only two clear chronological references in the gospel (i.e., Lk.3:1 and 3:23), is also recommended by three other important factors. First, it allows for a three year ministry of Christ (as required by the chronological details of John's gospel).³¹ Secondly, it allows for a crucifixion date of 33 A.D., by far the most likely date when independently derived.³² And, thirdly, it squares most precisely with the universal census mentioned by Luke (Lk.2:1-3).

As to the census, the first two points that need to be clarified here are that the universal census described in Luke 2:1-3 is *not* the census of Quirinius, and, secondly, that Luke does *not* in fact equate the two. That Quirinius, Roman governor of Syria from ca. AD. 6 to 11, held a census in A.D. 6-7 is well established (cf. Josephus, *B.J.* 2.118; 2.433; 7.253; *A.J.* 18.4-10; 18.23-25; 20.102).³³ It is therefore unfortunate that English versions of the Bible inevitably mis-translate Luke's Greek to make these two separate censuses appear to be one and the same. Properly translated, Luke 2:2 states that "this was *a* census which occurred *prior* to Quirinius' governorship of Syria".³⁴

³⁰ 2 B.C., as opposed to 1 B.C., is also required because of the need to place the birth of Christ before the death of Herod (cf. Matt.2:1-19). Although many have found such a late date for the death of Herod impossible, it is important to note that our only source for the earlier dating of his demise is Flavius Josephus, a somewhat dilettantish historian. Moreover, it is entirely possible that Josephus' statements in this regard have been wrongly interpreted in any case. See W.E. Filmer, "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great", Journal of Theological Studies 17 (1966) 283-298, who proposes January of 1 B.C. as the time of Herod's death. This date leaves ample time for a December 2 B.C. birth of Christ, the events of Matthew 2:1-9, and the death of Herod immediately following.

³¹ See the comparative chronological chart of the ministries of John and Jesus in part 5 of The Satanic Rebellion, in section II.9.a.iii, "The Crucifixion of Christ".

³² See part 5 of The Satanic Rebellion, section II.9.a.iii, "The Crucifixion of Christ".

³³ On the topic of Quirinius' census, see especially E. Schürer's The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (Edinburgh 1973) v.1, 399-427. While Schürer's conclusions are fanatically secular and wrong-headed, his excursus is invaluable for the details and bibliography he provides.

³⁴ The absence of the Greek definite article in the initial phrase means that "census" is the predicate (i.e., "this was *a* census which occurred . . ."). The second issue is the use here by Luke of the superlative form *prote* to govern the genitive case (i.e., "[occurred] 'first of' the governorship", meaning *before* the governorship). This usage is paralleled at John 1:15 and 1:30 in John the baptist's description of Jesus: "He was 'first of me'" (i.e., *before* me).

It was important for Luke to point out the distinction between the census that took place at Christ's birth and the one held later by Quirinius. For, being seven years more recent and also more notable on account of the armed resistance it engendered, Quirinius' census would have been easily confused by his readers with the earlier one he describes at 2:2 (a confusion which, ironically, modern interpreters have almost universally failed to avoid in any case). The Roman Empire was a triumph of bureaucratic organization as well as military might. Not surprisingly, accurate census data (especially as it related to taxation) was essential for its administrative and financial operation.³⁵ In his *res gestae*, the synopsis of his most prestigious accomplishments, Augustus devotes considerable space to his work in census matters (*CIL* v.3, in loc., para.8). Secular historians have been (unreasonably, in my view) skeptical about extrapolating a regular, empire-wide census from Augustus' remarks cited above. Indeed, Augustus' census of Roman citizens in 9/8 B.C. is paralleled by evidence for a census taking place in the Roman province of Egypt at the same time.³⁶ This Egyptian census cycle is known to us primarily from papyrological records, and that fact is significant, for papyrus has generally only survived from antiquity in places with extremely arid climates (i.e., conditions which did not obtain in most of the rest of the Empire). Mundane records such as official census returns are not likely candidates for preservation in climates where heroic efforts were historically necessary to safeguard important literary texts. In other words, there is much we simply will never know, because the documentation has not survived. But when we add to the 9/8 B.C. and 6/7 A.D. censuses the further fact of a 13/14 A.D. census under Augustus and Tiberius, the pattern of a seven year cycle emerges, and 2/1 B.C. is the only gap within this otherwise repetitive cycle.³⁷ Rather than a slapdash approach, it seems more in keeping with his penchant for careful organization that Augustus would have begun the systematic application of Roman census procedures (cited in his *res gestae* above) not just to certain provinces, but to all territories under Roman sway, exactly as the biblical record indicates:

And it came about in those days that a decree went out from Augustus Caesar to conduct a census of *the entire civilized world* (i.e., the whole Roman empire).

Luke 2:1

One of the characteristics of Roman provincial census procedures which seems to be indicated by our admittedly incomplete data on the topic is that results are recorded for the year *preceding* the year of recording.³⁸ The census process thus covered roughly two calendar years, with the first

³⁵ cf. the Cyrene edicts' use of census classifications to make jury assignments (*SEG* 9.8.1).

³⁶ See especially Grenfell and Hunt's discussion of the P.Oxy. II 254, pp.207-214.

³⁷ There was, in fact, also a provincial census in Gaul at this time (i.e., 1-2 B.C.). See the Oxford Classical Dictionary (2nd ed.) s.v. "census".

³⁸ Grenfell and Hunt, *op. cit.*, 208f.

year being the year of record and the second the year of recording. But unlike in the U.S. today where we file income tax by April the 15th of the year following the year being officially recorded, under the Roman system the census was a “snapshot” of assessable wealth and legal status, taken (and officially registered) during the first year, thus giving the imperial administration a further year to verify, validate, correct if necessary, and record the information submitted by all residents of the province in question. That, at least, is what the surviving evidence strongly suggests. And coupling this last fact with the likelihood that Joseph and Mary journeyed to Bethlehem to fulfill the legal requirements of the universal census of 2/1 B.C., we would come again to the proposition stated above that Christ was born in 2 B.C., the year of registration (as opposed to 1 B.C., the year of official recording).

c) The place of the birth of Christ: Our Lord’s nativity in Bethlehem fulfilled the prophecies about the coming Son of David, offering tangible proof of His Messiahship from the instant of His unique birth (cf. Is.9:1-2; Matt.2:23; 4:14-16):

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, too small to be numbered among the clans of Judah, from you I will bring forth the One who is to rule over Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, even from the days of eternity.
Micah 5:2

Being born in Bethlehem also has to do with the important issue of demonstrating and validating our Lord’s inheritance and claim to the throne as the greater Son of David who was prophesied to come and “rule over Israel” (cf. the importance of our sharing in an eternal inheritance through Him: Rom.8:17; Gal.3:29; Eph.1:11-18; 3:6; Col.1:12; 3:24; Tit.3:7; Heb.6:17; 9:15; 11:9; 1Pet.1:4; 3:7; Jas.2:5; Rev.21:7). Bethlehem is of course David’s city, and our Lord’s physical line (through Mary) and legal line (through Joseph) both go back to David and were both therefore intimately connected with Bethlehem as the geographic focus of the earthly inheritance of David’s progeny. Being born in Bethlehem was thus a prerequisite for anyone claiming a share in the Davidic line, especially for anyone who claimed to be the Messiah (cf. Matt.2:5; Jn.7:42). Additionally, the name Bethlehem means “house of bread”, and this fact is certainly also meant to be prophetically significant since Jesus, the true Messiah, is “the Bread of Life” through the partaking of whom by faith we have eternal life (cf. Jn.6:32-58).

As we have already seen, the genealogies in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38 serve slightly different purposes, with Matthew’s genealogy giving Jesus’ legal line (through His “step-father”, Joseph), and Luke giving Jesus’ blood line (traced from Mary all the way back to Adam in order to demonstrate beyond any question Jesus’ true humanity). Both lines go back to David through the royal family of Israel, making both Mary (Jesus’ blood line) and Joseph (Jesus’ line of inheritance) regal in every respect. This also means that Mary and Joseph were distantly related, though not nearly so closely as to provide any grounds for objection. This detail was in fact something that recommended the match since it kept any inheritance within the clan (a not uncommon thing in arranged marriages before and since). Moreover, since they were each of the line and lineage of David, both Mary and Joseph would have had their “official inheritance” in Bethlehem and its environs, a fact important both for Jewish genealogical recording (especially

in the royal and priestly lines, cf. Ezra 2:62), and also for Roman administrative purposes.³⁹ As discussed above, Rome carried out a regular sequence of the census in the provinces (every seven years – the one at Jesus’ birth being the first “world-wide” one, though they had been held in some provinces before this), and in each such case there was first a “year of enrollment” wherein each individual had to register his/her property in his/her official place of residence. This, of course, was a much more crucial thing in that day and age than it is today, for citizenship and civil rights were tied to localities for non-Roman citizens (so that this would be analogous today to U.S. citizens having to return to their original home states every so often to maintain their rights and pay their taxes). Although we do not know anything specific about Mary’s immediate family, it is well to note that the Law required women who were heirs to the ancestral inheritance in their own right for want of male siblings to marry within their tribe and within their immediate clan (Num36:6–9). So it may very well be that Mary as well as Joseph were each heirs to their own ancestral inheritances, giving our Lord in this instance (as well as other; cf. section I.3.a above) a “double portion” symbolic of His unique humanity. Furthermore, if Mary no less than Joseph had reason to register for the census in Bethlehem, it would explain why Joseph felt it necessary to take her along, even though her pregnancy was by that time very far advanced. In any case, all of these events worked together to bring about our Lord’s birth in Bethlehem, the city of David, according to the prophecies.

d) The timing of the birth of Christ: Scripture is clear that Christ’s coming into the world occurred at exactly the right time, the precise time, in fact, that God had ordained since before the world began. Indeed, God has constructed history’s true timetable entirely around Jesus Christ who is the pivot of God’s plan and the central Person of history when correctly understood from the divine point of view.⁴⁰

[Jesus, whose coming was] foreordained before the creation of the world, but who appeared [in the flesh] at the end of times because of us (i.e., for our salvation).
1st Peter 1:20

(1) God, from antiquity having communicated to our fathers in the prophets at many times and in many ways, (2) has in these last days communicated to us in a Son, [the One] whom He has appointed heir of all things, [the One] through whom He created the universe.
Hebrews 1:1-2

³⁹ We know that after being visited by the angel, Mary had traveled “to a town in the hill country of Judea” to visit her cousin Elizabeth (Lk.1:39), the mother-to-be of John the baptist who was “your relative” (Lk.1:36), showing clearly that Mary too still had kin in Judea, even though her immediate branch of the family called Nazareth home.

⁴⁰ See The Satanic Rebellion Part 5: Judgment, Restoration and Replacement, section II.1, “The Plan of God in Human History: The One Central Person of Human History”.

1. Jesus came when “the right time was at hand”: Mark 1:15
2. Jesus came at the “proper time”: Romans 5:6
3. Jesus came in the “fullness of time”: Galatians 4:4
4. Jesus came when “the times had reached their fulfillment”: Ephesians 1:10
5. Jesus came at the very “conjunction of the ages”: Hebrews 9:26

e) The events surrounding the birth of Christ: The coming of the Messiah did not occur with the fanfare with which His arrival was expected by the religious community of that day. Instead of being announced to the reputed leaders of Judaism, Jesus’ coming was announced to shepherds at night, as light shining out of darkness (Is.9:1-7; Lk.1:78-79), and good news being preached to the lowly (Is.61:1; Lk.1:52). Instead of being revealed to His countrymen, His coming was made known to foreigners, believers who followed God’s word instead of the traditions of mere men (Matt.15:9; Mk.7:7), and who used the things of this world to worship the Savior rather than worshipping the things of this world (Matt.23:1-36). And instead of coming in resplendent glory, Jesus came as a true, as yet unglorified human being through physical birth (Heb.2:14-17; 4:14-16), coming into this world in order to die for us (Heb.10:5-10).

[See chart #1 at rear]

1. The proclamation to the shepherds:

(8) Now there were shepherds in that area who were camping out and keeping watches through the night to tend their flock. (9) And an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone all around them [so that they] were very frightened. (10) And the angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid. For, behold, I proclaim good news to you [of] a great [occasion for] joy which will belong to your entire people. (11) Today there has been born for you a Savior. [Even He] who is Messiah (i.e., Christ), Lord – in the city of David. (12) And this will be your sign [that the One you find is truly Him]: You will find a [newly] swaddled baby lying in a feeding trough”. (13) And immediately there was with the angel a multitude of [the] heavenly army [of elect angels], [all] praising God and saying, (14) “Glory to God in the highest [heavens]! And [also] on [the] earth [let there be] peace among men of [His] good pleasure (i.e., “men with whom He is well pleased = believers)”. (15) And it came about as the angels left them for heaven that the shepherds were talking with each other. “Let’s go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us”. (16) And they hurried and went, and they found Mary and Joseph, and the baby [who was] lying in a feeding trough. (17) And when they saw [these things], they let [everyone] know about what had been told them concerning this child. (18) And everyone who heard was amazed at what was told them by the shepherds. (19) And Mary remembered these words of theirs, [and was] meditating on them in her heart. (20) And the shepherds returned [to their flocks], glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen [which turned out] exactly like it had been told to them.

Luke 2:8-20

In the manner of His famous ancestor king David whom God prepared to lead His people Israel through the experience of faithfulness in shepherding, Jesus is the Good Shepherd of the sheep (Jn.10:14), and our Lord uses this same analogy to show Peter and all “pastors” after him what is really important in leading the Church of Christ: feeding the flock and caring for their safety through the Word of God (Jn.21:15-19; cf. Lk.10:38-42). As is obvious from their positive response, these shepherds to whom the angels proclaimed the coming of the Messiah were clearly believers who were awaiting the “hope of Israel” (cf. Acts 28:20). Rather than being heralded in Jerusalem to the assembled multitude and rulers of the people, our Lord is announced instead to a group of men who would never enter the thoughts of the rulers, priests, Sadducees, Pharisees, and other powerful individuals of Judea. But these faithful believers prove obedient to the angelic proclamation, and do not take umbrage at the fact that the Messiah has been born as a lowly human baby in most inglorious circumstances (as the worldly “persons of repute” would most certainly have done, and in fact did throughout our Lord’s first advent).

2. The babe in the manger (Lk.2:4-20):

In the place where Joseph and Mary stayed in Bethlehem, there was no crib in which to lay our newly born Lord. For this reason, they used a feed trough instead, that is, a movable wooden tray deep enough to hold animal feed, normally employed in a barn, but used here in place of a normal crib. This was the “sign” to the shepherds that the baby they found in Bethlehem was indeed the Messiah – not the fact that He was “swaddled”, that is, bound up in the wrap normally used to dress newborn infants in that day and age, but the fact that He, the Lord of the world, the One who created everything and who holds everything together by His powerful Word, was to be found lying in something so far from elegant that it was worthy of note and comment. This sign was a clear indication of the *kenosis* or humbling which coming into this world, becoming a true, unglorified human being, and taking on the form of a servant would entail for the Son of God. It was symbolic and representative of the human life He would lead: not a life of privilege, luxury, and appreciation for who He was and what He was about to do for all mankind, but instead a life characterized by humility, by privation, and by experience of the most outrageous ingratitude.

Given the many popular misconceptions about this particular aspect of our Lord’s birth, a few further words of explanation are in order here. The notion that Jesus was born in a barn and that this is where Joseph and Mary had to stay because “there were no rooms at the inn” is, while very popular today, entirely based upon a misunderstanding of what the original text means in Greek as the following translations demonstrate:

And [Mary] gave birth to her Son, her first born, and she wrapped Him up, and she lay Him down in a feed-trough (Greek *phatne*, φάτνη), because they did not have a [suitable] place [to put Him] at the inn.

Luke 2:7

And the [shepherds] hastened to come, and they found Mary and Joseph and the baby [Jesus] who (*singular*) was lying in the feed trough (i.e., the one explained in Lk.2:7 – this is the *sign* they were looking for).

Luke 2:16

The Greek word translated “place” (*topos, τόπος*) may be only translated as “room” in the sense of “area” or “space” and does *not* have the meaning here of *a* “room” in a house (or inn) as, for example, the King James version seems to imply. Secondly, the word translated feed-trough above (Greek *phatne, φάτνη*), refers to just that, a relatively small oblong wooden box used for feeding cattle, and it is highly doubtful whether it can ever mean anything else.⁴¹ The KJV actually allows for understanding the passage as translated above (i.e., in English, a “manger” may mean a feed-trough as well as an entire barn), but once extrapolated from a misunderstanding of the KJV’s English, the “barn-manger” story has acquired an unfortunate cultural momentum of its own, unfortunate because the false focus on the “barn” and its putative menagerie of animals takes away from what we are supposed to concentrate on, namely, the fact that the sign of humiliation here belonged to and was meant to be focused upon our Lord alone – it did not extend to His parents or, still less, to the location. The feed-trough crib was a sign of *His* Messiahship, and a symbol of the life of humility and humiliation that *He* would endure on our behalf. It was, moreover, a sign and symbol of the momentous nature of the gift our heavenly Father was giving to the world by offering up His one and only Son on our behalf. The Lord of life, Maker and Sustainer of the universe, glorious God forever, was born to die. He came into this world in a dirty wooden box resembling a coffin and left it (before His resurrection) nailed to a rugged wooden cross, having died in our place that we might not die but instead have life eternal with Him.

3. Jesus’ dedication and presentation in the temple (Lk.2:21-38):

Our Lord was circumcised on the eighth day after His birth in keeping with the sign of the covenant given to Abraham (Lk.2:21; cf. Gen.17; Lev.12:3; Jn.7:22; Acts 7:8; Gal.3:17), and given the name Jesus in accord with the directions of the angel to Joseph and to Mary individually (cf. Matt.1:21; 1:25; Lk.1:31). After the forty days of separation and purification mandated for women upon the birth of a first born son were completed (Lk.2:22; 2:39; cf. Lev.12:1-4), the family made the short journey from Bethlehem to Jerusalem in order to present the required sin offering for Mary (Lev.12:6-8; cf. Lev.5:7; 5:11), as well as to present Jesus in the temple in order to consecrate Him to the Lord (Lk.2:23; cf. Ex.13:2; Num.3:13; 8:17), without doubt also paying the redemption price required of all first born males, “five shekels of

⁴¹ The argument for the possibility of “barn” is made by, e.g., the Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich Greek English Lexicon, but only half-heartedly and none too convincingly in terms of the dubious parallels cited.

silver” (Ex.13:11-15; 34:20; Num.3:13; 3:44-48; 18:14-16).⁴² Joseph and Mary fulfilled all of these details carefully, and given this scrupulous approach, we can certainly conclude from the fact that the sin offering they provided for Mary was the inexpensive alternative to a lamb, namely, “a pair of doves or two young pigeons” (Lk.2:23), that 1) they were not of people of great means, and 2) the Magi had not yet come and presented Jesus with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. As it would turn out, these gifts would be very needful to support the family during their flight to Egypt.

Finally, the presentation of our Lord in the temple also provided an opportunity for two further witnesses to His Messiahship in the words of Simeon (Lk.2:29-32, also known as the *nunc dimittis*), who had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Christ (Lk.2:26; cf. Lk.2:30: “my eyes have [now] seen Your salvation”), and in the words of the prophetess Anna, which, while not recorded verbatim, were directed to all those who were “looking forward to the redemption of Israel”, a feat that only the Messiah could accomplish (Lk.2:38).

4. The star and the Magi (Matt.2:1-18):

Following our Lord’s presentation in the temple, Joseph and Mary, along with our Lord Jesus, returned to “their city” of Nazareth (Lk.2:39). Then, though we are not told specifically why, the family returned again to Bethlehem shortly thereafter. They may have received divine direction to do so, or they may have concluded on their own that the city of David, the ancestral town of both Mary and Joseph, was the proper place for the Messiah to be raised. In any case, the hypothesis that their brief return to Nazareth after Jesus’ presentation in the temple was for the purpose of closing down their household there and collecting up their possessions for the move has much to recommend it: in Matthew 2:11, the Magi find them in a “house” rather than in an “inn”, and we may glean from this that the family had secured what they may have hoped would be a permanent residence in Bethlehem after traveling south this second time (also implied by Joseph’s first inclination to take up residence in Judea rather than in Nazareth after the return from Egypt, a fact that suggests that he had intended to return to the new household already in place in Bethlehem).⁴³ It was at this time that the Magi arrived, following the star which portended the birth of the Messiah, the Light of the world.⁴⁴

⁴² Unlike circumcision which had to take place precisely on the eighth day (cf. Phil.3:5), no set day is given for the redemption of the first born. The Hebrew phrase used at Numbers 18:16, *mibben-chodesh*, suggests rather that the parents were to wait at least until the child was a full month old before presentation and payment.

⁴³ See Thomas and Gundry, A Harmony of the Gospels (Chicago 1978) p. 30 note o.

⁴⁴ Thus the popular notion that the visits of the shepherds and the Magi were roughly contemporaneous is incorrect. The family flees to Egypt immediately after the Magi depart (Matt.2:13), and this fact necessitates our understanding of the first return to Nazareth as having

(78) Because of the compassionate mercies of our God, through which the rising [Light] from on high will visit us, (79) to shine upon those in darkness and dwelling in the shadow of death, to make straight [paths for] our feet in the way of peace.

Luke 1:78-79 (cf. Is.9:2; Mal.4:2)

Jesus is the Light of the world (see section I.4.b.18 above). Throughout the Bible, light is a powerful metaphor, especially when contrasted with darkness. Light is good (Gen.1:3); light is truth (Jn.3:21); light is life (Jn.1:4). Darkness is the absence of all these things, and it was into the darkness of this world that Jesus, the true Light, did come. Thus the star of light that heralds His birth, shining in the darkness, is a fitting symbol for our Lord's first advent. He alone is life and light, clearly visible in the darkness around us, drawing all who are willing to come to His light.

(6) I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and shall take You by the hand, and guard You, and appoint You a covenant for the nations and a Light for the gentiles, (7) to open the eyes of the blind, to bring forth the prisoner from the dungeon, and those who dwell in darkness from their place of captivity (i.e., physical and spiritual redemption).

Isaiah 42:6-7

In Him was life, and this life was the light of men. And this light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not quenched it.

John 1:4-5 (cf. Jn.8:12; 12:46)

For God who said, "Let light shine forth from the darkness!", is He who has shone forth [His light] into our hearts to illuminate our knowledge of God's glory in the Person of Jesus Christ.

2nd Corinthians 4:6

The true Light which illuminates every human being was coming into the world.

John 1:9

Sadly, however, though He came to give light to the entire world, only a handful are willing to open their eyes and see the Light of truth. The star of Bethlehem was visible far and wide throughout Judea, yet it was left to a small number of foreigners to recognize it for what it was, the sign of the Messiah. Thus the star shining in the darkness and leading the way to the Messiah, to salvation through faith in the true Light of the world is an apt metaphor for the fact that although Jesus came to His own, His own were, by and large, not willing to receive Him.

He came to His own, but His own did not receive Him.

John 1:11

occurred prior to visit of the Magi. For Luke 2:39 very clearly implies that the family's return to Nazareth took place immediately after presenting Jesus in the temple.

This is the [basis for] judgment, that the light came into the world, and that men loved darkness rather than light.

John 3:19

The Magi (a Persian word from which our “magic” is derived through Greek) are traditionally known as the “wise men”. That these gentiles were believers who were waiting for the kingdom of God is evident from their actions:

- They come from a long distance on a difficult trip (Matt.2:1-2).
- God guides them on their journey (Matt.2:1-2; 2:9-10; 2:12).
- They bestow extremely expensive gifts on the Messiah (Matt.2:11).
- They “worship” Jesus when they find Him in Bethlehem (Matt.2:2; 2:11).
- They respond obediently to the dream given by God which warned them not to return to Herod (Matt.2:12).

The status of the wise men as believers may also be seen from the means by which they knew to come and had been motivated to come at all, namely, through the diligent searching of the scriptures:

[The wise men] were saying, “Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him”.

Matthew 2:2

For a Star will march forth from Jacob, and a [Ruler’s] scepter [will arise] from Israel.
Numbers 24:17b (Matt.2:1-13; cf. Gen.49:8-12; Deut.33:7; Lk.1:78; Rev.12:5)

Given that in Matthew 2:1 the wise men are said to have come “from the east”, and given the fact that they know the scriptures and prophecies about the Messiah and respond to them so wholeheartedly and enthusiastically, it seems certain that these Magi are successors to the guild of wise men of whom Daniel was put in charge and over whom he unquestionably exerted considerable influence during his long tenure as their head (Dan.2:48). At the time of Christ, moreover, Babylon, while no longer an important political capital, was still a center of such “higher learning”. While we would certainly not wish to accord all who claimed the title “Magician” at that time the truly blessed appellation of “believer”, this small group of gentile men, dedicated to the scriptures, were rewarded for their faith in the truth, and were used of God in this extraordinary way, being privileged not only to experience the fulfillment of the prophecy they had long studied even to the extent of seeing the Messiah with their own eyes, but also to be allowed to contribute to God’s plan so significantly in the giving of the expensive gifts of “gold, myrrh, and frankincense”, with the gold representing Jesus’ deity (as is often the case in symbolism of the temple, gold being rare, precious, and glorious), the myrrh (a costly substance used in making incense and in the process of embalming) representing His humanity taken on in order to die for us, and the sweet savor of the frankincense representing the acceptability of His sacrifice (cf. the “sweet savor” of the Levitical offerings representing Christ’s work: Eph.5:2; cf.

Heb.1:3). These valuable treasures almost certainly funded the escape of our Lord and His family to Egypt and supported them while they were there.⁴⁵

As to the star itself, it is wrong to think of this object as a “star” in the sense that modern astronomy defines stars, or even as an asteroid or a comet. The description of this luminous object’s behavior in Matthew makes it very clear that it is not to be identified with any such phenomenon and that we will search in vain for any secular evidence of its appearance, ancient or modern. This particular “star” has as its purpose not only the fulfillment of the prophecy in Numbers 24:17 (quoted above) heralding the advent of the Messiah, but also the directing of the Magi to Bethlehem. For this particular “star” actually guides the wise men to the place of Christ’s birth – indeed it directs them to the very house in which He and Mary and Joseph were staying (Matt.2:9-10). The star appeared at Christ’s birth, fulfilled the prophecy, brought the Magi to Judea, and led them to Jesus – and then apparently disappeared, its purpose having been accomplished.⁴⁶ This was entirely a supernatural event, foreordained and meticulously directed by God, not a predictable or otherwise recognizable astronomical event of the sort that can either be explained or rationalized by science. This was a miracle of the highest order.

5. The flight to Egypt and the second return to Nazareth:

Divine intervention in the form of another angelic warning (Matt.2:13-15) prompted the family’s rapid departure from their new home in Bethlehem to seek refuge in a part of the empire not under Herod’s control, namely, Egypt (a Roman province at this time). The fact that Joseph who had received the dream obeyed that very night is ample evidence of his responsiveness to the Lord. Such rapidity of response would be difficult for most if not all of us, having just made several long, overland round trips under what were no doubt very difficult circumstances, with Mary pregnant on the first leg, a very young child in tow on the second, and loaded down with all of the household possessions they could carry on the third. Having just now settled in to a new home after all of that, it would certainly be understandable if Joseph had been tempted to delay a few days, at least to get organized for the trip and to make arrangements for his new home during his absence – but he fled with his family that very night in complete and humble obedience to the Lord. From this and from Joseph’s earlier considerate treatment of Mary we may glean that our Lord Jesus was given two exceptionally God-fearing and spiritually mature individuals to rear Him.

Herod’s command to destroy all of the male in Bethlehem who were “two years old and under” (Matt.2:16) is a further indication that the visit of the Magi did not occur immediately after Jesus’ birth as the visit of the shepherds had. For it was certainly Herod’s understanding after his

⁴⁵ I am indebted to Rev. Chris Rodgers for this observation.

⁴⁶ As angels are often described as stars and often appear as stars, though Matthew does not say so, it is certainly possible that the star of Bethlehem was an angel or directed by angelic agency (e.g., Rev.9:1-2; 12:4; cf. Is.14:13-14; and compare Lk.2:13 with Is.40:26).

conversation with them that the initial appearance of the star had occurred at some time in the past, thus necessitating the murder of many young boys who were clearly not newborns.⁴⁷ Wherever specifically in the east the Magi had come from, it is virtually certain that their journey and their preparations for it must have taken many months at least.

Following Herod's death, Joseph was once again told in a dream by an angel of the Lord to return to "the land of Israel". According to his by now familiar pattern of obedience, he did so, intending to take up residence now at last in the family's new homestead in Bethlehem of Judea (Matt.2:22). En route, however, he discovered that Herod's son Archelaus was the new ruler in Judea (not at all a certainty before the fact as the popular expectation may well have been that the Romans would dispense with the Herodian dynasty entirely after Herod's demise).⁴⁸ As a result, Joseph apparently decided on his own that it would be more prudent to head for Nazareth instead, and this spiritually laudable decision was graciously confirmed for him by a third dream (Matt.2:19-23), thus relieving him of any nagging feelings that abandoning the little they now had out of reach in Bethlehem might have been a mistake. Nazareth thus becomes the place where Jesus grows up (cf. Jn.2:1). And herein we also see the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah about light coming out of the darkness (i.e., the secular north country: Is.9:1-2 – completed with the beginning and the end of Jesus' earthly ministry: cf. Matt.4:14-16; 28:7), as well as the prophecy of Jesus being a "Nazarene" (Matt.2:23).⁴⁹

The people who were walking in darkness have seen a Great Light. [And for] those dwelling in a land of the shadow of death, a Light has shone upon them.

Isaiah 9:2

g. Early Life and Preparation for Ministry:

The only gospel that even deals with our Lord's life before the time when He was on the point of commencing His ministry at about age thirty is the gospel of Luke, and even here we have only the account of His Passover in Jerusalem at the age of twelve, framed with two general statements which characterize His formative years on the one hand and His years of further preparation on the other. This fact alone should impress upon us the burden our Lord took on for

⁴⁷ In the absence of birth certificates, it is likely that the men sent to dispatch these poor children were commanded to kill all male infants who could not yet walk or speak.

⁴⁸ Herod's kingdom was split between his three sons, with Archelaus receiving Judea and Samaria, Herod Agrippa (the "Herod" who interrogated Jesus) receiving Galilee and Perea, and Philip receiving Ituraea and Trachonitis (east of Galilee). Archelaus was deposed in A.D. 6, and Judea became an official Roman protectorate (rather than a client kingdom), governed by Roman procurators (e.g., Pontius Pilate).

⁴⁹ Although see the note above in section I.4.b.4 "Branch" and this word's implicit reference to Isaiah 11:1b

us. For though He is both God and man from the point of virgin birth, the Savior of the world, yet for thirty years He walked through this world in complete obscurity and anonymity, preparing for the ministry of ministries which would end in His sacrifice of Himself for the sins of that world.

(40) And the child grew up and was being strengthened [by being] filled up with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. (41) And His parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the Passover. (42) And when He was twelve years old, they went up according to the custom of the feast, (43) but when they had completed their days [there] and as they were returning, Jesus, their young son, remained behind in Jerusalem, and His parents did not realize it. (44) But since they assumed that He was in the traveling party, they went a day's journey before they began to search for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. (45) When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for Him. (46) After three days, they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers both listening to them and asking them questions. (47) And all who heard Him were amazed at His insight and His replies. (48) And when His parents saw Him, they were astounded, and His mother said to Him, "Child, why have you treated us this way? Look, your father and I have been searching for you anxiously!" (49) And He said to them, "Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's things?" (50) And they did not understand this statement which He spoke to them. (51) And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them. And His mother was pondering all these things in her heart. (52) And Jesus [continued to] make progress in His wisdom and His stature and in grace with God and with men.

Luke 2:40-52

This passage, though rather short considering it contains by far the bulk of our information about our Lord's life until the commencement of His ministry at about age thirty, is very revealing. For one thing, we see immediately the load and the difficulty that our Lord had to bear just in terms of His normal family life. He was God and the Son of God, and His answer to His parents indicates that without any doubt He was fully aware of these facts. And yet, since in order to be qualified to be our sin-bearer He had to live an absolutely perfect life, free from the slightest tinge of sin (a feat truly beyond our comprehension which He did indeed accomplish), our Lord had to be the perfect son, even as He had to prepare to fulfill the obligations of the Son perfectly. This meant obeying His parents when they were right – and when they were wrong. As Jesus perfectly negotiated the mundane hours, days, weeks, months and years until He came upon the scene to fulfill the ministry of ministries many years later, we can say without question that He never did wrong, either by omission or commission, and thus was never in the wrong. However, people being the imperfect creatures that they are, there must have been countless occasions whereupon He had to endure the faulty conclusions, impressions, and applications of others with whom He necessarily had to interact, and, until His majority, interact with in an obedient and submissive way – even on those numerous occasions where He was in the right and they were in the wrong. This would have been difficult enough for anyone to bear, but considering that He was aware of His status as the Son of God, and that He had to prepare with every spare moment and ounce of energy for what was to come, what for the rest of us would constitute mere "daily"

life must have been for Him a gauntlet which intensified with every step forward. We often fail to appreciate the sacrifice that becoming a human being and enduring with perfect patience the years of waiting must have entailed for our Lord, even as He had to take maximum advantage of every opportunity to prepare for what would be the most incomparably difficult three and half year experience any human being would ever know culminating in the passion and the cross, especially since, being God, His existence before the incarnation was blessed to an infinite degree:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.
2nd Corinthians 8:9 NIV

Although our Lord's parents, Mary His mother and Joseph His stepfather clearly did not entirely "get it" as this story shows, yet our Lord "got it" and yielded to them on this and without a doubt on many other occasions as well, maintaining perfect obedience in spite of ignorance, lack of appreciation, and downright opposition to His necessary course of spiritual growth (Lk.2:40). But before we are too hard on Mary and Joseph it is well to reflect that Jesus had the best possible parents, and we would be most unlikely to do as well. For we all say that we "know" that Jesus is our life, and say that we believe in the resurrection and eternal rewards as far more important than anything this earthly life has to offer, and yet we have a tendency to live life as if such were not the case. Mary and Joseph had seen the demonstrations of Jesus' Messiahship at His *virgin* birth and had undoubtedly seen many other amazing things since, but even though on some level they believed (Lk.2:51; cf. Lk.2:19), it is safe to say that, like His future disciples, even daily contact with the One who had come into the world to save it was insufficient to melt through our human preoccupation with the world, given that Jesus' refulgent deity was shielded from their view (cf. Mk.6:52; 8:17). This too would be part of the daily challenge our Lord would have to face throughout His earthly life (cf. Matt.17:17; Mk.9:19; Lk.9:41).

It is also of great significance that our Lord, whose understanding of the Word was clearly light-years ahead of the most exalted scholars in Jerusalem by the time He was only twelve years old, still had to undergo a further 18 years of preparation before beginning His ministry of ministries. Such was the importance of the task He faced, such the magnitude of the degree of preparation necessary to successfully negotiate the crucible ahead.

As discussed above, scripture makes it very clear that in His humanity Jesus was not exempted from any of the normal trials, temptations, or obligations that confront us all (cf. Is.52:13 - 53:12; 2Cor.8:9; Phil.2:5-8; Heb.2:5-18; 4:15; 5:7-10). Without question this means that in that aspect of human life which is indeed the most important (though the least appreciated as such by humanity in general), namely, spiritual growth, spiritual maturity and the deep and in His case perfect understanding of all the wisdom and counsel of God revealed to man was not offered up to our Lord on a silver platter. He had to learn truth and grow spiritually just as we do, only He actually did so in a perfect way and to a perfect degree. Spiritual growth is a process of seeking, learning, believing, and applying the truth of God's Word (in deliberate thinking, speaking, and active behavior), and it is a measure of just what it would take to emulate our Lord's

accomplishment of becoming perfectly spiritually mature, having attained an absolutely complete and flawless understanding of the entire revealed truth of scripture, that it took Him nearly thirty years to do so (including the preparation necessary for His ministry, on which see below). For our Lord never involved Himself in any sinful waste of time. More to the point, He was thoroughly dedicated to the purpose for which He had come, for which He had been sent into the world, and love for the Father ruled His every thought and action. Accomplishment of the essential personal preparation of attaining complete spiritual maturity was thus for Him “job one”, and a task moreover that had to be completed by just the right time. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not have a minute to lose or a moment to spare, and He set Himself to the task of growing up spiritually from His earliest days, having gained a measure of insight few of us could ever hope to achieve by the time He was only twelve years old. That some eighteen additional years of concentrated “graduate study” were required before He would commence the most sublime ministration of God to man only goes to show how difficult in truth those final three and a half years were for Him (whether we fully appreciate that fact or not).

So it is a fair and indeed an important question to ask, “just how *did* Jesus grow?”, especially since it is clear that His level of spiritual maturity at age twelve surpassed that of most if not all believers who have ever lived. The principle of *kenosis* (see section I.5.e above) means that He did not have any sort of “unfair advantage” but had to grow up spiritually in precisely the same way as we all do. What advantages He did have as the Son of God, devoid of a sin nature and empowered to an unlimited degree by the Spirit from the moment of His birth, and as a prophet in His own right, were more than balanced by the extraordinary satanic opposition He faced throughout His earthly life, and the incredible difficulty of the mission on which He had been sent for the salvation of us all. For it was His challenge not only to grow up spiritually in a perfect way while living a perfect and sinless life of complete dedication to the Father, but also to conduct the perfect pre-cross ministry, run the most horrific gauntlet of opposition to get to the cross, and then bear the sins of the world while hanging there in the darkness between heaven and earth.

It was prophesied about John the baptist, Jesus’ herald, that he would be “filled with the Holy Spirit from out of his mother’s womb” (i.e., from the moment of life at birth; Lk.1:15). And we may be sure that this was the case for the Messiah he heralded as well (Mic.3:8; cf. Matt.3:11; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28; 12:31-32; Mk.1:8-12; 3:29; Lk.3:16; 3:22; 4:1; 4:14; 4:18; 11:13; 12:10; Jn.1:32-33; 7:39; 14:26; 15:26; 16:15).

(2) And the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him (i.e., the Messiah), the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Isaiah 11:2

(17) This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: (18) “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.”

Matthew 12:17-18 NIV

(34) For the One God sent speaks the words of God. For the Father does not give [Him] the Spirit in a sparing way. (35) He loves the Son and has given everything into His hand.

John 3:34-35 (cf. Jn.6:63)

And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing [there, looking] as if He had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes (which are the seven spirits of God sent out into the entire earth).

Revelation 5:6

As we are told at John 7:39, the universal baptism of the Spirit was a gift from the Father to the victorious Son, and was thus not poured out upon all believers until after the cross, beginning on the day of the first post-cross Pentecost. But our Lord possessed the Spirit “without measure” (Jn.3:34), being filled from the moment of His birth – precisely as we believers all are now as well from the moment of our new birth (for the descent of the Spirit upon our Lord in visibly “bodily” fashion as a demonstration of His Messiahship see section I.5.h. below). Thus our Lord’s astounding spiritual growth was not due to anything to which He had some unique or secret access. We too have the Spirit given in an unlimited way, for He now dwells in all of us as well (Rom.8:9; 2Tim.1:14), and as a result we possess the very “mind of Christ” (1Cor.2:16; i.e., the indwelling of the Spirit illuminating the truth of scripture, all of which is accessible to us if we are willing to pursue it). The difference is that our Lord Jesus *made perfect use* of this wonderful Helper to learn and to grow and to live in precisely the way the Father desired, doing so perfectly at all times. For in Jesus Christ alone this unlimited portion of the Spirit met with perfect responsiveness.

The passages in Luke commenting upon His childhood both make reference to the mechanics of the process of Jesus’ Spirit-empowered spiritual growth. Luke 2:40 tells us that He “grew and was strengthened *by being filled up* with wisdom”, demonstrating perspicuously the fundamental principle of spiritual growth: learning, believing, and applying the truth of the Word of God (true wisdom). Luke 2:52 further states that Jesus grew “in *wisdom*” and (consequently) in “grace/favor with God and men”, showing us the result of this consistent process of spiritual growth: God’s legitimate pleasure in those who respond to Him. For while God’s grace is astounding and truly unlimited, it is clear from this and other passages that it is possible to “grow” in that grace, to experience an increase in grace (Jas.4:6; 2Pet.3:18; cf. Acts 6:8; Rom.1:7; 1Cor.1:3; 16:23; 2Cor.1:2; 9:8; 9:14; 13:14; Gal.1:3; 5:4; Eph.1:2; 4:7; 6:24; Phil.1:2; 4:23; Col.1:2; 4:18; 1Thes.1:1; 2Thes.1:2; 1Tim.1:2; 1:14; 6:21; 2Tim.1:2; 2:1; 4:22; Tit.1:4; 3:15; Philem.1:3; Heb.4:16; 12:15; 13:25; 1Pet.1:2; 5:5; 2Pet.1:2; 2Jn.1:3; Rev.1:5; 22:21). And the means to the increase in God’s favor, God’s pleasure with us, is shown here by example on the part of the One who accomplished just such a “growth in grace” to a degree never to be matched before or since. It is important to note that God’s favor is not manifest in terms of overwhelming material prosperity in this instance (and if not in the case of the perfect response of His own Son, then we too would be wise not to look for God’s favor in purely material terms). But one important result seen here to flow from Jesus prodigious spiritual growth is that He *also*

grew in grace concomitantly with *men* as well as with God: when we do what God wants us to do, we not only gain favor in His eyes, but He also gives us favor in the eyes of all with whom we have to do, even our enemies (Prov.16:7).

(1) Who has believed our report? And to whom has the Arm of the Lord (i.e., the Messiah) been revealed? (2) For He grew up before Him like a suckling plant, like a root [springing up] from dry ground.

Isaiah 53:1-2a

Every plant sprung from seed must grow in the natural way, from small to large, and without passing any step of growth along on the road to maturation as it pushes up against the resistance of the soil towards the light, drawing strength and size from that light. Our Lord would later repeat this image in the parable of the Sower wherein He told us how to grow, to provide good soil for our seed of faith, to grow apace, to rise above the weeds of this life, ever stretching outward and upward towards the light of the truth of the Word of God. And as the prophecy about Him in Isaiah above makes clear, He had already accomplished this very process Himself when He taught this lesson, and had done so to a perfect degree – in spite of the fact that in His case the earth was dry, an image which is meant to convey in a very vivid way the deprivation and the resistance with which the Messiah would have to cope even as He was accomplishing His historically exceptional course of spiritual growth.

(4) The Lord God has given Me a tongue of those who have been [fully] instructed [in the truth], that I may know the right words [of truth] to encourage (lit., “re-string” them like an unstrung bow) the weary. He arouses His Word [within Me]. [And] every morning He awakens Me. He awakens My ear[s] to listen like [the ears of] those who have been [fully] instructed [in the truth]. (5) The Lord God has opened My ear[s], and I have not refused [instruction] (lit., “rebelled” against it). I have not turned away [nor gone] backward.

Isaiah 50:4-5

Herein we see the Messiah’s approach of complete dedication to the process of learning the Word of God. Jesus’ spiritual growth was an *every day* commitment, engaged in the very first thing in the morning every morning precisely because it was His *top priority*. If this was true of our Lord, should we not adopt a similar approach as best we can? And there is something else of importance to note in these verses as well. When it says that our Lord Jesus “did not refuse” and “did not turn back”, it should remind us that spiritual growth is often not an entirely easy process. Despite the fact that the Word of God is the sweetest thing on earth, it still takes discipline and fortitude to take it in consistently, and that is doubly so whenever our good application of consistency in this regard is challenged, whenever we are under pressures of various sorts that have a tendency to knock us off of our “game”, and especially whenever the Word touches a nerve, perhaps finding fault in an area where we have issues with our present or past behavior (whether of commission or of omission) or for whatever reason find some truth difficult to accept or to face. The Word of God challenges us all, reproves us all, refines us all like the flames of a crucible. Staying with it, continuing to “take the heat” day in and day out, not merely listening,

but learning, believing, and applying what we know to be true, takes a deep level of dedication to God. Not only did our Lord never shrink or sink back (as is often the case with us where frequently we find ourselves taking three steps forward and two back), but He pressed forward each and every day regardless of circumstances, pressures, and opposition (often preferring His communion with the Father to His necessary sleep: cf. Matt.26:36-46; Lk.6:12-13; Heb.5:7-9), and in so doing showed us the way toward the high upward calling of drawing closer to God, pleasing Him, and becoming fit to do what it is He has called us to do. When the time came to take up the most difficult ministry in the history of the world, our Lord Jesus was ready. We see in all of Jesus' words in the gospels the truth of the statement quoted above that He knew "the right words [of truth] to encourage the weary". And because of His dedicated pattern of growth, when the time came He was ready for the gauntlet that led to the cross and even for what came after: the bearing and expiation of the sins of all humanity, the pivot point of all history and the means of our eternal life.

Nor should we imagine that Jesus' spiritual growth was *limited* to this important daily regimen, for we know that He spent much additional time in prayer, fasting and scripture reading. And not only that, of all who have ever lived, we may be assured that our Lord perfected the technique of "walking with God" better than anyone else (Enoch, Gen.5:22-23, included). This day by day, moment by moment "Sabbath" depended upon a deep and in Jesus' case undoubtedly perfect knowledge of the scriptures as they existed in His day (i.e., the entire Old Testament canon). We know, for example, that when He was tempted by Satan, He replied to all three of the devil's ploys with precise and precisely appropriate quotes from the book of Deuteronomy (cf. Matt.4:1-11; Lk.4:1-13).

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of mockers. But the teaching (*Torah*) of the Lord is his delight, and in His teaching (*Torah*) *he meditates day and night.*

Psalm 1:1-2

I have kept the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be moved.

Psalm 16:8

We cannot know all the details but His conduct in the synagogue suggests that He made maximum use of the availability of the scriptures in Nazareth (cf. Lk.4:16-20), and He must have been ever present and ever listening with intent concentration whenever the scriptures were read until He possessed them in His human heart forever. Further, we may expect that in His day to day conduct, Jesus' mind was never idle but that He kept His heart ever focused on the truths of the Word and the Word itself. Many passages of Old Testament scripture reflect the Messiah's experiences, and one in particular, Psalm 119, sets the tone for His course of spiritual growth as a young man (cf. Ps.119:161 with Jn.15:25), for example . . .

beth

9 How can a young man keep his way pure?

By living according to your word.
10 I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.
11 I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.
12 Praise be to you, O Lord;
teach me your decrees.
13 With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.
14 I rejoice in following your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.
15 I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.
16 I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.

heth

57 You are my portion, O Lord;
I have promised to obey your words.
58 I have sought your face with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
59 I have considered my ways
and have turned my steps to your statutes.
60 I will hasten and not delay
to obey your commands.
61 Though the wicked bind me with ropes,
I will not forget your law.
62 At midnight I rise to give you thanks
for your righteous laws.
63 I am a friend to all who fear you,
to all who follow your precepts.
64 The earth is filled with your love, O Lord;
teach me your decrees.

Psalm 119:9-16 & 57-64 (*beth* and *heth* stanzas) NIV

As a result of this complete dedication and unswervingly righteous approach, though He had no extensive formal education, Jesus Christ was better versed in the Bible by the time He began His earthly ministry than anyone else who had ever lived, in fact, He was *perfectly* versed in it. This confounded His adversaries who were at a loss to explain His complete command of scripture which far exceeded their own, even in the case of the “professional” ministers and scholars (Jn.7:15; cf. Matt.13:54-56; Mk.6:3). It also explains what it means when we are told that He taught “with authority” (Matt.7:28-29; Mk.1:22-27; Lk.4:32-36). Possessing a perfect knowledge and a perfect understanding of the Bible and what it really meant, and being taught by the Spirit, Jesus, a prophet in His own right, *the* Prophet in fact (Deut.18:15 with Jn.1:25; Acts

3:22-23), could say without hesitation or doubt or reflection that everything He taught was truly from God.

“My teaching is not My own, but belongs to Him who sent Me.”

John 7:16

Although truly God and in full knowledge of that salient fact (Jn.5:18; Jn.14:9; 17:5), our Lord, who had humbled Himself to take on true humanity, also humbled Himself continually during His years of preparation, learning truth as we all must, through observation of the world (cf. Jn.2:25 for our Lord’s perspicacity regarding human nature), diligent study of the scriptures, humble attention to direct prophetic revelation, and a dedicated approach of applying the truth He had learned and believed in a systematic way. If we wish to draw closer to God, we cannot ask for a better example than our Lord of the best way, indeed, the only way to proceed.

(4) You adulterously unfaithful people! Don’t you know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God? Whoever wants to be a friend of the world establishes himself as an enemy of God. (5) Or do you imagine that the scripture says (i.e., paraphrasing Gal.5:16-21) to no purpose that the Spirit which dwells in us sets its desire against [this sort of selfish] envy (i.e., selfish ambition and jealousy of others through wrongful concentration on the world as the essential sin in context; cf. vv.1-3). (6) For He gives grace [which is] greater [than these things you desire]. That is why it says, “God opposes the arrogant, but gives grace to the humble”. (7) Therefore subordinate yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. (8) Get closer to God, and He will get closer to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and sanctify your hearts, you double-minded. (9) Lament and grieve and mourn. Let your laughter turn to grief, and your joy to humiliation. (10) Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

James 4:4-10

h. The Formal Inauguration of His Ministry:

1) The Baptism of John:

(13) But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. (14) He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, (15) for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. (16) Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. (17) And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to *make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*”

Luke 1:13-17 NIV

The purpose of John's ministry as seen very clearly from the passage above was to prepare the hearts of His countrymen for the Messiah's imminent arrival (cf. Mal.3:1; Lk.1:76-77). John is the King's herald; Jesus is the King Himself. Without any question, therefore, the purpose for Jesus' baptism was entirely different from that of the baptism of those in Israel who chose to repent at John's proclamation of the Kingdom. They were sinners; Jesus is sinless. They were waiting for the King; Jesus is the King. They were helpless without Him; He was their help – and is ours today as well. Thus we can well understand John's reluctance to baptize Jesus (Matt.3:14), while our Lord's response "Allow [this] now. For it is appropriate for us [to act] in this way in order to fulfill all righteousness" calls for some comment. As John correctly discerned, Jesus did not have to be baptized, for there was certainly no need for Him to indicate any repentance, since He was sinless. Jesus' baptism is unique and demonstrates His acceptance of the cross. For after others had gone down into the water to symbolically wash away their sins, our Lord went down into the same water to symbolically die for those sins, so that His baptism represents His satisfying of the Father's righteous requirements of salvation = "fulfilling all [God the Father's] righteousness" (i.e., His righteous requirements that had to met in order for salvation to be made available to mankind, namely, the propitiation of all of our sins by the blood of Christ, His work on the cross in dying [spiritually] in our place). Jesus' coming up out of the water (a picture of His resurrection just as going under is a picture of His spiritual death on our behalf) is accompanied by the visible coming of the Holy Spirit as an indication both of the fact that He is the Messiah (and indwelt with the Spirit from birth as we have seen), but also as a picture of the gift of the Spirit which He would be given to give in turn to us after His glorification (Jn.7:39).

2) The Temptation in the Wilderness: Rather than preparation per se, our Lord's forty day trial in the wilderness was more to demonstrate that He was in fact completely prepared to take on the ministry of ministries which, after increasingly intense opposition in its own right, would lead through even more intense trials to the cross where Jesus would bear the sins of the world. Of this we can be sure: this was not the first time that Jesus Christ had been led to spend extensive time in fasting and prayer apart from other people. Isolation and fasting, while extremely difficult for most of us to endure except for very limited periods of time, do have the potential of opening a person up to God, His voice and His will – when they are done for the right motives. There are many, and the Pharisees constitute an excellent example (cf. Matt.6:16-18; Lk.18:12), who engage in this sort of behavior totally apart from God and in order to appear pious rather than to seek God in truth. Our Lord, quite to the contrary, was led into the wilderness by God the Holy Spirit (Matt.4:1; Mk.1:12; Lk.4:1), and we can be assured that while we know of this event after the fact (through the revelation by the same Spirit), none of His contemporaries had any idea that this particular trial was taking place (just as was the case in all of the no doubt extremely numerous trials He had undergone in His nearly thirty years of preparation), so that His motives were entirely pure: not the seeking of human admiration, but the willingness to respond to the Father even under the most trying and difficult circumstances. The forty days of this trial on our Lord's part are, moreover, deliberately parallel to the forty days

spent by Moses (a biblical type of Christ)⁵⁰ on Mt. Sinai during his receiving of the Law. On Moses' receiving of the second set of tablets (on account of his breaking of the first set in response to the people's rebelliousness in worshiping the golden calf) he also is said to have fasted for forty days (Ex.34:28; cf. Ex.24:18; Deut.9:9). In Moses case, we are not told that he was hungry (as was the case with our Lord at the conclusion of this time: Matt.4:2; Lk.4:2; cf. Matt.4:11; Mk.1:13), and the context strongly suggests that Moses was supernaturally provided for during this special time of communion with the Lord. Thus while Moses does represent a foreshadowing of the Messiah's experience, the critical point of comparison is not the period of the fast. For Moses' experience looks forward to the time when we shall have no need of food whatsoever in our eternal fellowship with Jesus, while our Lord's forty day fast demonstrates the exceptional degree to which He was prepared to suffer in order to carry out the Father's will. Rather, the true, critical point of comparison is between the commencement of Moses' ministry and that of Jesus' ministry, the latter of which would inaugurate a New Covenant through Jesus' suffering and dying for the sins of the world which would replace the Old Covenant mediated by Moses (which could only foreshadow this wonderful reality which was yet to come just as Moses as a type of Christ could only represent the Messiah, but the Messiah Himself, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, would have to come in the flesh in order for salvation to be provided in fact). These forty days of privation also serve to set the tone for the public ministry and further life of our Savior, for He would know nothing but ever increasing opposition and suffering from this point forward. Just as the "scapegoat" which was released into the wilderness symbolically bore the sins of the people (Lev.16:8-26), so our Lord Jesus would "suffer outside the camp", bearing the sins of the world (Heb.13:11-12), and this forty day period of genuine physical affliction (fasting and along with the extreme discomfort of exposure to the elements, insects, wild animals [cf. Mk.1:13], and the like without anything more than the clothes He wore) is symbolic of and indeed looks forward by way of anticipation to His act of supreme sacrifice, the bearing and expiating of the sins of the world in the darkness of those final three hours on the cross (not to mention the ostracism from traditional religious society that His ministry would entail).

The three specific temptations attempted on our Lord by the devil have been covered in detail before in respect to Satan's overall methodology.⁵¹ What concerns us here is the meaning and significance of the devil's threefold attempt to throw our Lord off stride. What we should notice first of all is that after forty days of such intense privation, our Lord's responses were beyond all question reflective of His true inner heart. Some of us might put up a bold front in the face of such an intense and diabolical assault if well-rested, well-fed and otherwise under no particular pressure. It is another thing entirely to resist Satan's appeals when ill, or in danger, or in trouble, or in want (as Job's experience shows us very well, i.e., the case of a man as perfect and righteous as mortal man could be, yet eventually worn down by pressure of a similarly unique

⁵⁰ See part 3A of Coming Tribulation, section V.3, "The Restoration Ministries of Moses and Elijah".

⁵¹ See part 3A of Bible Basics, section IV.2.1-3, "The Temptation", and also part 4 of The Satanic Rebellion, section IV.4, "Satan's World System: Tactical Doctrine".

sort). In order to endure trials even approaching this extreme type, the Word of God *has to be* so deeply ingrained in a person's heart that instead of being a factor in the inner person it dominates the entire inner life. This was certainly the case for our Savior, who, when refined like gold in the crucible, merely reflected the exquisite quality of what was truly inside. It is also not to be overlooked that the specific form in which this shining forth of the perfection of His inner-self flawlessly developed from His youth came out as direct quotation of the scriptures, a fact which should remind us of the critical importance of the Bible in everything we do or aspire to do as Christians, followers of Jesus Christ: the Word of God is our spiritual life-blood just as it was for Him who is our Model in all things.

As we have seen in the past (see the references in the previous note), the three temptations directed at our Lord by the devil, the temptation to put self-will over God's will (stones to bread), to reverse roles with God substituting our will for His (jump), and to put personal ambition over God's authority (kingdoms of the world), are all met by our Lord Jesus with Bible verses which expose the subtleties with which Satan has attempted to cloud the issue in each case. In regard to the first temptation, the context of our Lord's first response, Deuteronomy 8:3, "not by bread alone", is that of the testing of Israel by the Lord *in the desert*, who Himself had deliberately and for good reason "made them hungry", "to humble you and test you so as to know what was in your hearts, whether or not you would obey His commands" (Deut.8:2). This privation was followed – after they failed the test – by the gracious and supernatural provision of manna. In regard to the second temptation, the context of our Lord's second response, Deuteronomy 6:16, "don't put the Lord your God to the test", is the comparison which completes the verse "like you did at Massah" *in the desert*, the place where the people tested God by demanding of His spokesman, Moses, that they be provided water, and were on the point of stoning him, asking "Is the Lord among us or not" (Ex.17:1-7). Thus the demand for water was a "testing of God", reversing roles with Him. For it is He who tests us, not the other way around (cf. Ps.91, quoted by the devil, where the true context is that of our Lord being our dwelling place; only then will "He give His angels charge" to protect us, i.e., when we are trusting Him rather than testing Him). In regard to the third temptation, the context of our Lord's third response, Deuteronomy 6:13, "Him only shall you serve", is that of the Lord being the One who brought the people out of slavery *into the desert*. He is not to be forgotten but remembered as the only One who can truly give us anything of value. He is the One who prospers us if we prosper at all (cf. 1Sam.2:7; Ps.75:7). There is also a level on which all of these temptations were more severe in the case of our Lord than they could ever be for us. For, being God as well as a true man, Jesus *really could* turn stones into bread; He *really would* have been rescued by the angels were He to have jumped; and He *really was* entitled to the rulership of the entire world. But in all these things, through perfect understanding and flawless application of the truth of the Word of God, He who is the Living Word acquiesced to the Father's authority, the Father's will, and the Father's glory in carrying out His plan for the 1st Advent in all things and in all ways and at all times. Thus these three temptations serve to show as well the categories of humility perfectly adhered to by our Lord throughout His time here on earth prior to the cross and His subsequent glorification.

Israel had spent 40 years wandering in the desert, one year for every day their scouts spent reconnoitering the promised land (Num.14:34). They failed the test of trusting in God in the wilderness (repeatedly), but our Lord Jesus Christ, though He must have been down to His very last reserves of strength after forty days of fasting in this hostile environment, demonstrated perspicuously what had been and would continue to be His pattern of behavior until the very end, namely, the complete degree to which He relied on the Father in all things, from His necessary needs, to the confidence of His faith, to the plan for His life. In each thing and in everything, He put the truth first, and there was not a sliver of daylight between His perfect understanding of that truth and His flawless execution of it. These forty days and the testing by Satan which followed demonstrated beyond any doubt that our Lord was more than ready to put the Father's will in place of His own will during His ordeal in the desert of this world with all the forces of evil arrayed against Him, culminating in His death on the cross for all mankind.

i. The Course of His Ministry: Short of a complete exegesis of the four gospels, it is impossible in this context to do more than give a short synopsis of the ministry of ministries undertaken and successfully completed by our Lord Jesus. What we can say here is that His teachings preserved in the gospels are consistent with, reflective of, and reflected by all of the truth found elsewhere in scripture whether in the Old Testament or in the New. Further, His miracles demonstrate His status and His authority as the Messiah, the Son of God. Lastly, His deeds over the course of His ministry reveal the love, the sacrifice, and the commitment of the One willing to be sent into this corrupt world in order to do the Father's will for the good of us all, an incomparable task wherein He died to save us all from our sins.

As to the (possibly disappointing) brevity of this section, on the one hand, the contents of the gospels are (or should be) well-known to all Christians, while on the other hand many if not most of the incidents, parables, and discourses of our Lord require detailed exegesis in their own right (so that a brief consideration of them here would be of little value). We shall thus have to content ourselves with an overview of some of the major issues of Jesus' three and half year ministry before moving on to His "passion" (that is, the gauntlet He had to run to get to the cross), the crucifixion itself, and the events which followed.

1) Obstacles to Jesus' Ministry: Apart from the thirty years of struggle necessary to prepare for it and the forsaking of any sort of normal life (we should not underestimate, for example, the sacrifice of refraining from marriage and the hope of any physical progeny), our Lord's pre-cross ministry entailed the constant negotiation of a number of serious hurdles most of which are unique to His experience (certainly in intensity if not altogether in type). The list given here is not meant to be exhaustive – we can only hope to have a dim idea of what Jesus endured by coming into this world for us, living the perfect life, and ministering the perfect ministry (let alone what He went through before and most particularly on the cross as He bore our sins).

a) Physical Obstacles: Traveling all over the territories of Galilee and Judea for three and a half years, all the while ministering intensely in the teaching of the Word and the demonstration

of its power through healing and the performance of other miracles involved a level of physical effort and exertion, and of mental and emotional fatigue that cannot be easily comprehended merely by reading the gospels in the comfort of one's easy chair. No matter how much of the burden His disciples and supporters were willing or able to bear, of necessity the lion's share of that burden fell upon Jesus as the One doing the teaching, the healing, and the managing of the ministry on every important level. The loneliness and the pressure of command, the energy necessary to teach and minister, and the effort required to keep a careful eye on every facet of His ministry had to be wearing and wearying beyond what any other person in the history of the world was capable of enduring, and that is especially true when we add the caveat that Jesus did it all perfectly at every point, on every occasion, day after day, year after year, without the slightest slip or oversight or mistake in planning, teaching or general execution.⁵² And at the same time, of course, our Lord had to prepare constantly during every spare moment for the concentrated teaching that was the hallmark of His ministry. Thus, however difficult His early life of preparation, Jesus' public ministry involved an exponential increase in the level of difficulty. We catch a glimpse of the stress and strain it entailed both physically and emotionally as Jesus calls those years "My trials" (Lk.22:28), a characterization which does much to explain the tremendous demands made upon Him during that time, especially in terms of the [potentially and ultimately] violent opposition He constantly encountered from the hostile religious establishment (e.g., Matt.12:14; Mk.3:6; Lk.6:11; Jn.5:18; 7:1; 7:19; 7:30; 7:32; 7:44; 10:39; 11:53):

Since then we too [like the believers of chapter 11] have such a large audience of witnesses surrounding us [both men and angels], let us put off every hindrance – especially whatever sins habitually affect us – and run with endurance the race set before us, turning our gaze unto Jesus, the originator and completer of our faith, who, for the joy set before Him, endured the shame of the cross, treating it with despise, and took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God. ***Keep in mind all the terrible opposition He endured against Himself at the hands of sinful men***, so as not to grow sick at heart and give up.

Hebrews 12:1-3

⁵² Our Lord's responsibilities to His family (mother, brothers and sisters; cf. Matt.12:46) did not end when He began to proclaim the gospel publicly either, and we may be sure He had made extensive preparations to ensure their well-being while He was engaged in full-time ministry. Still, His concern for them and the need to keep this obligation in proper balance with His calling was no doubt an additional load upon Him (Matt.13:55; cf. Matt.12:46), especially since Joseph had probably died by this time so that Jesus was head of the household. During the wedding banquet at Cana, Joseph is not mentioned while Mary is prominent in the story (Jn.2:1-11); we may add the fact that from the cross some of Jesus' last words involve making arrangements for the care and support of the mother of His humanity (i.e., entrusting her to John would have been unnecessary were Joseph still alive: Jn.19:26-27).

b) Psychological Pressures: In addition to being divine, our Lord was (and is) a perfect human being – but He was even so a *true* human being during all of His years here on earth, and that meant He had, in addition to a physical body that experienced fatigue, genuine human emotions that experienced the entire range of what we feel, albeit without sin. Our Lord learned early on how to control His feelings and how to interpret (in terms of the truth of the Word of God) the events which affected them. This does not mean, however, that He did not experience emotional pain, for He certainly did (and at times He expressed it righteously; e.g., Matt.17:17; Lk.22:48; etc.). Therefore we should not in any way imagine that life was somehow unreal for our Lord, that He didn't know the pressures of the heart that full often bear down upon us much more heavily than any physical pressure ever could. Indeed, the emotional pressures with which He had to deal were not only more intense than the ones we have to confront; in many instances they were unique to Him.

- The pressure of dealing with severe disrespect although being the Son of God:

(1) Who has believed our report? And to whom has the Arm of the Lord (i.e., the Messiah) been revealed? (2) For He grew up before Him like a suckling plant, like a root [springing up] from dry ground. He had no [particular] handsomeness that we should take note of Him, no [obvious] charisma that we should be taken with Him. (3) [On the contrary,] He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with suffering. Like a person people hide their faces from, He was despised, and we did not hold Him of any account.

Isaiah 53:1-3

The gospels of course are replete with examples of this pressure. Jesus, who might have punished His enemies severely on many occasions, consistently and perfectly bore up under the completely unwarranted disdain with which He constantly had to contend. Indeed, on one occasion when His disciples asked to bring about what they felt to be a just retaliation for an exceptional slight, He roundly rebuked them (Lk.9:51-55). Although fully recognizing His truly exalted status, Jesus walked through this world in complete humility, refusing to react to the opinions or expectations of others, and taking into account only what the Father thought (where we would be almost certain to react; compare Mk.15:5 with Ps.39:1-3). In this our Lord showed us by example what it really means to “not be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of your thinking” (Rom.12:2).

- The pressure of coping with poor response to His ministry:

(60) On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” (61) Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? (62) What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! (63) The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. (64) Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. (65) He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the

Father has enabled him.” (66) From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

John 6:60-66 NIV

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, she who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her. How many times I wanted to gather your children together like a bird [gathers] her own chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”

Luke 13:34

As can be seen from these and many other like passages, while our Lord expresses honest disapproval of all failure to accept the truth, He never allowed Himself to get overly or unreasonably frustrated with negative response (of which there was much; cf. Ps.118:22; Is.49:4), nor was He ever carried away by the superficial and transient positive responses His ministry often engendered (cf. Lk.11:27-28; Jn.6:15). For thousands would sing “Hosanna” in His Name, only to turn away very soon thereafter and demand His crucifixion (compare Jn.12:37 with Acts 1:15). Jesus knew well what was truly in man (Jn.2:25), and never allowed human responsiveness or lack thereof to affect His following of the course His Father had laid out for Him.

- The anticipation of the cross:

(37) And having taken along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (i.e., James and John), He began to be distressed and sorely troubled. (38) Then He said to them, “My heart is filled with distress to the point of death.”

Matthew 26:37-38a (cf. Mk.14:33-34)

This verse records the crushing anxiety bearing down on our Lord hours before His arrest and crucifixion, but the burden of anticipation of the cross – the bearing of the sins of the world in the darkness more than the trials and crucifixion itself – was one which He had to bear His entire life. And while we may not properly understand the pressure this coming crucible exerted upon Him daily (since after all we can only dimly appreciate what it took and what it entailed to be judged for sins of the world), the fact is that scripture records this aspect of our Lord’s first advent as significant (cf. Mk.10:38; Matt.16:21; Lk.9:22; 9:44; 13:32-33; 17:25; 18:31-34; Jn.12:27).

(49) I came to cast a fire upon the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled! (50) But I have a baptism to undergo [first], and how I am pressed until it be completed!

Luke 12:49-50

- The challenge of self-restraint:

Then Jesus replied and said, “O you unbelieving and perverse generation! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you?”

Matthew 17:17

This passage is exceptional because it is one of the few places where our Lord gives vent to legitimate and righteous indignation. Yet, as in the case of His legitimate, necessary, and mild reproofs to His earthly mother (Lk.2:49; Jn.2:4; cf. Lk.11:27-28), this correct assessment of the situation is followed by gracious and miraculous intervention, true testimonies to the incredible patience of our Lord, who on innumerable occasions had ample reason to react adversely. Unlike the rest of us, however, our Lord's testing in this area of self-restraint was indeed unique. For not only would the temptation to angry reaction and summary action in response be understandable in His case (since He was and is perfect, and as a result was always dealing with others being "in the wrong"), but also He was capable of commanding the powers of God to redress any injustice, slight, offense or attack that might come His way. This sort of behavior was not in the Fathers plan for the first advent (cf. Lk.9:51-55; the second will be quite another matter), but since Jesus had the power at His finger-tips, restraining Himself on this score moment by moment day by day throughout His entire earthly life was an accomplishment indeed (for which of us if invested with such power could refrain completely from self-vindication for even a single day?).

(14) After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." (15) Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.
John 6:14-15 NIV

Akin to the need to show perfect self-restraint in regard to rendering judgment was the similar necessity not to be swept up in the popular enthusiasm which came His way as a result of His miracles. Even Herod desired to see Him because "he hoped to see him perform some miracle" (Lk.23:8). Rather than craving celebrity as the rest of the human race does almost without exception, our Lord eschewed it as the passage above shows, and went to great lengths to avoid it as far as He possibly could (Matt.8:4; 9:30-31; 12:16; 14:13-14; Mk.1:43-45; 3:20; 8:26; 9:30; Lk.4:42-44; 5:15-16; 5:19).⁵³ For Jesus knew full well that the approbation of human beings is about as stable as the wind; He was looking not for human approval but to please His heavenly Father (e.g., Matt.26:42; Lk.11:2; Jn.4:34; 5:30; 6:38).

(1) Behold *my Servant* – I will support Him. My chosen One – my soul (i.e., heart) takes pleasure in Him. I have placed my Spirit upon Him. He will bring forth justice for the nations. (2) He will not cry out nor will He lift up His voice in the street.
Isaiah 42:1-2

⁵³ cf. also Mk.8:28: the fact that people think Jesus might be "John" risen from the dead (Herod included) indicates that John was still *the* celebrity up until his death, a fact that gave our Lord "cover" to accomplish what He did without being fatally conspired against. After John's death, the celebrity factor began to remove Jesus' freedom of movement and resulted in ever increasing hostility from the power-structure in Judea.

c) Supernatural Assaults: Though little recorded outside of the temptation in the wilderness (treated above), and the devil's role in orchestrating Judas' betrayal (covered below), the intensity of demon opposition in the case of our Lord (and no doubt countervailing action by elect angels), must have been the most intense in world history. In short, our Lord Jesus met with stiff resistance in every good thing He did – and everything He did was good.

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him *until an opportune time*.

Luke 4:13 NIV

2) The Teaching Ministry of Jesus Christ: The first thing to note about the three and a half year public ministry of our Lord is that Jesus was *always* teaching (Matt.4:23; 5:2; 7:28-29; 9:35; 11:1; 13:54; 21:23; 26:55; Mk.1:22; 2:13; 4:1; 6:2; 6:34; 8:31; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:35; 14:49; Lk.4:15; 4:31; 5:3; 5:17; 6:6; 13:10; 13:22; 19:47; 20:1; 21:37; 23:5; Jn.6:59; 7:14; 7:28; 8:20; 8:28; 18:20). His life was a perfect model to all who cared to notice then and still is for all who care to read about Him today. Everything He did and said, whether set in a formal teaching venue or not, was perfectly considered in order to communicate God's truth in a flawless fashion.

a) Organization and Logistics: As hinted at above, our Lord probably prepared for this ministry on the home-front on the one hand by taking steps to ensure Mary's well-being, and on the other the family business was no doubt set on a stable footing sufficient for the following three and a half years. By way of contrast, our Lord's "organization for combat" in personal terms is striking. For it would seem that other than the sandals on His feet and the clothes on His back, He had very little if anything to bring to this ministry in a material way.⁵⁴ Spiritually, however, He carried more precious possessions in His heart than anyone before or since, for He had put the Word of God first in His life at all times, and was now thoroughly prepared to minister it in the unique and glorious way that scripture records, becoming the Father's "Light to the world", and revealing the one true way of salvation. There is certainly a lesson for us in this, for the world assumes that without significant (or even prodigious) logistical support, most efforts of ministry ought not even be attempted. Jesus put the objective first, and let His heavenly Father and ours take care of the details. Of course it should go without saying that, for such an approach to be successful, both an extremely close walk with God (so that there is no doubt about what His will really is), and a high level of personal spiritual maturity are absolutely essential.

This approach of traveling extremely light demonstrates a level of reliance upon God reminiscent of the Exodus when the children of Israel were commanded to leave Egypt in haste, an event memorialized in the Passover command to eat that meal "with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste" (Ex.12:11 NIV); and this

⁵⁴ Our Lord may have had some minimal resources or the means to earn them to support Himself during the early days in Galilee (in Capernaum, for example), and to travel (to John's place of baptizing, for example), or else He may have stayed with supporters of His ministry. In any case, His resources were beyond meager by any standard.

indeed is the same attitude of mind that all followers of Jesus Christ ought to have, prepared to serve and follow Him apart from worldly hindrances “with your feet shod in the readiness [to serve] the gospel of peace” (Eph.6:15). It also demonstrates that even with exceptional support from God, we are not meant to ignore earthly realities entirely, as if they didn’t exist (i.e., even the payment of the temple tax required Peter to “work” after a fashion, doing what he knew how to do best in fishing for it: Matt.17:27).⁵⁵ The disciples had a common purse (which Judas kept, Jn.12:6; and which was used to buy necessities such as the requirements of the Passover: Jn.13:29), indicating that the ministry was supported by others (most of whom were apparently women: Lk.8:3; 10:38-40; Jn.11), who generously gave of their resources. We have suggested above that our Lord “saved up” for this ministry, and we probably see an example of this in the colt provided for His triumphant entry into Jerusalem on “Palm Sunday” (i.e., our Lord had no doubt provided for this necessity ahead of time in order to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9; cf. Matt.21:1-7). Even the 72 who are sent out with deliberately negligible resources (Matt.10:9; Mk.6:8; Lk.10:4) are told to rely on the provision of those to whom they will minister (a situation which would change rather dramatically during apostolic times: cf. Lk.22:35-36). Thus we see in our Lord’s ministry the proper balance we are to maintain during our own walk through this world: utilizing the means of this world without being subject to them, and in all things putting complete faith in the One who provides them, our heavenly Father.

b) Plan and Purposes: The very plan of God for us all, of course, can be summed up in Jesus Christ. We exist for Him and He cast His lot with us, becoming a human being and dying for our sins on the cross. Therefore on the most important level, the purpose for His ministry is as obvious as the plan behind it, namely, the offering of the Savior of the world to the world in order to save the world. But our Lord could have come in glory, and glory so blinding that denying who and what He was and is would have been an impossible feat for any mortal human being to accomplish. Instead, like the parables with which He often taught, our Lord’s personal truth and glory was shielded to a very great degree, so great in fact that although He was and is the Son of God, it was (and still is) possible for human beings to ignore that fact and even to deny it.⁵⁶ More than that, the reality of Him, who He really is, is still masked today behind the noise and fury of this present decaying world to such an extent that only those who choose to seek for the truth of Him find it, responding to invitations God has placed at every turning point

⁵⁵ So while the disciples “left all” to follow Jesus (Lk.18:28; cf. Lk.5:11), the exceptional catch of fish reported at Luke 5:4-11 – just after which they “left all” – probably kept the families of Peter, James and John in good stead for some time (God provides!).

⁵⁶ This conforms with the principle of being careful not to “cast your pearls before swine”; cf. Mk.4:11-12: “The mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those outside everything is in parables so that, ‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding, lest they turn and be forgiven’” (cf. Matt.13:34 NIV: “Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables”). It is important in God’s plan for us to have to demonstrate some level of commitment and determination when it comes to our response to the truth (cf. Prov.25:2a; Matt.12:16-17 with 12:19; 13:3-23).

in our lives, but which are nonetheless very easy to pass by without response if the heart is not willing.

For this reason during His earthly ministry, Jesus came not in power but in weakness, not in wealth but in poverty, not in glory but in humility. Clearly, His coming and His teaching were signs, truth whispered in the ears of all like a still, small voice, leading those willing to listen to eternal life, but allowing those who had no wish to do so to disdain Him and His message entirely. It is ever thus. Jesus could have come as the King, but He came as the servant, and the reason, the purpose behind this critical part of the plan of God, was to separate the wheat from the chaff, just as is the case today. Human history, God's plan and purpose for the human race, is all about choice, all about free will exercised in faith, and, specifically, all about separating those who truly do want God from those who in truth do not. From the standpoint of the things which appeal to the world, our Lord and His ministry had nothing to recommend them. He was not attractive in the way celebrities usually are (Is.53:2). He did not use persuasive arguments to win over the crowd (Lk.11:27-32), but instead told them truths which His listeners often found difficult or impossible to accept (Jn.6:60). He offered neither economic nor political nor social solutions or relief (Lk.19:11; Jn.6:26). In short, to hear Jesus Christ and follow Him required, demanded a very definite and definitive choosing of the invisible kingdom of God over all other earthly concerns. That has always been the choice that confronts every human being, and never was it made more clear than during our Lord's ministry. For on the one hand no one after seeing the prophecies about Him fulfilled so completely, after seeing the miracles He accomplished so dramatically, after hearing the words of truth that poured forth from Him so penetratingly, could seriously doubt that this was the Messiah, God's own Son. On the other hand, the commitment He demanded, the sinfulness He exposed, and the dismissal of worldly concerns He required ran against the grain of everything the world taught to be true then as now. As no ministry before or since, Jesus' earthly ministry, like the entire Word of God, which Word He is, was a touchstone which immediately and unswervingly proved the quality of every heart, separating the silver from the dross, and making the choice of choices clear: "Follow Me" (Jn.10:27; 12:26; 21:19; 21:22; cf. Matt.4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21; Mk.1:17; 2:13; 8:34; 10:21; Lk.5:27; 9:23; 9:59; 14:27; 18:22; Jn.1:43; Rom.15:5; 1Cor.11:1; 1Pet.2:21; Rev.14:4).

(34) Do not think that I have come to hurl peace upon the earth. I have not come to hurl peace upon the earth but a sword (of divisiveness). (35) For I have come to divide . . . 'a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (36) A man's enemies will be the members of his own household'. (37) Whoever loves his father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me, and whoever loves his son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me. (38) And whoever does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. (39) Whoever has found his life will lose it, and the one who has lost his life for My sake will find it.
Matthew 10:34-39

Jesus Christ came to earth at precisely the right time, at the "conjunction of the ages" (Heb.9:26; cf. Rom.5:6). His life and death, His person and His work, His ministry and His cross are the very pivot around which human history actually turns, for they are and He is "the plan of God".

In His three and a half year earthly ministry, the Word of truth Himself confronted the entire *cosmos*, the devil and his world system, along with the worldly power structure of His day, political and religious, head-on. In Jesus Christ, mankind saw the offer of the Messiah, God in the flesh not as imagined in self-serving human fantasy, but as He actually was and is, the power of God, the grace of God, the love of God. The heavenly kingdom of God which Jesus preached was not the worldly kingdom of earthly power and glory most men either expected or desired. Given the chance and the ability to reject Him, most did so in a clear and emphatic way as the willing crucifixion of the Messiah demonstrates so perspicuously. Thus, in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, we see the plan and purpose of God fulfilled but also encapsulated. For never was the choice of God's kingdom or the devil's more pellucidly presented than in the offer of the Son Himself to the world. With very few exceptions, the world rejected Him decisively, even though He had come into the world to save it entirely, and, at the end of these precious few years, He died on the cross to make that salvation a reality available to all mankind. Jesus' ministry therefore demonstrates the nature of the choice that faces everyone: face the truth and yield to it, gratefully accepting the mercy of God in Jesus Christ through faith, or ignore or reject it, hardening the heart to serve Satan instead. For Jesus Christ *is* the plan of God; He *is* the New Covenant which was promised in the Old and replaces the Old by fulfilling it in every way through the true sacrifice, His own death on the cross for all sin. Jesus Christ *is* God offering Himself to us, providing us with eternal life without cost to us but at the dearest possible cost to Himself, the death of His one and only Son on our behalf. In Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, therefore, we see most clearly this offer of eternal life being placed before those who ought by rights to have appreciated it the most and understood it the best, and, even so, most chose to harden their hearts against Him and the truth of His words. Yet for those few who did turn to Him and for all those who turn to Him today, the purpose and plan of His ministry is ever being fulfilled, the demonstration of the true power and wealth and glory of God in opening up the life-gate to the invisible kingdom of heaven for all who choose to enter it.

(11) He came to what was rightfully His, but those who were His did not receive Him.

(12) But as many as accepted Him, to them He gave the power to become children of God, [that is,] to those who put their faith in His Person, (13) [even those] who were not [born] of blood, or fleshly desire, or human will, but [who] were born of God (i.e., "born again").

John 1:11-13

c) Procedures and Reception: Although the procedures our Lord employed for broadcasting the offer of eternal life through faith in His Person and work were designed to reach the entire nation of Israel, even so as mentioned above the response was far from universally positive, and the faith of most of those who did respond positively at first, like the seed sown on the rocks, withered away at the first sign of trouble. But the one thing that Jesus' generation could definitely *not* say is "we never heard the message". The personal ministry of Jesus Christ served to present the Messiah to the nation and to offer Israel their king – on God's terms (rather than in terms of human expectations). One of the things the perfect presentation of the perfect ministry of the perfect Son of God makes clear is that the issue of salvation for humanity *has nothing to do* with God's provision of the message. He provides for all who seek Him, and

perfectly so. The Israelites of Jesus' day were yearning for a Messiah, and were in fact offered *the* Messiah, the message of His kingdom being delivered personally and in a dramatic and perfect way. But even so, few were willing to respond to God on God's terms and accept Him. No other period of history, no other series of events related by scripture, documents so clearly how the hardness of the human heart is a matter of free will choice, pure and simple, and how that God's provision of salvation and the information about it, the gospel, has therefore been perfect and perfectly designed in the case of every human being who has ever lived. For God knows what everyone truly thinks in their heart, and how everyone will respond to the truth. Even the provision of the Truth Himself in this awesome way did not result in salvation for those determined to reject God and follow their own course instead.

(25) "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. (26) The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner."

Acts 26:25-26 NIV

Our Lord Jesus made Himself and the message of the Kingdom available to the Jewish people far and wide. He taught in their synagogues where they gathered on the Sabbath day (Matt.4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54; Mk.1:21; 1:39; 3:1; 6:2; Lk.4:15; 4:44; 6:6; 13:10; Jn.6:59), He taught in the temple and made Himself and His message available during the major festivals when Jews from throughout Judea, Galilee, and the entire world came to worship at Jerusalem (Matt.26:55; Mk.14:49; Lk.19:47; 21:37; 22:53; Jn.18:20; cf. Matt.21:14; 21:23; Mk.12:35; Lk.20:1; Jn.7:14; 7:28). He taught in the cities and towns (Matt.11:21-23; Lk.10:13-15), taught on the lakeshore (Matt.13:2; Mk.4:1; Lk.5:3) and by the river Jordan (Jn.10:40-42; cf. Mk.10:1; Lk.3:3; Jn.3:22-26), taught inside and outside (Mk.6:56; cf. Mk.2:1-4), taught even in the wilderness whenever and wherever the people gathered (Matt.4:25 - 5:2; Mk.6:32-34; Lk.9:10-11; cf. Matt.14:13-14; 15:29-32; Mk.8:1-4). He filled up the countryside and the city streets with the words of God's truth, and through the spectacular nature of His ministry, the unmistakable power of both His words and His miracles, in those few short years He made the truth available to all who were in any way willing to hear it or even to give it a brief consideration, as well as to those who chose to reject it out of hand. For our Lord did not restrict Himself to a single area or a single venue or a single method: He traveled and strove and labored to the end of His strength to make the good news of the Kingdom of God available to all:

(42) And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

(43) But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." (44) And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

Luke 4:42-44 KJV

As the Messiah, the One sent to the nation of Israel to fulfill the promise of her coming King (and the prophecy of His rejection at her hands), His ministry was primarily one of offering the

Kingdom of God to His fellow countrymen. But in spite of this, wherever worthy gentiles were to be found, that is, those who “thirsted for righteousness” and the truth of eternal life, our Lord made sure through the guidance of the Spirit that they too were not denied, as can be seen from the cases of . . .

- The man of Gadarene possessed by the legion of demons (Matt.8:28ff.; Mk.5:1ff.; Lk.8:26ff.), the only one in his area willing to come to Christ (Matt.8:34; Mk.5:17; Lk.8:37).
- The Syro-Phoenician woman whose daughter was demon-possessed, to our knowledge the only person in her vicinity who responded to our Lord (Matt.15:21-28; Mk.7:24-30).
- The centurion whose faith exceeded that of anyone in Israel (Matt.8:5-13; Lk.7:1-10).
- The village of Samaritans whose faith response put Jewish towns to shame (compare Jn.4:4-42 with Matt.11:21-23).

A few words also need to be said about the specific procedures adopted by our Lord in the conduct of His unique ministry. First, from the early days (though not from the very start; compare Matt.4:12 with Matt.4:18-20 and Matt.9:9), He was attended by disciples. These came in at least three groups: 1) the twelve selected by our Lord (Matt.4:18-22; Mk.1:16-20; Lk.5:2-11; 6:12-16; Jn.1:35-42); 2) the seventy-two selected by our Lord (Lk.10:1ff.); 3) other seriously committed believers who were “called” to follow Him with some degree of consistency and dedication (Matt.8:18-22; Lk.9:57-62; cf. Matt.5:1). These last were not members of the official inner circle, but are to be distinguished from the crowds who showed up to hear Him and to benefit from His miracles on any given day. The possession of a cadre of disciples was certainly not an unprecedented thing for a prophet (cf. John: Matt.9:14; and Elijah: 2Kng.2), so that we should not be surprised to see them attending *the* Prophet. However, while it is certainly true that part of the reason for the selection of the two innermost groups had to do with ministry as in the sending out of the 12 (Matt.10:1ff.) and the 72 (Lk.10:1ff.), our Lord’s choice of *all* of these individuals was for their benefit and the later benefit of the Church as a whole (rather than to provide administrative or logistical support for Himself). Simply put, Peter, James, John and the rest, named and unnamed, benefitted greatly from their close association with our Lord (although less than they should have but undoubtedly more than we would have), and through their constant attendance upon Him, hearing His every word and observing His every deed, were being prepared for the apostolic ministries they would in a few short years shoulder themselves. For the Church is built upon the Rock, Jesus Christ (Matt.16:18), and He personally trained the twelve apostles and these other early “pillars” who, in company with the Old Testament prophets, embraced the Cornerstone and provided the rest of the foundation for the Church of Jesus Christ.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Paul, Judas’ true replacement, constitutes the most notable exception to this, of course, though He did have a very detailed epiphany of our Lord (Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-21; 26:9-23). His

(19) So then, you are no longer strangers and hangers-on, but you are fellow citizens and fellow members of the household of God, (20) established upon *the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself the cornerstone*, (21) in whom the entire structure is in the process of being riveted together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, (22) in whom you too are being built up into a dwelling place of God by the Spirit.
Ephesians 2:19-22

As would also be the case with the apostles, the synagogues throughout Judea and Galilee were an important venue for our Lord's propagation of the good news of the coming kingdom of God and the salvation that was about to be provided to all through faith in Himself (Matt.4:23; 9:35; 12:9; 13:54; Mk.1:21; 1:39; 3:1; 6:2; Lk.4:15; 4:44; 6:6; 13:10; Jn.6:59). Since these "places of coming together" (the meaning of the Greek word) were to be found in every major community, with, in contrast to the many churches and denominations in our present day, no distinction made between the people of God (i.e., whether Pharisee, Sadducee, Essene etc., except of course for the distinction still operative at that time between Jew and gentile), it was imperative for the message to be disseminated in these formal local assemblies as much as it was necessary to do so during the major collective assemblies in Jerusalem. For by proclaiming the truth of salvation in local and national gatherings, and in settings formal and informal, all excuse was removed: no one alive and of age during Jesus' day will be able to say at the judgment "but I didn't know". In contrast to present day Jewish practice and in great distinction to that of almost all Christian churches, the synagogues of Jesus' day offered a prime opportunity for addressing the local body of Israel whose custom it was to gather twice every Sabbath (and often at least once during the week as well), but without the presence of any formal teaching or sermonizing (apart from the regular reading of the Law and the Prophets). As Schürer remarks, "Strangely enough, [in the synagogues of Jesus' day] no one was nominated to conduct worship proper: the reading of the Scriptures, preaching and public prayer were still performed by the members of the congregation themselves, which accounts for Jesus (and Paul) being able to speak in various synagogues . . ."⁵⁸ Thus, unlike today, it was possible for our Lord and later for His apostles to make at least an initial presentation of the truth without prior vetting of their message by the ruler or elders of the congregation. So while later rejection was possible (and typical), no claim could be made of a lack of information.

(15) [Jesus] taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. (16) He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the

diligence and dedication beyond the measure of even these other great believers without our Lord's direct tutelage should encourage us to take heart in the understanding of just how much can be accomplished by attention to the written Word, the very thinking of the Living Word, our Savior Jesus Christ (1Cor.2:16).

⁵⁸ The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ 2nd (Edinburgh 1973) v. II, pp. 433-434.

synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. (17) The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: (18) “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, (19) to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (20) Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, (21) and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 4:15-21 NIV

Our Lord was of course unique in every way, and one of the ways He gained a hearing outside of the formal assembly of the synagogue for His unique ministry was through His performing of miracles. Jesus’ raising of the dead, His curing of leprosy, His expulsion of all manner of demons, His restoring of sight to the blind, His multiplication of the loaves and the fishes, His turning of the water into wine – the world would not be able to contain the books which could be written about all the wonders He wrought (Jn.21:25)! Yet the performance of such exceptional miracles was for Him problematic. For Jesus did not seek His own glory but the glory of the One who sent Him (Jn.7:18; 8:50; 8:54). He did not do miracles to call attention to Himself, but *only* to gain a hearing for the Word of God, and in His perfection kept Himself from all arrogance and pride that might attend such marvelous gifts were you or I in possession of them. Thus His only desire in accomplishing these miraculous works of healing and the like was the furtherance of the Father’s plan, giving authority to the message of the Kingdom with which He had been entrusted (Matt.13:58; Mk.1:39). Therefore the celebrity and enthusiasm which inevitably tended to accompany these dramatic happenings had a great potential downside as well (as when those who had eaten of the miraculously multiplied bread and fish wanted to make Him king by force: Jn.6:15), so that on more than one occasion our Lord instructed beneficiaries of His miracles *not* to bruit abroad the wonders He had performed, precisely so that over-ebullient false enthusiasm might not hamper His true purpose (cf. Lk.8:56). Even so, we see clearly enough in the stark contrast between the loud shouts of “Hosanna!” when He entered Jerusalem before that last Passover and the roars of “Crucify him!” a few days later the true value of celebrity-induced enthusiasm. Our Lord understood this only too well (cf. Jn.2:25), and there is certainly a lesson to be learned from this for all who minister the Word of God: it is the Word received in the heart which is important; all superficial expressions of response no matter how enthusiastic are likely to be as ephemeral as the morning mist.

d) Actions Reactions: Because He was unwilling to compromise the truth in any way – indeed, He *is* the Truth – it was inevitable that our Lord’s ministry was going to produce a reaction in those who had long ago rejected the truth for the sake of their own positions, whether secular or religious (and often a violent one at that, Ps.119:161 with Jn.15:25; Ps.35:19; 69:4; cf. Is.52-53; Jn.8:59). For our Lord’s ministry of undiluted truth threatened those comfortable positions by stripping away their patina of false authority and exposing their hypocrisy on every hand. Challenged as to their true motivations, shown up to be false and dissembling, it was little wonder that, like all of the false prophets who had preceded them, these “wicked husbandmen” would soon seek to destroy the source of that challenge (Matt.21:33-41; Mk.12:1-9; Lk.20:9-16).

For our Lord's authority came from the Father, but the religious establishment of His day had become so completely divorced from the truth that their only authority was a pseudo-authority based entirely upon the positions they held and the legalistic traditions they maintained, traditions which obscured the spiritual realities which the Law was intended to teach (cf. Matt.23:1-26). Our Lord cut straight to the heart of this particular point when challenged as to His authority by asking His accusers about their position on John the baptist's ministry, thus forcing them to plead ignorance rather than admit the truth: they were not at all concerned with God, only with their own positions (Matt.21:25; Mk.11:30; Lk.20:4).

In fact, to anyone with a solid understanding of the scriptures based upon the truth, our Lord's authority was plain to see. The miracles He did substantiated that authority completely (cf. Jn.10:25-38), and everything He taught is paralleled in and by the Old Testament scriptures (e.g., compare Matt.5:5 with Zeph.3:12). It is worth considering for a moment just how brilliant Our Lord's perfect teaching was. He was kind while at the same time completely straight-forward and honest. He always found a way to say what was right yet without at the same time casting "pearls before swine" (cf. Prov.23:9). He had a perfect way of piercing the heart of every listener without making the issue unnecessarily personal (or having others take it that way). As in the example of the Matthew 21:23-37 passages referenced above, our Lord's words always cut right to the quick, and in just a few words, Jesus was ever able to unveil people's true motivations. This was true because in everything He said, He always kept to the main issue at hand, namely, of the need for turning to God and following Him (through following the One He had sent). In facing the Person of Jesus Christ come in the flesh and in hearing His perfect words supported by undeniable miracles, all of His contemporaries were made to face the issue of life and death with crystal clarity, for He made that choice unmistakably clear in each and every case without any possibility of an honest mistake. This perfect standard of teaching required complete honesty on the part of the Practitioner (and does much to explain why His simple words are so much more powerful and so indescribably different than those of anyone else). To accomplish this perfect presentation of the truth of the Word required a complete rejection of flattery or any personal agenda (Matt.22:15-22; Lk.11:27; Jn.6:15); it allowed for no bitterness or for hurt feelings even when these were warranted through foolish rejection of the truth and self-serving invective, slander and mis-characterization of what our Lord was doing for us all and was about to do on the cross. It required a complete rejection of and mastery over the sorts of temptations to which the rest of us would inevitably fall prey, desire for personal honor and glory, desire for positive responses and the avoidance of negative ones, and the urge to retaliate when wronged, slandered and bitterly opposed (especially galling in His case since there was not a trace of legitimacy to support anything but humble appreciation and awe). Jesus had infinitely more claim to a worshipful response from everyone than anyone else before or since, and yet He had to repudiate His natural feelings when this was not forthcoming and persevere in a completely professional way despite such unprecedented "opposition by sinners against Himself" (Heb.12:3). Our Lord's unique ministry required, in the face of the unique reactions it engendered, perfect humility, wisdom, and self-control in order to deliver what He did, the absolute truth about the righteousness of God and how to attain it through faith in Himself.

e) Form and Content of Jesus' Teaching: Jesus is the Logos, the living Word of God in Person (Jn.1:1-14). Further, the content of God's truth is called in scripture "the mind of Christ" (ministered by the Holy Spirit: 1Cor.2:16). So while "red-letter" editions of the Bible which highlight Jesus' "own" words have their place, we should not be misled by them so as to forget that every word of scripture, every "jot and tittle", is – as originally penned – the precise message God intended the world to have about Jesus Christ, through Jesus Christ, and for Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ is the Word, and all the words of scripture are His. As indicated above, there is no teaching of Jesus from the gospels which is not paralleled in the Old Testament (e.g., compare 1Kng.8:59 with Matt.6:11 and Lk.11:3) and in the New Testament epistles (e.g., compare Jn.17:17 with Eph.4:24). While all three of these major topical divisions of scripture have their own unique ways of expressing things, the content of the truth they express is completely consistent in every way. There is, it is true, a general trend in scripture toward progressive revelation, so that, for example, what we know about the end times from Daniel is greatly expanded in our Lord's "Olivet Discourse" (Matt.24-25; Mk.13; Lk.21), and then even more so by the book of Revelation (that is, "The Revelation *of Jesus Christ*"). But this expansion is one of detail only, not one of essential truth: Daniel, our Lord, and John teach precisely the same things in every respect (when these passages are correctly understood); it is only that through God's plan of expanding revelation over time we are given to know more details in each successive wave of the unveiling that truth. Thus Jesus didn't "change" anything; rather He fulfilled everything, and everything is fulfilled in Him:

(17) Do not assume that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets: I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. (18) For what I say to you is the truth: Until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota or one serif will pass away from the Law – until everything has come to pass (i.e., the shadows of the Law fulfilled on the cross).
Matthew 5:17-18

For Christ is the fulfillment (lit., "end") of the Law, resulting in righteousness for everyone who believes [in Him].
Romans 10:4

So whether it be the Law which foreshadowed Christ, the teachings of Jesus, the incarnate Word, or the detailed exposition of the truth ministered through the Spirit in the rest of the New Testament (cf. Jn.14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15), the message is one message, unified, indivisible, unchanging, and complete, the words of God Himself which witness to the Word Himself, the audible proclamation of the truth and the only means by which men can know the truth.⁵⁹

(4) The Lord God has given Me a tongue of those who have been [fully] instructed [in the truth], that I may know the right words [of truth] to encourage the weary. He arouses His

⁵⁹ As John 21:25 reminds us, the teachings and miracles of our Lord's earthly ministry are beyond voluminous, so that space and time do not allow for a study of this sort even to list them with appropriate commentary, let alone do each of them full justice.

Word [within Me]. [And] every morning He awakens Me. He awakens My ear[s] to listen like [the ears of] those who have been [fully] instructed [in the truth]. (5) The Lord God has opened My ear[s], and I have not refused [instruction]. I have not turned away [nor gone] backward.

Isaiah 50:4-5

“My teaching is not My own, but belongs to Him who sent Me.”

John 7:16

(38) “I am telling you what *I have seen in My Father’s presence*. So you also do what you have heard from your father.” (39) They answered and said to Him, “Our father is Abraham.” Jesus said to them: “If you were children of Abraham, you would be doing the things Abraham [did]. (40) But as things actually stand, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth *which I have heard from God*.”

John 8:38-40a

(44) He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in He who sent Me. (45) And he who sees Me, sees the One who sent Me. (46) I have come into the world as a light, in order that everyone who believes in Me may not abide in darkness. (47) But if anyone hears My words and does not hold on to them, I do not condemn him. For I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world. (48) He who rejects Me and does not receive my words has someone who judges him. The Word which I spoke, that [is what] will judge him on the last day. (49) For I did not speak of my own accord, but the One who sent Me, the Father Himself gave Me instruction as to what I should say and what I will [yet] speak. (50) And I know that His instruction is eternal life. Therefore, as to the things which I speak, just as the Father has spoken to Me, that is how I speak.

John 12:44-50

“For the words *You gave Me*, [Father,] I have given to them, and they received them and have come to know truly that I came from you, and they have believed that You sent Me.”

John 17:8

j. The Last Passover: The final year of our Lord’s three and a half year ministry is often referred to as “the year of opposition”, since it was between the penultimate and final Passovers that our Lord experienced a noticeable intensification of hostility from the Judean political and religious ruling classes (i.e., the Sadducees and the Pharisees). It should be noted that John was put to death by Herod just before that penultimate Passover (Jn.11:55ff.),⁶⁰ and that this event was one important factor in the increased resistance to our Lord. For during his lifetime (even while in prison for its final two years), John’s “celebrity” served to run a sort of “interference” on behalf of our Lord (Matt.11:10; Mk.1:2-3; Lk.7:27; Jn.4:1-3), giving Jesus a freedom of action he

⁶⁰ See the chart, “A Comparative Chronology of the Ministries of John the baptist and Jesus Christ”, in part 5 of the Satanic Rebellion series.

would not have had otherwise (since, without the “cover” John provided, He and His ministry would have been the sole focus of the ire of the religious establishment toward the spiritual revival then underway). A second major factor in the intensification of the resistance was the intensified nature of our Lord’s ministry. It is no accident that the bulk of the content of the gospels deals with this final year (i.e., roughly speaking, everything from Matthew 10, Mark 5, Luke 9 and John 6 forward), and it is in this final year that the most dramatic miracles take place (i.e., the feeding of the five and the four thousand, walking on the water, the transfiguration, the healing of the man born blind, the raising of Lazarus), and that the widest and most obvious evangelism takes place on the part of Jesus’ disciples (i.e., the sending out of the twelve [at its inception]: Matt.9:35-11:1; Mk.6:6-13; Lk.9:1-6; and of the seventy-two: Lk.10:1-20). This period of the most intense and growing resistance in the face of the most dramatic miracles and teaching on the part of our Lord and his disciples serves to demonstrate the implacable hostility of the world (in ultimate service to the present ruler of the world, Satan) towards the truth: the clearer the truth is made, the more threatening the source of truth is seen to be. Moreover, the amazing events of that final year brought home vividly the truth of Jesus’ proclamation that “the Kingdom of God is near!”, a kingdom of light which is destined to sweep away the kingdom of darkness to which our Lord’s opponents had given their allegiance, and whose defeat they fearfully understood meant the loss of their exalted positions (cf. the parable of the tenants: Matt.21:33-44; Mk.12:1-11; Lk.20:9-18; cf. Matt.27:18; Mk.15:10; Lk.13:17):

- The Feeding of the 5000 and the 4000 (Matt.14:15-21; Mk.6:35-44; Lk.9:12-17; Jn.6:4-13; and Matt.15:32-38; Mk.8:1-9 respectively): The King’s power to provide for His subjects demonstrated.
- Walking on the Water (Matt.14:24-33; Mk.6:45-52; Jn.6:16-21): The King’s power over time and space demonstrated.
- The Transfiguration (Matt.17:1-8; Mk.9:2-8; Lk.9:28-36): The glory of the King and His Kingdom prefigured.⁶¹
- The Sending of the 72 (Lk.10:1-24): The Kingdom Proclaimed as Imminent; the 12 proclaimed and showed its power; this is a “far and wide” proclamation (prefiguring Rev.14:6) that takes away the argument “we never heard” (cf. Rom.10:18-21)
- The Healing of the Man Born Blind (Jn.9:1-41): The King’s revelation of the truth for all willing to see demonstrated.
- The Raising of Lazarus (Jn.11:1-16): The King’s power over life and death demonstrated; His power to grant eternal life in place of eternal death prefigured.

⁶¹ See Coming Tribulation, part 3A, section V.5, “The Transfiguration”.

The scriptural treatment of the final week before the crucifixion begins with Mary's anointing of Jesus in Bethany (i.e., the "six days" of Jn.12:1),⁶² and nearly everything that transpires serves to demonstrate ahead of time the essential truth of which Jesus has been attempting to forewarn His disciples throughout this final phase of His first advent (e.g., Matt.16:21-26; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; Mk.8:31-37; 9:30-32; 10:32-33; Lk.9:22-25; 9:43-45; 18:31-34), namely, that the Messiah had to come twice, a second time to reign in glory (as all were expecting Jesus to do now in short order), but a first time as well, in order to die for the sins of the world and purchase a "people for Himself" to share His kingly reign forever (Rev.5:9; cf. Rev.1:5-6).

1) The anointing at Bethany: The first of these events was Jesus' anointing by Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus (similar to but to be distinguished from an earlier occurrence related at Lk.7:36ff.).⁶³ As Jesus Himself tells us, this was very significant not only because it prefigured His death and burial (i.e., anointed head *and* foot as in burial preparations: Matt.26:6-13; Mk.14:3-9; Jn.12:1-8; cf. the holy anointing oil: Ex.30:22-33), but because it demonstrated that while none of His disciples seemed to understand, at least Mary did realize full well that our Lord was about to give His life on our behalf, so that "wherever in the entire world this good news [of the Kingdom] is proclaimed, what this woman has done shall also be mentioned to remind of her [faith]" (Matt.26:13; cf. Mk.14:9). This incident and the outrage it initially caused among the disciples (because of the "waste" of money involved) we may take to be the "final straw" for Judas who realized great personal monetary loss from the anointing (helping himself to the common purse as he often did: Jn.12:4-6). For the nard employed was of such high quality that it was actually liquid (and thus would have fetched a princely price).⁶⁴

2) The triumphal entry (Matt.21:1-17; Mk.11:1-11; Lk.19:29-44; Jn.12:12-19): On that glorious future day of days, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, will enter Jerusalem from the east in glory, mounted on a heavenly white charger, spattered with the blood of His enemies just dispatched at the battle of Armageddon (Rev.19:11-13). On the

⁶² The chronology given here follows Thomas and Gundry's assessment that John places these events in a strict chronological order in contrast to the thematic placement in the synoptic gospels (as is often the case): A Harmony of the Gospels by R.L. Thomas and S.N. Gundry (Chicago 1978).

⁶³ Although Luke does not mention her by name, the similarity of these two unique acts (she uses tears in addition to ointment to wash Jesus' feet in this earlier instance), the fact that the costliness of the act reduces the number of possibilities (i.e., no woman of ordinary means could afford the expense of the ointment on either occasion), and the fact that Simon is the host in both cases, argue for the woman in both cases being Mary of Bethany, otherwise known as "Mary Magdalene".

⁶⁴ This is the meaning here of the use of the word *myron* ("perfume", i.e., a liquid as opposed to a rub) in all three accounts, and in Mark 14:3 of the word *pistike* "genuine", i.e., as opposed to second-rate varieties.

previous day being considered here, only hours before He would pour out His life's blood for the sins of the world (the symbol which encapsulates Jesus' spiritual death in the darkness to atone for the sins of all mankind), our Lord rode into Jerusalem in humility, mounted on a donkey colt with an adult animal in tow, the pair of animals symbolizing both the purpose of this present advent as being different from the expectations of the populace, and also that it would be followed in the future by the advent of glory the people anticipated and yearned for then. In the symbolism here, our Lord's being mounted on the colt indicates that the cross comes first since a young and untrained animal would be unsuitable for battle (i.e., for Armageddon), but is on the contrary symbolic of purity and innocence recalling our Lord's sinlessness and suitability for sacrifice on behalf of the sins of the world.

(10) The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. (11) He (i.e., Judah, and thus the Messiah) will tether *his donkey* to a vine, *his colt* to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine (2nd Adv.; cf. Rev.19:13-15), his robes in the blood of grapes (1st Adv.; cf. Rev.7:15 with Lk.22:20).

Genesis 49:10-11 NIV

Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion. Shout [for joy], daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your King will come to you. ***Righteous and victorious*** He is (2nd Adv.); ***humble*** and riding on ***a donkey***, even on ***a colt***, a donkey's foal (1st Adv.).

Zechariah 9:9

As our Lord made His way down the descent from the Mount of Olives into the Kidron valley and towards Jerusalem, the populace, many of whom would soon be calling for His crucifixion, turned out to see the prophet they hoped might be the conquering Messiah (cf. Matt.21:11), strewing palm branches in His path (symbolic of the Millennial Kingdom Messiah would bring)⁶⁵, and singing a victory Psalm which indeed spoke of Him, but missing entirely the symbolism even therein which spoke of the necessity for the Messiah first to suffer and die for the sins of the world.

(19) [Messiah speaks:] "Open for Me the gates of righteousness (i.e., the eastern gate of Jerusalem and the gate of the temple facing east)! I shall enter by them and praise the Lord. (20) This is the Lord's gate. The righteous will enter by it (i.e., through Christ; cf.

⁶⁵ For the symbolism of the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, see part 5 of the Satanic Rebellion series, section II.8.c.III.7, "Booths (Tabernacles)".

Jn.10:1-9). (21) I shall praise You although You humbled⁶⁶ Me (i.e., 1st Advent sufferings), for You have brought me deliverance (i.e., the victories of resurrection and Armageddon).” (22) [The chorus of celebrants responds:] “The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone! (23) This has come from the Lord, and it is wondrous to our eyes! (24) This is the Day which the Lord has made (i.e., the 2nd Advent)! Let us rejoice and delight ourselves in it! (25) Yes, Lord, *deliver us we pray* (*hoshi’ah na’ = hosanna!*) [from the Tribulation]. Yes, Lord, bless us with prosperity (i.e., the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom)! (26) Blessed be the One (i.e., the Messiah) who is coming in the Name of the Lord! We greet you all (i.e., the Messiah and His retinue) from the house of the Lord! (27) The Lord is God! And He has caused His Light to shine upon us! ***Bind up the Sacrifice with ropes to the horns of the altar*** (i.e., the inaugural memorial sacrifice of the Millennial Kingdom meant to remind of the cross).”

Psalm 118:19-27

Immediately upon entering Jerusalem that first day, our Lord went up to the temple mount and swept the court of the gentiles clean of the commercial enterprises that had turned the worship of God into a human system of monetary transactions, exactly as He had also done at the beginning of His earthly ministry (Matt.21:12-13; Mk.11:15-18; Lk.19:45-48; cf. Jn.2:13-22). This is a striking foreshadowing of what will happen in the Millennium (cf. Zech.14:21; Dan.12:10), and therefore another prophetic sign of Jesus’ Messiahship.

While they were coming back into the city from Bethany on the second day, our Lord approached a fig tree beside the road in search of fruit,⁶⁷ but, finding none, He cursed the tree which withered soon thereafter (Mk.11:13-14; 11:19-25; Matt.21:18-22).⁶⁸ The symbolism of this miracle is most important, for the tree represents Israel and her lack of productivity (cf. Micah 7:1). At the very time she should have been welcoming the Messiah with open arms and putting before His

⁶⁶ Reading ‘*anah* II in the *piel* here (rather than ‘*anah* I in the *qal*). This alternate reading, which explains much in light of the “rejection” in the next verse, does not require any change in the essential consonantal text, only a small change in its vocalization. It is understandable how the “answer” vocalization came to replace the “humbled” one, inasmuch as the latter reading presents the suffering Messiah, a concept later generations of unbelieving Jewish scholars sought to eradicate as far as possible.

⁶⁷ *n.b.*, Mark places cleansing *after* the cursing of the fig tree in his narrative, but he does actually indicate the true chronological order as can be seen in an accurate translation of Mk.11:15: “Now when they were entering Jerusalem (i.e., the previous day) and He had gone into the temple . . .”

⁶⁸ Matthew’s use of *parachrema* (Matt.21:19-20) does not necessitate that the tree withered “before their very eyes”. As Mark’s account makes clear, there was an interval between cursing and withering, but the rapidity was still clearly miraculous.

feet the fruits of her spiritual labors, she was in fact bereft of all truly godly works, and was about to crucify the One who had come to deliver her from her sins. This demonstrative sign also has ramifications for every believer's spiritual life as well, for while production for the Lord is the normal and expected result of spiritual growth, a complete lack of production is usually associated with apostasy (Jn.15:1-1-17; Heb.6:7-8).

Another symbolically important event we should note here which took place during those final days in Jerusalem was the request from certain Greeks to meet with Jesus and our Lord's response, that "unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone by itself; but if it does die, it produces much fruit" (Jn.12:20-32). Now that His prophetic ministry to the Jewish people was complete, our Lord had His face "set like flint" (Is.50:7; cf. Lk.9:51) to last through the gauntlet of abuse ahead in order to fulfill the critical objective and primary purpose of His time on earth, namely, His bearing the sins of the entire world on the cross. In the manner of the grain of wheat in His illustration, Jesus' death would produce abundant "fruit" in the streaming into the family of God people of all nations (which these curious Greeks represent).

3) The Olivet Discourse: This is the name by which our Lord's extensive teachings about "the things to come" to His disciples on the Mount of Olives in response to their question about the timing of the coming of the Kingdom is commonly known (Matt.24:1 - 25:46; Mk.13:1-37; Lk.21:5-36). It is important to note that since "the Spirit was not yet given" (Jn.7:39), many essential details of eschatology would have to wait until after Pentecost (Jn.16:12-15; and compare the description given at pre-unction Acts 1:7 with the later statements in 1Thes.5:1 and 1Jn.2:20).⁶⁹ Nevertheless, on the cusp of His departure, our Lord gave the disciples much critical information about the end times and the need for believers to stay focused on the eternal realities in order to safely negotiate the Tribulation of that future day. These same truths, moreover, would prove to be essential for enduring the days of personal tribulation ahead for all His disciples during the two millennia of the Church Age to come on the other side of His passion and resurrection. Indeed, the disciples themselves would have need of remembering and applying them carefully in only a few short hours.

4) Judas and the Sanhedrin's Plot to Kill Jesus: Just as thirty three years earlier Herod had attempted to have Jesus killed on account of the threat he perceived to his own dynasty by a genuine "King of the Jews", so also those in positions of power in Judea's political and religious establishment had long been concerned by the "threat" posed to their status by our Lord and His ministry (Matt.21:46; 26:4; Mk.12:12; 14:1; Lk.20:19; Jn.7:30; 7:44; 10:39). Their thinking is best summed up by the report John gives us of the council held just prior to our Lord's triumphal entry, where the priests, Pharisees and Sadducees equate themselves with "the nation":

⁶⁹ The reader is encouraged to refer to the extensive material on eschatology contained in the Satanic Rebellion and Coming Tribulation series. On Acts 1:7 where "not yours to *know*" is better translated "not yours to *decide*", see fn.60 in part 5 of the Satanic Rebellion.

(47) Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. “What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. (48) If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” (49) Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! (50) You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”

John 11:47-50 NIV

Shortly following this conference, orders were given for informers to be cultivated in order that Jesus might be arrested “on the sly” in order to avoid any confrontation with the crowd (Jn.11:57: cf. Matt.26:4; Mk.14:1). This explains why they were so “delighted” when Judas responded to the appeal (Mk.14:11; Lk.22:5). For, once armed with “inside information” about our Lord’s whereabouts and habits when not surrounded by the crowds, they were confident of arresting Him without instigating a possible insurrection.

What Judas’ original motivations were we can only speculate. Part of his motivation was certainly financial, seeking to make a profit out of this new phenomenon in the manner of Balaam (Jn.12:6; cf. 2Pet.2:15). In part he may also have been attracted to the excitement and the clearly miraculous nature of Jesus’ ministry. But without any question Judas was deep into apostasy and open to all manner of satanic influence – otherwise he would not have betrayed the Lord of life (1Cor.2:8), and otherwise he never would have been open to possession by the devil himself (Lk.22:3; Jn.13:27). Therefore we may be sure that Satan had his hand on Judas from the beginning, seeking to place a infiltrator into our Lord’s midst (and fulfilling a prophecy in the process: Jn.13:18). Judas had never believed in Jesus as our Lord knew only too well (cf. Jn.6:64; 6:70; 13:18), but the other disciples apparently suspected him least of all as we can surely discern from the fact that he does not even come under suspicion even after our Lord gives John and Peter such a clear sign in the dipping of the sop (Jn.13:26-28), and then essentially names him in response to his question “Is it I?”: “You have said [yourself]” (Matt.26:23-25). We may take from this that Judas put on a much more pious and respectable appearance than any of the other twelve, and it is often the case that those with the most intense corruption within have taken the greatest care to “whitewash” the outside of the tomb (as in the case of the scribes and Pharisees: Matt.23:27).

5) The Last Supper: The final Passover the night our Lord was betrayed also did much to foreshadow both His impending sacrifice on our behalf and the significant changes His victory on the cross would effect in God’s administration of His grace and His plans for His Church on earth. Passover, of course, is the premier ritual of the Old Covenant, and our Lord’s transformation of it into the one legitimate ritual of the Church Age known to us as “communion” or the “Lord’s supper” demonstrates in a most vivid and concentrated way the change of covenants which the cross was about to produce. Partaking of the Passover lamb is clearly symbolic of belief in the Lamb of God. But while this and all of the other Old Covenant rituals which made use of animal sacrifice foreshadowed the death of the Messiah for the sins of the world, Jesus’ transforming of Passover into communion transforms the shadows of ritual into

a partaking of the soon to be completed reality of salvation. For by eating the bread, His body, we express our faith in His Person – who He is, the God-man, undiminished deity and true humanity in one person forever. And by drinking the wine we express our faith in His work – what He has done for us, dying for the sins of the world and washing all our transgressions away by that death on the cross in Calvary’s darkness. Thus by partaking of “communion”, we demonstrate our faith in the “oneness” we have with Jesus Christ on the basis of what He did for us and what only He could have done for us as the perfect Messiah.

This new ritual therefore proclaims in a brilliantly simple way the essence of the difference between the two covenants. For while both the old and the new are essentially promises from God made to all who would seek Him, the old made use of shadows which looked forward to a future reality whose exact details of fulfillment were not entirely yet made clear (1Pet.1:10-12; cf. Job 17:3). But the new is completely open and perspicuous, being founded upon a reality that is already eternally set in place – indeed, the cross is *the* reality of human history, for it is the ultimate purpose and the power of all that God has ever done or will ever do in this creation (cf. Rom.1:16-17). The cross is “the good news”, because through it we have eternal life, not merely a promise from God of future deliverance (as wonderful as that was), but the proclamation from God of His satisfaction with the Person and work of His Son, through faith in whom we possess that deliverance even now as we wait for our salvation “to be revealed” (1Pet.1:5; 5:1). By giving the disciples this tangible sign of the salvation He was about to accomplish and the eternal fellowship that was about to be theirs then and is ours now through faith in Him – demonstrated to the world each time we “eat of the bread and drink of the cup” – Jesus illuminated all that had gone before, and explained the new and wondrous reality of the “better promises” of the New Covenant (Heb.8:6), better because they are based upon the actual sacrifice of Christ rather than its anticipation. It is precisely because Christ has now actually and historically paid the price for sin that Spirit could be “given” (Jn.7:39), resulting in all the marvelous Church Age gifts, the explosion of the family of God to the gentiles, and the revelation of all the precious new truths of scripture embodied in the New Testament.

(23) For [on this matter] I received [directly] from the Lord what I passed on to you, namely that on the night on which He was betrayed He took bread, (24) and having blessed it He broke it and said, “This is my body which is [offered up] on your behalf. Keep on doing this in order to remember Me.” (25) And in the same way [after eating] He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant [made] by my blood. Keep on doing this as often as you drink [it] in order to remember Me.” (26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup (i.e., partake of communion), you are proclaiming the Lord’s death [on our behalf] until He returns.

1st Corinthians 11:23-25 (cf. Matt.26:26-29; Mk.14:22-25; Lk.22:15-20; cf. Jn.6:51-59)

When they had finished, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn and went out into the night toward the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane (Matt.26:30; Mk.14:26). There in the garden our Lord offered up His last prayers of preparation before the ordeal of ordeals He was about to endure. The details of these prayers as recorded in John chapter 17 show that our Lord was most concerned about His disciples – and about us who would one day be so as well (Jn.17:6-26). The

shorter versions preserved by the synoptic writers are often misunderstood. Jesus' request for the "cup" of the cross (cf. Matt.20:22; Mk.10:38) to be taken away "***if it be thy will***" is made for our benefit, not for His. Peter's previous protestations (Matt.16:22-23; Mk.8:32-33) and many heresies since necessitated that our Lord make very clear that this cup ***could not*** be taken away – not if we were to be saved. The unmistakable distress our Lord demonstrates is also for our benefit and should be carefully contrasted with the remarkable coolness under pressure He demonstrated throughout the trials and the torture that preceded the crucifixion. For our Lord Jesus was anticipating the death He was about to die for sin (Rom.6:10) in the darkness on the cross, a weight of suffering we cannot even begin to comprehend or imagine, and one which made the sufferings He would endure prior to the redemption about to be achieved by this *spiritual* death light affliction in comparison. This is the message of the Gethsemane prayers, namely, to show us the necessity of Him going through what He was about to go through if we were to have eternal life, and to emphasize that it was His death for sin that would be the truly impossible task He was about to make possible.

k. The Trials of Christ: When He had finished praying for the third time, Jesus came again to Peter, James and John, found them sleeping, and woke them up, for He knew full well that the time had come (Jn.18:4; cf. Matt.26:36-47; Mk.14:40-43; Lk.22:46-47). Led by Judas to whom the chief priests and Pharisees had detailed them (Jn.18:3), a large multitude of Jewish irregular troops (Matt.26:47; Mk.14:43; Lk.22:47), and an entire cohort of Roman soldiers (a unit whose regular T.O. and E. complement was 600 soldiers), all armed with torches and weapons, came upon our Lord and His small group of disciples, whereupon Judas identified our Lord as the object of this illegal raid by greeting Him as "master" and embracing Him (Matt.26:49; Mk.14:45; Lk.22:48; and cf. 2Sam.20:9).⁷⁰ In the middle of the night and in darkness, set upon by overwhelming hostile forces with malicious intent, we can only imagine what fear may have risen in the hearts of our Lord's companions. But in what then occurred, Jesus demonstrated through His perfect walk with the Father that He was beyond intimidation. He possessed true "four o'clock in the morning courage" founded upon unshakeable faith as can be seen from every aspect of His handling of this crisis, and there can be no surer demonstration that the pressure our Lord felt as demonstrated for our benefit in the Gethsemane prayers had to do with bearing our sins alone. Since as followers of Jesus we truly have nothing to fear from man (Ps.56:4; 118:6), beyond all doubt the Son of God did not, and our Lord's responses to all of the events of that night and indeed to all of the events that preceded His judgment in the darkness of Calvary on our behalf show this most perspicuously. God's will would be done and no human being or group of human beings were going to be able to thwart Him.

(4) Jesus, ***knowing all that was going to happen to him***, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" (5) "Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am He," Jesus said. (And Judas

⁷⁰ i.e., *rabbi*, or "Rabbi", meaning, "my great one", precisely the greeting our Lord has told the disciples not to use for each other (Matt.23:8), but one Judas was apparently fond of using for Jesus, clearly part of his deceptive modus operandi of flattery he didn't really mean (Matt.26:25).

the traitor was standing there with them.) (6) When Jesus said, "I am He," they drew back and fell to the ground.

John 18:4-6 NIV

(51) With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. (52) "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. (53) Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? (54) *But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled* that say it must happen in this way?"

Matthew 26:51-54 (cf. Jn.18:11) NIV

Despite the impending burden of the cross and the death for the sins of the world He was about to endure, our Lord's actions and comments above reveal His complete confidence in who He was, the Son of God Himself. The mere mention of His deity caused the entire groups of attackers to fall before Him, and but a word from Him was necessary to summon an irresistible angelic force to His aid. But our Lord was determined to die on our behalf, and nothing in this world could dissuade Him from accomplishing the Father's will to our great and eternal benefit.

When our Lord had said these things, the flush of mis-directed bravery exhibited by Peter in taking up the sword ebbed away, and the disciples reacted with predictable and prophesied panic (Matt.26:31; Mk.14:27; cf. Zech.13:7), leaving our Lord to be arrested and dragged away, an eventuality He did not resist (Is.53:7-8).

(55) At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. (56) But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Matthew 26:55-56 NIV (cf. Mk.14:48-52; Lk.22:52-53)

"It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors' (Is.53:12); and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."

Luke 22:37 NIV

The Seven Trials of Christ: In biblical symbolism, while seven is the number of perfection and thus the number of God (e.g., the seventh day, the Millennium, and the seven Edens), six is the number of Man (i.e., created on the sixth day and being incomplete without the addition of the One, Jesus Christ). It is thus no accident that our Lord was made to undergo six trials at the hands of human beings before being judged in the darkness on the cross by the Father in our place. In each of these trials, Jesus was irrefutably innocent but nonetheless condemned, the perfect Lamb of sacrifice without spot or blemish being condemned to death as a substitute for our sins. And in each of the trials conducted by human agency, our Lord was not only condemned but also abused physically and mentally. Nonetheless, though we would be hard-

pressed to endure any one such of these six trials, for our Lord they were but a prelude designed to demonstrate His mettle and His perfection before the trial of trials began on the cross itself.

This gauntlet of abuse, unprecedented in human history and never to be remotely duplicated, constitutes the final prophesied humiliation of the Messiah. The suffering and humiliation of our Lord Jesus is a recurrent theme in Old Testament prophecy, and an unmistakable one at that (cf. Is.52-53), even though, because it was so “uncomfortable”, it was rejected by Jesus’ contemporaries as they rejected Jesus Himself, an outcome which was itself part of His suffering and humiliation (Ps.22:6; 118:22; Is.53:3; Mk.9:12; 1Pet.2:4). Thus the portions of scripture which prophesy this were later occasionally obscured deliberately as in the case of the incorrect traditional vocalization of Psalm 118:21 (covered in fn. #66 above under “Triumphal Entry”). We have already discussed the betrayal of our Lord (prophesied: “my companion, my close friend” Ps.55:13-14; cf. Ps.41:9), His abandonment by the disciples (prophesied: “strike the shepherd”: Zech.13:7; and see below on Peter’s three denials), and are about to consider the trials our Lord would have to endure which in terms of process and outcome could not have been further removed from any notion of basic justice (prophesied: “they hated Me without cause”: Jn.15:25; cf. Ps.35:19; Ps.69:4; Is.52:13-53:12). All of these things contributed greatly to the suffering or “passion” of our Lord to a degree that is easy to miss when merely reading about them in the comfort of our homes. Being betrayed unto death by someone you have cared about and sought to help for years is no small matter, nor is being abandoned and denied by your entire inner circle of closest companions in your hour of greatest need.

Finally, before coming to the crucifixion itself, the six trials of Christ were unquestionably a heavy load beyond anything any of us could ever hope to bear – and especially beyond anything we could hope to bear up under with perfectly sanctified behavior in the manner of our Lord. For beyond the physical suffering, the beating and the scourging, and beyond the mental anguish from the slander, blasphemy, spitting and mocking, the very fact of being condemned by a judicial proceeding, being found to be a wicked person, a lawbreaker and someone to be shunned by any decent citizen, to be set upon by an angry crowd maligning you and calling for your death, are terrible things to have to suffer, *especially* if completely untrue, unfair and unjust. For any of the rest of us, complete innocence in any matter is problematic, sinners that we are, but no one was ever more completely and demonstrably innocent of all wrong doing or of even of the appearance of it than was our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet He was condemned six times, rejected even from the consideration of clemency in favor of a genuine criminal (Barabas) by those He had come to save.

We probably will never be able to appreciate fully the emotional suffering of our Lord in all that He endured before the cross, in addition to the physical suffering to which He was subjected throughout those final hours before Golgotha, forced also to bear up under the temptation to indulge in extreme bitterness and anger, rejected, abandoned and abused *by everyone* as He was. When we add to this His mental anticipation of dying for the sins of the world, a consideration which His prayers in the garden of Gethsemane demonstrate as being out of all proportion to any of these other considerations to the point where they are not even mentioned therein (i.e., His

death for sin on the cross is the “cup” to which He refers; see above under “The Last Supper”). Nevertheless, as we consider this part of our Lord’s “passion”, it is absolutely critical for us who call ourselves Christians to understand that all these things which Christ suffered before the cross and which constitute His prophesied humiliation *did not* expiate our sins. It was the judgment of our Lord Jesus in the darkness on the cross which washed those sins away, and not the unimaginable physical and emotional sufferings that preceded the cross, the event which, from the proper divine point of view, *is* history.

Why, then, did Jesus have to go through this gauntlet of gauntlets even to get to the cross where He bore our sins “in His body on the tree” (1Pet.2:24)? Without question all of this preliminary suffering fulfilled a whole host of Old Testament prophecies (cf. Acts 13:27-29). And without question the devil did all that he possibly could to prevent Jesus from reaching the cross in a manner acceptable to the Father and as an acceptable Substitute for our sins, for that was where the victory in the unseen conflict raging around us was finally and definitively won with eternal results (Jn.16:33; Rom.14:9-10; Eph.1:19b-23; Phil.2:9-11; Col.2:15; Rev.5:5-14; cf. Eph.4:8-10).⁷¹ What we can also say, moreover, is that our Lord’s resolute and unwavering negotiation of this final gauntlet serves to provide a vivid demonstration of His boundless love for us, and for the entire world.

Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

John 13:1 KJV

For God loved the world so much that He gave [up] His only Son, [with the purpose] that everyone who believes in Him should not be lost [forever], but have eternal life [instead].

John 3:16

But short of Satan’s physical prevention of our Lord (something he was clearly not allowed to do), nothing could stop Him from carrying out the Father’s will to the end, no matter how hard, how painful, how emotionally or physically searing it proved to be, and not even when what lay beyond the gauntlet of pain and humiliation was something so incredibly impossible and horrifying that we are incapable of even dimly understanding it this side of heaven – standing judgment and dying for our sins, and for those of the entire world. In this as in everything important, Jesus is our role model, and just as He did, so we too are to carry our cross and do whatever God puts in front of us. But we can rest assured that whatever this may be it will never approach what Jesus went through, and that on the other side of whatever gauntlet we may face, even if martyrdom be our lot in the midst of the Great Tribulation to come, rather than undergoing anything like the ultimate sacrifice made by our Lord, we instead will be liberated from any further suffering and find ourselves standing before Him there in the third heaven with

⁷¹ See Coming Tribulation part 2B, “The Heavenly Prelude”, section II [b], “The Victorious Lamb”.

a “well done” for following Him and His example, “sharing the sufferings of Christ” (1Pet.4:13; cf. Rom.8:17; 2Cor.1:5; Phil.3:10; Col.1:24).

(13) Behold, My Servant will embrace the truth. He will arise on high, be lifted up, and be greatly exalted, (14) to a proportional degree that many had [previously] been appalled at Him. For His appearance had been marred beyond human [likeness], and His form more than [that of any] other man. (15) As a result, He shall sprinkle [with salvation] many gentile [nation]s. Kings will shut their mouths at [the sight of] Him. For those [gentiles] who had not been told shall see, and those [gentiles] who had not understood shall hear. (1) [But] who has believed our report? And to whom has the Arm of the Lord (i.e., the Messiah) been revealed? (2) For He grew up before Him like a suckling plant, like a root [springing up] from dry ground. He had no [particular] handsomeness that we should take note of Him, no [obvious] charisma that we should be taken with Him. (3) [On the contrary,] He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with suffering. Like a person people hide their faces from, He was despised, and we did not hold Him of any account. (4) For He took away our torments, and He shouldered our weaknesses. And yet we considered Him as [the One who had been] punished, smitten and afflicted by God. (5) But [in fact] He was made subject to torment on account of our transgressions, and He was crushed because of our collective guilt (lit., “guilts”). The punishment [required] for making peace [with God] on our behalf [fell] upon Him. Because of His wounding, we have been healed. (6) We have all gone astray like sheep. Each of us has turned to his own way. And the Lord caused the guilt of us all to strike Him. (7) Though He was oppressed and afflicted, like a lamb led to slaughter He did not open His mouth, and like a ewe before her shearers He did not open His mouth. (8) By repressive judgment He was taken away, and who gave any thought to His posterity? For He was cut off from the land of the living. He was punished for the transgression of my people. (9) And they assigned Him a grave with the wicked (pl.) and with a rich [man] in His deaths (*sic*). Not for any violence that He had done. Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. (10) For it was the Lord’s good pleasure (i.e., “will”) to crush Him, to subject Him to torment. But though you make His life a guilt offering, He will see His seed, He will lengthen His days, and the good pleasure (i.e., “will”) of the Lord will prosper in His hand. (11) [Released] from the trouble [inflicted] upon His life, He will [again] see [the light of life] and be satisfied (i.e., in resurrection). My righteous Servant will provide righteousness for the great [of heart] (i.e., believers) through the[ir] acknowledgment of Him, and He Himself will shoulder their guilt (lit., “guilts”). (12) Therefore I will allot the great [of heart] to Him [as His portion of the plunder], and He will apportion plunder to the[se same] mighty [of heart]. Because He bared His life to death and was numbered with the transgressors, thereby He took away the sin of the great [of heart] and substituted [Himself] for the transgressors.

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

(6) I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. (7) For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I

not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

Isaiah 50:6-7 KJV

(1) My God, My God, why did You forsake Me? [Why were You so] far from saving Me, [so far] from [answering] the words I roared forth?

Psalm 22:1

(6) But I am a worm, not a man, the reproach of mankind and One rejected by the people. (7) All who see Me, mock Me. They open wide their mouths. They shake their heads [at Me]. (8) "He relies on God. Let Him rescue Him! Let Him deliver Him, if He takes pleasure in Him" (cf. Matt.27:39-43; Mk.15:27-32; Lk.23:35-37). (9) For You are the One who cut Me out of the womb. You are the One who made Me trust in You on my mother's breasts. (10) I was cast upon (i.e., made to rely upon) You from the womb (i.e., immediately after birth). [Since the moment I came] from out of the womb You have been my God. (11) Be not far from Me, for trouble is near, for there is no one [else] to help [Me]. (12) [Like] many bulls they have encircled Me. [Like] strong bulls from Bashan they have surrounded Me. (13) They open their mouths against Me [like] roaring lions about to pounce on their prey. (14) I am poured out like water, and all My bones are being stretched apart. My heart has become like wax. It is melting inside of Me. (15) My strength is evaporating like a broken piece of pottery, and My tongue is sticking to the roof of My mouth [with thirst]. For You (cf. vv.1-2) have set Me ablaze in the dust of death. (16) For they have surrounded Me [like] dogs. [This] congregation of evil-doers has encompassed Me. They have pierced My hands and My feet. (17) I can count all My bones. [While] they look on and stare at Me, (18) they are dividing up My clothes for themselves, and for My garments they are casting lots. (19) But You, Lord, be not far off! O My God, hurry to My help! (20) Deliver My life from the sword, My precious [life] from the power of [these] dog[s]! (21) Save Me from the mouth of the lion! Answer Me from amid the horns of these wild oxen!

Psalm 22:6-21

Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

Psalm 41:9 NIV

(12) If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. (13) But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, (14) with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.

Psalm 55:12-14 NIV

For they mixed gall with what they gave Me to eat, and for My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.

Psalm 69:21 (cf. vv.19-21; Matt.27:34; 27:48; Mk.15:23; 15:36; Lk.23:36; Jn.19:29)

(50) Remember, Lord, how your servant has been mocked, how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the nations, (51) the taunts with which your enemies have mocked, O Lord, with which they have mocked every step of your anointed one.

Psalm 89:50-51 NIV

The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone.

Psalm 118:22

For they have struck on the cheek with a rod the Judge of Israel.

Micah 5:1b

In addition to the beating, spitting, mocking, lying, cursing, betrayal, rejection and all of the other things He had to endure, it should be noted as well that besides being a particularly painful form of execution, the fact that our Lord was crucified (as opposed to being stoned to death or beheaded), constituted a part of His humiliation as well. For there was a certain amount of shame involved in this type of death (cf. Heb.12:2), since it proclaimed the person in question as being “under a curse” (Deut.21:23; Gal.3:13).

He made Him who had no [personal] experience of sinning [to be] sin (i.e., a sin offering) for us, so that we might have God’s righteousness in Him.

2nd Corinthians 5:21

. . . [Moses] considered the *reproach* [suffered on behalf] of Christ greater riches than the treasure vaults of Egypt. For he was looking to his reward.

Hebrews 11:26

Since then we too [like the believers of chapter 11] have such a large audience of witnesses surrounding us [both men and angels], let us put off every hindrance – especially whatever sins habitually affect us – and run with endurance the race set before us, turning our gaze unto Jesus, the originator and completer of our faith, who, for the joy set before Him, *endured the shame* of the cross, treating it with despite, and took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Keep in mind all the terrible opposition He endured against Himself at the hands of sinful men, so as not to grow sick at heart and give up.

Hebrews 12:1-3

So let us go outside the camp to Him, bearing *His reproach*.

Hebrews 13:13

He Himself bore our sins in His body *on the tree*, in order that we might die to sins and live to righteousness. By His wound you are healed.

1st Peter 2:24

But before the ultimate trial of the crucifixion itself and the death for sin He would die on our behalf in the darkness while hung on the cross, our Lord, though completely innocent, would be made to undergo six prior trials at the hands of sinful human beings, and be abused, rejected and condemned by mere men for whom He was about to die.

1) The Trial before Annas (Jn.18:12-24): In our Lord's day the high-priesthood had become a largely political office. Annas, though no longer holding the office, was Caiaphas' father-in-law and the apparent power behind the throne, so it was to him that our Lord was first brought after being arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. Under intense interrogation, Jesus refused to answer questions about His disciples and remained unintimidated in spite of physical abuse (cf. Jn.18:21-23 with Is.50:8-9).

2) The Trial before Caiaphas (Matt.26:57-68; Mk.14:53-65): From comparing the accounts of John and Matthew, it seems likely that Annas' residence shared an inner courtyard with the official residence of the high priest. As in the first interrogation, this trial must have taken place on the portico of the residence, for Peter is able to observe its progress, and our Lord is able to see Peter immediately after his third denial (Lk.22:61). While the first trial seems to have been focused upon gathering intelligence in order to round up all of our Lord's followers, this second trial seems to have served a probouleutic function, having the purpose of concocting an appropriate charge for a death penalty at once acceptable to and persuasive for the Roman governor. None of the witnesses interviewed provided anything convincing, however, and it was only when our Lord affirmed His status as the Messiah under direct questioning that His accusers became satisfied that they had enough evidence to convict Him. In the process of this trial, Jesus was spit upon, slapped, beaten, blindfolded, and mocked.

3) The Trial before the Sanhedrin (Matt.27:1; Mk.15:1a; Lk.22:66-71; cf. Jn.18:28): While the first two trials took place in close geographic proximity, probably just before dawn our Lord was marched to the council house where the Jewish senate or Sanhedrin met. All four of the gospels indicate that this third trial, coming very shortly after the second and, with Peter's denials sandwiched in between them, that it took place at day break. The purpose of this trial before the most politically powerful individuals in Jerusalem and Judea (outside of the Roman governor and his staff) was merely to place a formal "rubber stamp" on the charge prepared by the high priest. The details of this trial are recorded only in Luke and the only accusation about which our Lord is asked is the same one which caused Caiaphas to rend his garments:

And they all said, "Are you the Son of God then?" And He said to them, "Yes I am."
Luke 22:70 NASB

The outcome of this apparently very short trial was a rapid sentence of condemnation, after which our Lord was led, bound, to the praetorium or headquarters of the Roman governor (Matt.27:2).

4) The Trial before Pilate: First Phase (Matt.27:11-14; Mk.15:1b-5; Lk.23:1-5; Jn.18:28-38): Bringing our Lord before Pilate was necessary inasmuch as that in Judea, being a Roman

protectorate, the power of capital punishment was reserved for the Roman governor (Jn.18:31).⁷² That was the sole purpose of the change of venue. For inasmuch as the rulers of Israel had determined that Jesus should die, the only thing left was effecting this decision, and that required persuading the Roman governor to acquiesce in their sentence of death. For this purpose, the priests, elders, scribes and Pharisees were willing to resort to any sort of falsity, and were clearly irritated that they had to provide any sort of rationale for a decision they had already reached (“If this man were not doing wrong, we would not have handed him over to you”; Jn.18:30). Luke records a threefold indictment in response to Pilate’s demand for a reason to execute Jesus:

“We discovered this man [1] misleading our people and [2] preventing [us from] paying taxes to Caesar and [3] saying that he is Messiah, [that is,] king”.

Luke 23:2b

The idea that they had only just now “come upon” our Lord acting in a criminal way is designed to prejudice the entire proceeding (by removing any suspicion of jealousy for one thing). “Misleading the people” is an entirely generic charge and meant to give Pilate a reason to agree in case he might be inclined to give them a blank check without further ado. “Preventing the paying of taxes” is, of course, a complete canard, for the command of our Lord to “render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and unto God what is God’s” had unquestionably become very well known. Resentment over the paying of tax to gentile occupiers and conspiring to avoid and resist such taxation was actually a crime of which these men were likely to have been guilty themselves. This second charge did, however, furnish Pilate with an appropriate rationale for granting an execution in case he were inclined to do so but not without at least a fig leaf of respectability. Finally, almost as an afterthought, they include the charge upon which the Sanhedrin had actually agreed: Jesus claimed to be the Messiah.⁷³ This was blasphemy in their unbelieving eyes, and they add the word “king” by way of explanation, no doubt because they knew very well that any claim of kingship as an alternative to Caesar, and especially one which claimed a divine mandate, was likely to be viewed as a traitorous threat by the Roman administration. They did not, however, count on Pilate’s seeing through and dismissing the first two charges out of hand and concentrating on the third.

“Are you the king of the Jews?”

Matthew 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; John 18:33

⁷² See A.N. Sherwin-White, Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament (Oxford 1963) 25-47.

⁷³ Even here, of course, the rhetorical way the charge is phrased is designed to prejudice the judge. Jesus was not going around loudly proclaiming Himself as the Messiah. He did reveal the truth to His disciples and admitted the truth under questioning, but the charge is not only inadequate (since Jesus *is* the Messiah) – it is also prejudicial in that it wrongly suggests self-willed, arrogant and vainglorious behavior.

“You say [so].”

Matthew 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; John 18:37

Only John records Jesus’ more extended explanation. He is indeed a king, but His kingdom is not of this world. He has come to testify to the truth, not to replace any earthly rule (at this time). Pilate’s infamous answer, “What is truth” (Jn.18:38), indicates that he understood quite clearly that our Lord was not instigating any sort of earthly rebellion. As a result, Pilate’s first and just verdict was an easy one for him to render:

“I find no guilt in this man.”

Luke 23:4 (cf. John 18:38)

But this verdict was met with a vigorous appeal by the accusers against the acquitted. Contrary to every standard of justice, Pilate allowed this verbal onslaught to continue for some time and was “amazed” that our Lord did not respond to any further charges (Matt.27:14; Mk.15:5): Jesus had cooperated with all the prior legal process to which He had been subjected despite its overwhelming unfairness. But having been officially acquitted, He was no longer bound by any standard of justice no matter how perverse to answer further, thus giving Pilate no further avenue of approach (despite his attempt to elicit one: “Don’t you hear what terrible things they are accusing you of?”; Matt.27:13; Mk.15:4). This explains why Pilate seized on the fact that Jesus’ ministry had begun in Galilee as soon as he was apprised of that fact (Lk.23:5-7).

5) The Trial before Herod (Lk.23:8-12): Sending our Lord to Herod must have seemed to Pilate a perfect solution. It was a marvelous way of passing the responsibility off. Herod’s father, Herod “the great”, had, after all, ruled Judea as king under a Roman protectorate which had only been dissolved upon his death (following the malfeasance of the eldest son, Herod Archelaus), and we may well imagine that this other son also had some hopes of regaining his father’s position. If anyone was likely to take offense at someone else proclaiming themselves “king”, it was surely Herod. Herod’s father had attempted to kill Jesus, and had killed the male children of Bethlehem (Matt.2:1-19), while his son, the present Herod (Antipas), had executed our Lord’s herald, John the baptist (Matt.14:3-12; Mk.6:17-30; Lk.9:9). Thus, sending Jesus to Herod was far from a benign act, and that fact was surely not lost on our Lord. But while Herod was pleased to be provided with this entertainment and questioned our Lord at length (to no effect, since our Lord did not respond to this illegal proceeding), he apparently had no desire and no intention of becoming involved in any legal process. After subjecting Jesus to more abuse, he sent Him back to Pilate.

6) The Trial before Pilate: Second Phase (Matt.27:15-26; Mk.15:6-15; Lk.23:13-25; Jn.18:39 - 19:16): Pilate interpreted Herod’s return of our Lord to him as ratification of his own previous acquittal (Lk.23:15). Upon that return, Pilate made several further attempts to prevent our Lord’s crucifixion. There are no doubt several reasons for this, but we need not attribute any deep respect for justice on his part as one of them (cf. Jn.18:38: “What is truth?”). The witness of our Lord and the power of His presence caused the Roman governor some serious foreboding (cf., Jn.19:7-12), and it is also likely that his wife’s warning to him not to have anything to do with

our Lord had been the source of some further unease (Matt.27:19). But Pilate is also likely to have been motivated to spare Jesus out of 1) his desire not to lose this “contest of wills” between himself and the Jewish authorities, and 2) a further desire to avoid becoming implicated in any way in what he clearly saw as a political murder – not out of a sense of justice but rather out of a desire to stay above the fray of Jewish party politics in order not to alienate any faction unnecessarily (i.e., he recognized that Jesus had been arrested “out of envy”: Matt.27:18; Mk.15:10; this also explains why he literally “washed his hands” of the matter after being unable to convince the crowd otherwise: Matt.27:24-25).

When his attempt to proclaim Jesus innocent based upon his own and upon Herod’s examination failed to persuade, in order to relieve himself of this situation which was growing increasingly tense Pilate tried to find an acceptable alternative to crucifixion, first by making use of his politically astute custom of releasing some well-known prisoner every Passover. But the crowd, egged on by the chief priests and the elders, shouted for Barabbas instead (Matt.27:20; Mk.15:11). He also tried humiliation and abuse, having our Lord beaten and whipped further and ridiculed by the soldiers (Matt.27:27-30; Mk.15:16-19; Jn.19:2-3), then presenting Him to the crowd dressed in purple but wearing a crown of thorns (symbolic, though unbeknownst to Pilate, of the curse He was about to be made for the sake of the whole world: cf. Gen.3:18)⁷⁴, and providing the comic introduction himself: “Look, here’s the man [now]!” (Jn.19:5). When this overture too was refused, and when a further interview with our Lord provided no insights or help to his dilemma (“Don’t you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you?” – “You would have no authority over Me unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin”; Jn.19:10-11 NASB), Pilate finally delivered Jesus over to crucifixion when the people under the guidance of their Jewish leaders played their ace trump: “If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar” (Jn.19:12 NASB). Pilate, the ultimate political pragmatist, knew that he had been beaten at this point. Failing to give our Lord over to the people and their will would now be very costly for him (even though it was certainly within his power), and he was unwilling to suffer any possible disadvantage (whether in terms of an immediate riot, future instability, or a possible charge of malfeasance lodged with Caesar) just for Jesus’ sake. However, wishing to make it crystal clear that he was only acquiescing in a decision of their making, he first washed his hands to demonstrate his “innocence” (cf. Deut.21:6), and the people responded: “His blood be on us and our children!” (Matt.27:25 NASB). Then, to leave no doubt, and to gain some political capital from this defeat, Pilate referred to Jesus as their “King”, questioning whether or not they really wanted to crucify their own king, until they responded “We don’t have a king – except Caesar” (Jn.19:15). Having made the best of a bad situation (from his spiritually blind point of view), Pilate “handed Jesus over to their will” to be crucified (Lk.23:25; cf. Matt.27:26; Mk.15:15; Jn.19:16).

I. The Crucifixion:

⁷⁴ I am indebted to Ms. Madeleine Woodward for this observation.

1) The Events of the Crucifixion:

Ridiculed, rejected, beaten and scourged, our Lord who by this time was nearing the end of His physical strength (but not of His moral resolve) was made to take up His own cross and carry it to the place of execution, “Golgotha”, a Hebrew name meaning “skull”. John tells us that on the initial leg of the journey Jesus was carrying His cross Himself (Jn.19:17). Having received enough physical abuse over the course of the preceding night and morning to kill most lesser men, our Lord was apparently unable to move fast enough to suit the Roman soldiers taking Him to the place of death, and so they “drafted” Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus (cf. Rom.16:13) in order to carry the cross for Him the remainder of the way (Matt.27:32; Mk.15:21; Lk.23:26). As the procession made its way along, with two criminals also slated for crucifixion in the column (Lk.23:32), our Lord at one point turned to the large crowd which was following to address the women who were beating their breasts and lamenting Him:

Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, “Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!” Then “they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’” For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?
Luke 23: 28-31

The second quote from Hosea 10:8 is a prophecy of the response of the wicked and unregenerate to the return of Messiah at His second advent. With this quote and with these words our Lord shifts the focus of the mourners from His circumstances to their own spiritual danger. Within a few decades (A.D. 68), Jerusalem would be completely destroyed by the Romans without doubt on account of her overall unwillingness to accept her Messiah. No amount of mourning for Jesus’ crucifixion would be able to save Jerusalem from her fate, nor would this mourning save any of the crowd who were also unwilling to believe in Jesus, accepting Him as the Messiah, the one and only Son of God who was about to die for their sins and for the sins of the entire world.

When they arrived at Golgotha, our Lord was offered wine mixed with some sort of additive to deaden the pain. Mark calls it “myrrh” and Matthew calls it “gall”. Both terms are somewhat generic in Greek (i.e., admissive of a wide variety of bitter, aromatic substances). Matthew’s choice of the word “gall” is clearly intended to emphasize the fulfillment of part of the prophecy from Psalm 69:21, “They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst” (where the Hebrew word *ro’sh* [translated here “gall”] actually refers to a specific bitter herb, “wormwood”, but is often used metaphorically for things producing noxious effects). Mark’s use of “myrrh” makes this event more understandable for his Roman audience and also demonstrates for us the reason behind Jesus’ refusal to drink it: certain types of myrrh were considered to have sedative properties, and our Lord, though without question by now terribly thirsty after this horrendous ordeal, was yet unwilling to drink anything that would in any way compromise His free will decision to take on the sins of the world – He had to be fully conscious when He bore our sins for the sacrifice to count. As in all the events of this gauntlet He ran for us even to get to the cross, everything He did, He did for us – that we might have eternal life.

When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.
Matthew 27:35 NIV

And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.
Mark 15:24 NIV

When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left.
Luke 23:33 NIV

Here they crucified him, and with him two others – one on each side and Jesus in the middle.
John 19:18 NIV

What has always struck this author about the actual description of the act of nailing our Lord to the cross is that it seems almost to be glossed over by the gospel writers, especially in comparison to the prominence it has been given in Christian art, literature and music over the millennia. I believe that this fact alone should serve to indicate to us that it is not the *physical* death of our Lord which is to be emphasized in considering His sacrifice on our behalf. After all, as we shall see below, Jesus died physically by voluntarily exhaling His spirit, not from exposure or shock or trauma or any loss of blood. He lay down His own *physical* life once His work on the cross in dying *spiritually* for us had been accomplished. That “work”, that [spiritual] death, was to be judged in our place, to stand judgment for the sins of the world that the world might be saved through faith in Him.

(16) For they have surrounded Me [like] dogs. [This] congregation of evil-doers has encompassed Me. They have *pierced My hands and My feet*. (17) I can count all My bones. [While] they look on and stare at Me, (18) they are dividing up My clothes for themselves, and for My garments they are casting lots.
Psalm 22:16-18

But he was *pierced for our transgressions*, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.
Isaiah 53:5 NIV

And I will pour out on the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem a Spirit of grace and repentance. For they will look upon *Me whom they have pierced*, and they will grieve for Him like the grieving for an only son, and they will [weep] bitterly for Him like the bitter [weeping] for a firstborn son.
Zechariah 12:10

(14) And just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so *the Son of Man must be lifted up* (i.e., on the cross for all to view as the object of faith for forgiveness of sins; cf. Num.21:4-9), (15) in order that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. (16)

For God loved the world so much that He gave [up] His only Son, [with the purpose] that everyone who believes in Him should not be lost [forever], but have eternal life [instead].
John 3:14-16

Behold! He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even *those who pierced Him*, and all the peoples of the earth will grieve on account of Him.
Revelation 1:7

The usual punishment for Roman citizens found guilty of capital crimes was beheading (cf. the *fascēs*, the bundle of rods bound around an ax, carried by Roman lictors), a far less cruel and less painful form of execution than being crucified, and one which was over with much more quickly as well. But crucifixion was meant to send a message to all who witnessed it of the horrible retribution which awaited those who opposed Roman authority. It was thus no accident that crucifixion by design entailed in most cases a very painful death from shock, exposure, and dehydration in a process which could last several days. This explains both Pilate's surprise at Jesus' "rapid" death (Mk.15:44), and also why the Roman soldiers had to break the legs of the two criminals crucified at Jesus' right and left so that they might be removed before the Sabbath began (Jn.19:33). Deprived of the ability to adjust their positions on the cross by means of their legs, suffocation would soon result (and shock, of course, would be greatly increased thus hastening the process). But, according to the prophecy, "not one bone" of our Lord's body was broken in His death on our behalf (Ps.34:20; Jn.19:36; cf. Ex.12:46; Num.9:12). The soldiers passed Him by after determining by piercing His side that He was already dead – He had already given up His spirit, His work of atonement already having been completed during the preceding three hours of darkness on the cross.

To inhabitants of the Roman world, therefore, the cross was a sign and symbol of disgrace, reproach, and death, and in particular a very painful, public, and shameful death. Moreover this was particularly true for Jews, since hanging a person (on a tree [or cross]) is indicative of that person being "under a curse" (Deut.21:23; cf. Josh.8:29; 10:26; 2Sam.4:12; Gal.3:13). This should remind us, we who embrace the name "Christian", just what our Lord was saying to us when He told us to "pick up our cross" and follow Him (Matt.10:38; 16:24; Mk.8:34; Lk.9:23; 14:27). For as His example makes clear, this is not a command to endure mere minor or temporary "inconvenience", but rather it is a call to a life that foreswears the world and all that is in it, embracing instead the suffering and the reproach of Christ for the sake of pleasing the One who did for us what we could never do for ourselves: expiate the justice of God by dying for our sins on the cross, thus opening the door for our eternal life with Him.

(24) By faith, Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, (25) and chose instead to suffer maltreatment with the people of God rather than to enjoy the transitory pleasures of sin, (26) because he considered *the reproach* [suffered on behalf] of Christ greater riches than the treasure vaults of Egypt. For he was looking to his reward.
Hebrews 11:24-26

(1) Since then we too [like the believers of chapter 11] have such a large audience of witnesses surrounding us [both men and angels], let us put off every hindrance – especially whatever sins habitually affect us – and run with endurance the race set before us, (2) turning our gaze unto Jesus, the originator and completer of our faith, who, for the joy set before Him, *endured the shame* of the cross, treating it with despite, and took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

(12) Therefore Jesus too, in order that He might sanctify the people through His own blood (i.e., His death on the cross), suffered outside the gate (i.e., separated from fellowship). (13) So then let us go out to Him outside of the camp (i.e., likewise choosing God over the world), bearing His *reproach*.

Hebrews 13:12-13

Even as He was lifted up on the cross, His hands and feet pierced by the nails that held Him there, for all his disciples who by now should have been capable of seeing through the veil of time to the glories beyond, this vision of suffering and reproach should yet have called to mind that day then soon to come when our Lord now lifted up in worldly shame would be lifted up in resurrection to ascend to heaven and be seated in glory at the Father's right hand; and it should now call to mind that day now soon to come when our Lord's sign of the cross will appear in the heavens to the entire world, with Moses and Elijah, only recently martyred themselves, taking their places of honor at our Lord's right and left hands (Matthew 24:29-30; cf. Rev.11:7-14).

After our Lord was nailed to His cross and lifted up on Golgotha, the gospels record several events which took place before the supernatural darkness descended upon Calvary at about mid-day:

1. The dividing up of His clothing: This was of course another fulfillment of prophecy regarding the suffering of the Messiah (Ps.22:18; Jn.19:24), and we should note that it can have been no small part of the psychological torment that was crucifixion for the subject to have to watch while all his earthly possessions were parceled out even while he was yet alive. Yet as our Lord told us we must do (Lk.14:33; cf. Matt.19:29; Mk.10:29-30; Lk.18:29-30), so He had from the first put no stock in the things of this world, possessing only the bare essentials necessary to function effectively in the ministry to which He had been called (Matt.8:20; Lk.9:58). This does not mean that we have been called to lives of abject poverty or that we should divest ourselves of all that we have beyond what is necessary to sustain life, but our Lord's example does provide for us the perfect standard: the things of this world had no power over Him whatsoever, so that this act of cruelty could not dissuade Him from His objective in the slightest. So we also, no matter whether we find ourselves, as Paul says, "in want or in plenty" (Phil.4:12), should consider

whatever we have to be gifts from God for the purpose of doing His will, being ever ready to part with them if necessary for the sake of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil.3:7-8).⁷⁵

2. The Inscription on the cross: Matthew and Mark both describe Pilate's inscription as the "charge" for which our Lord was crucified, and there is deliberate divine irony in the fact that, officially speaking, Christ was ordered to be crucified for admitting under questioning to be what in fact He most surely was and is: "**the** King of the Jews" (Matt.27:37; Mk.15:26; cf. Matt.27:11; Mk.15:2; Lk.23:2-3). In Christian iconography, the letters INRI are often employed as an acrostic for Pilate's inscription which was actually written in triplicate, in "Hebrew, Latin and Greek" (Jn.19:20). These letters represent a probable reconstruction of the Latin inscription based upon John's Greek version: *Jesus Nazoraius Rex Iudaeorum* ("Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews").⁷⁶ The lead inscription was in Hebrew as the language spoken in Jerusalem (not "Aramaic" as some versions, notably the NIV, erroneously translate the Greek word *Hebraisti*), with Latin second, being the official language of state authority. Greek was also used since anyone likely to be in Jerusalem yet not conversant with Hebrew or Latin would almost certainly know enough Greek, the *lingua franca* of the entire eastern Mediterranean world, to read and understand these words. Thus Pilate's description of Jesus as "king" was accessible to all who came to witness Jesus' crucifixion. Further, the placard on which it was written, whose words are similarly described in all four gospels (Matt.27:37; Mk.15:26; Lk.23:38; Jn.19:19), was posted on our Lord's cross plainly visible to all, and on that account occasioned complaint from the chief priests who tried to no avail to have Pilate change the wording, objecting to the statement proclaiming that here was "the king of the Jews". Pilate refused to do so, replying "what I have written, I have written" (Jn.19:22), allowing this truth they found so uncomfortable to remain in place.

3. Jesus is mocked from the cross (Matt.27:39-44; Mk.15:29-32; Lk.23:35-39): The scorn which the crowd in general and the chief priests and scribes in particular heaped upon our Lord as He hung on the cross – about to stand judgment for their sins and ours – was prophesied in scripture both generally (cf. especially Ps.22:7) and specifically. In the latter category, we see the chief priests and scribes actually quoting Psalm 22 to chastise Him, using the very prophetic words which foretold of this suffering of the Messiah and now serve to condemn their blind, self-righteous behavior:

⁷⁵ i.e., the reason why our Lord said that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven (Matt.19:24; Mk.10:25), and the reason why He told the rich young ruler to sell all He owned and give it to the poor (Matt.19:21) was not because wealth disqualifies a person from salvation, but rather because possessing wealth often induces its possessor to rely upon that wealth instead of upon God, and such false reliance is inimical to faith.

⁷⁶ The Vulgate's Latin transliteration of the second word as *Nazarenus*, "Nazarene", is a less likely rendering of the Greek of John 19:19: *Nazoraios* – Ναζωραῖος.

“Roll (i.e., “commit”) [Yourself] to the Lord. Let Him rescue Him. Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him.”

Psalm 22:8

(41) In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him.

(42) “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel!

Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. (43) ***He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him,*** for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

Matthew 27:41-43 NIV

One final thing to notice about this verbal abuse which our Lord sustained from all sides, the height of ingratitude from those He had come to save and for whom He was about to die, is that Jesus most certainly ***could*** have come down from the cross and made them all eat these horrible words. He ***could*** have changed His mind. He did not have to die for the sins of the world. He did it for us out of a love so deep it can never be plumbed. And it is a mark of His great courage and that great love that though we turned away and though they taunted Him so violently, yet He chose to stay on the cross in order to provide eternal redemption even for those who mocked Him.

4. The two robbers: Along with our Lord, two robbers had likewise been led away to Calvary in our Lord’s execution procession (Lk.23:32-33) and were crucified, one on His right and one on His left (Matt. 27:38; Mk.15:27-28; Lk.23:33). This also fulfilled in part a prophecy to which Jesus Himself had referred, namely, that the Messiah should be “numbered with transgressors” (Lk.22:37).⁷⁷ The Greek words employed to describe these men, *lestes* in Matthew and Mark, and *kakourgos* in Luke, indicate that far from being petty criminals, these men were professional felons of the most violent sort, highway robbers and/or home invaders guilty of terrible crimes. At first, they joined in with the rest, reproaching Jesus in His innocence, but after a time, no doubt impressed by the fortitude and courage shown by our Lord and stricken in what conscience he still had left, one of these thieves had a change of heart. He ceased his own mockery, rebuked his compatriot, and appealed to our Lord for mercy.

(39) One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” (40) But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? (41) We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” (42) Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” (43) Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Luke 23:39-43 NIV

⁷⁷ The direct attribution of this event to Isaiah 53:12 by an insertion into the text at Mark 15:28, however, is not part of the Bible.

Our Lord's reply, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise", crystalizes for all who are willing to hear it the utter vanity of this world on the one hand, and the extreme of importance of the real reason we are in it on the other. For this man had led a life of which anyone would look back and be ashamed – yet he will be in heaven with us all as a brother in Jesus for all eternity simply for repenting of his folly and placing his faith in the Lord who was about to die for him. Whereas the vast majority of those watching, though they were admired in the eyes of the world and had led lives that may have been fairly honorable, will be cast into the lake of fire forever, simply because they refused to accept God's gracious gift of salvation in the person of His beloved Son.

5. Jesus' instructions to John about Mary:

(25) Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. (26) When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," (27) and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

John 19:25-27 NIV

These verses clearly demonstrate that even in the midst of such pain and torment, on the point of dying for the sins of the world, our Lord nevertheless carried out every earthly responsibility perfectly as well, making provision here from the cross for the mother of His humanity. As Mary's sister was standing by, however, and considering that in addition to her extended family (cf. Lk.1:39-45), Mary had a rather large number of other children herself (cf. Matt.13:56; 28:10; Mk.3:31; Lk.8:19; Jn.2:12; 7:3; Acts 1:14; 1Cor.9:5; Gal.1:19; Jude 1:1), some explanation of why our Lord made this particular assignment is necessary. As the elder brother, the care of His sole remaining parent was indeed our Lord's responsibility, and one which He was apparently unwilling to leave to others to decide in His stead. In terms of worldly priorities, it is not unreasonable to say that most of us would have put family first in such situations (on the principle that "blood is thicker than water"). Or we might consider the material aspects and entrust our loved one to whomever could best provide. John was not family. John was poor (and no doubt poorer than Jesus' brothers, for John had been unemployed in the worldly sense for the past three years, living off donations along with Jesus and the other twelve: cf. Lk.8:3). But our Lord was clearly more concerned with His mother's spiritual welfare than with either family considerations or economic concerns (for letting His brothers take care of her would have been better on both of these other two counts). Jesus was concerned that His mother continue in an environment of faith, and by this action clearly demonstrates that her eternal life and spiritual growth were of far more importance to Him than her physical circumstances and financial security. As with all of the other events of the cross, this is a serious lesson for us: if we really love someone, we should live by Jesus' example here and put their spiritual welfare ahead of all other considerations. For even if we see to it that they are happy, healthy, and know no financial want, if they are suffering spiritually as a result of our focus on these other issues – far subordinate in God's eyes to maintaining healthy faith, growing in the truth, and drawing closer to Him and His Son – then we have made a poor bargain indeed.

Since as we have seen none of the disciples really grasped the reality or the gravity of our Lord's impending death before the fact, it would have been somewhat imprudent of our Lord to entrust this responsibility to John (or anyone else, for that matter) before now. John was, as it says here, "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (cf. also Jn.13:23; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20). Since our Lord's judgment was perfect, this means that John's spiritual priorities were admirable even in comparison to the other disciples, for the qualities which attracted our Lord to John must have been primarily spiritual. As such, John seems to have been the best choice and indeed the perfect choice to look after Mary.

6. The interpolation "Father forgive them" is not a part of scripture: Possibly one of the most famous and most frequently translated passages which reputed to be biblical but are not is "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This half verse, occurring in some manuscripts in the text of Luke in the first half of chapter 23 verse 34, is without question not a part of the Bible, but rather is a later addition put there by some scribe to fill out the gospel story (for motives discussed below). Whether the issue is viewed from a linguistic, textual, historical or theological perspective, on all counts the passage is manifestly a forgery.

1) Linguistic evidence: Verse 33 of Luke chapter 23 ends with "there they crucified Him and the lawbreakers, one on His right and one on His left . . .", while verse 34, following the interpolation, completes this thought with "and dividing up His clothes they cast lots for them." Even in most English versions (at least where not too much trouble has been taken to "airbrush" the problems with this awkward insertion) the text as modified does not ring true. In the Greek, the startling change of subject then immediate return to the narrative arouses immediate concerns about the text. This interjection (and in the Greek, the verb is in the imperfect tense meaning that Jesus "kept saying" this throughout) does not accord with Luke's narrative style where chains of events are seldom interrupted and where statements, especially important statements, are usually given some introduction and followed by some commentary or explanation or description of reaction. Were Luke to have written this at the end of verse 34 instead of at its beginning, the placement would have been less jarring, but it seems clear that the interpolator decided on this point for the insertion since he was wishing to put these words into Jesus' mouth directly after the act of nailing our Lord to the cross (and we have already discussed the fact that the scriptures do not in fact go into great detail about that actual act – precisely because it was His death for sin in the darkness, not the physical suffering of being nailed to the cross, which is the basis for our salvation). Even so, the words "and the lawbreakers, one on His right and one on His left" split up the act of Jesus' crucifixion from this statement (a fact that makes the placement of this non-scriptural addition seem even more clumsy). While on their own, these facts might not be decisive, they do serve to raise suspicion about the passage for all who are reading the text closely, and especially for those reading it in Greek.

2) Textual Evidence: Possibly the most decisive evidence against considering this half-verse as part of the Bible is the fact that it does not occur in some of the best and earliest manuscripts of the New Testament. Not only does the contemporaneous corrector of Sinaiticus, the best of the ancient manuscripts, correct the faulty inclusion in that ms. by expunging it, but it

does not occur in the first place in some of the other major and most important witnesses (e.g., Vaticanus, D, W, Theta, and finally the Bodmer papyrus, a witness that pre-dates almost all other witnesses, being generally assigned to circa 250-290 A.D.). As a result, all the best critical editions of the Greek New Testament mark the passage as spurious. According to the canons of textual criticism, one of the main issues one should consider in cases of this sort is how likely inclusion or exclusion would be if the passage were original or not. Given how famous this passage is, how pithy, and how eminently quotable (it is perhaps the most quoted “verse” in the NT), no good reason can be suggested for why any copyist should wish to leave it out, nor can any reasonable theory be proffered for how such an otherwise famous passage might have been accidentally overlooked. Thus, the absence of the passage in some of the best and earliest witnesses constitutes overwhelming proof of its lack of authenticity, for the only way for it to have been missing in these early manuscripts is if it was not originally part of the genuine text (but only added after the penning of these early witnesses).

3) Historical Evidence: While a rationale for a scribe to exclude this passage do not come readily to hand, the reasons why someone might want to insert such a passage or defend it once inserted are obvious. For example, as any diligent reader of scripture is fully aware, as he was being stoned Stephen proclaimed “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” (Acts 7:60 NIV). Putting aside the obvious distinction that Stephen was not the Messiah about to die for the sins of the world, it is yet easy to see how a person with a superficial understanding of the nature of our Lord’s death for sin on our behalf might find the lack of a similar statement of blanket forgiveness troubling, and might wish to rectify the perceived “problem” (which is in reality no problem at all; see the following point) by means of this interpolation. The fact that all of the major modern English versions print this passage even though their policy elsewhere is to include only what is clearly in the original Greek text shows that this is not merely an ancient prejudice (and by now, of course, there is also a great emotional attachment to this verse on behalf of many).

Had the interpolater merely reproduced Stephen’s words or some form thereof, the fact of his fraud would have been immediately and glaringly obvious. While he avoided this potential evidence against his crime, happily for us he did not make the passage up out of whole clothe: this half verse is in fact taken from an early Church historian by the name of Hegisippus (whose work now survives only in fragments, existing in Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History). We find this quotation in Eusebius’ second book, discussing the martyrdom of James:

“So they went up and threw down the just man, and said to each other, ‘Let us stone James the Just.’ And they began to stone him, for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned and knelt down and said, ‘I entreat thee, Lord God our *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*’”

Eusebius 2.23.16

The words in bold above are not merely similar sounding. In the Greek, they are *identical* to the text found in Luke.⁷⁸ Since nothing in Eusebius' text suggests any correspondence with any similar statement of our Lord (and given how famous the Luke passage was to become, some sort of acknowledgment of such an *exact* quotation which this would then be would have been necessary), we can safely say that the interpolator drew his words either from Hegisippus directly or from Eusebius derivatively. Given the flexibility of Greek syntax, accidence, and word order, the odds against this being a coincidence are astronomical.⁷⁹

4) Theological Evidence: While Stephen's prayer in Acts chapter seven was as appropriate as it was magnanimous, Jesus was offering Himself for the sins of the world (something neither Stephen nor any of the rest of us could ever even contemplate doing). As such, the acceptance of Him and His work, His person and His death on the cross for the forgiveness of those sins, is *the* issue of human life. Of course the Father and of course our Lord desire the forgiveness and salvation of all: the Father sacrificed His Son and the Son died in our place *precisely so that* such forgiveness might be made available to all. But to offer such a statement as contained in this interpolation is to send the message that forgiveness requires no repentance; that salvation is possible absent faith on the part of the saved. Nothing could be further from the truth. While Jesus could and did die for the sins of the world, the one thing He could not and did not do was to die for the unbelief of the world. Unbelief is the one "unpardonable sin" for which forgiveness is impossible, and for our Lord Jesus Christ to have exonerated unbelief in any way by such words would have had repercussions throughout the entire plan of God which are unfathomable (and impossible because, ultimately, such blanket forgiveness would in effect compromise the righteousness of God, something that can never be).

No follower of Jesus can fail to understand and appreciate God's boundless mercy and the fact that the forgiveness of our sins is based entirely upon our Lord's work on the cross in dying for them. Jesus could and did forgive sins – "the Son of man has the authority on earth to forgive sins" (Lk.5:24). But though He was soon to die for the sins of all, He did not forgive everyone's sins (Jn.8:24; 9:41; 17:9), only the sins of those who turned to Him in faith (Matt.9:2; Lk.7:48; cf. Jn.20:23). For Jesus to have granted blanket forgiveness, even to those who firmly rejected Him and always would (like most of those who stood around His cross mocking Him), would have been to eliminate the need for faith in salvation, to compromise the righteousness of God which demands satisfaction for sin through appropriating the work of Christ through faith, and essentially to render the cross pointless. For if a person could be forgiven without accepting what Jesus did for us upon it, then the sacrifice itself would have been unnecessary. This false

⁷⁸ The text in both places reads: *πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς· οὐ γὰρ οἶδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν.*

⁷⁹ Incidentally, this is not the only occasion where Eusebius has proved a fertile hunting ground for interpolaters. One finds a similar situation in his third book where the extra-biblical but likewise fondly quoted story from John chapter eight of the woman caught in adultery is sketched out in a way that shows that while it was not original to the Bible, Eusebius is the likely provenance of the story (*H.E.* 3.39.16).

passage eliminates the issue of free will in time exercised through faith, and the whole rationale for the creation of the human race in the first place.⁸⁰

The fact that this insertion is so widely quoted, and very often by those who have little understanding of either the scriptures or of the true nature of the sacrifice of our Lord, is extremely revealing. For our Lord died that we might be saved by accepting His work through faith, not that the world might reject Him and be saved in spite of their decision to renounce God and His gift. The gate to eternal life was about to be opened by Jesus Christ our Lord through His spiritual death expiating the sins of the entire world so that the whole world might be saved by this gracious act through faith in it and in Him. The last thing our Lord was going to do just before the darkness descended upon Golgotha was to send a message which in effect pronounced both His sacrifice and our response unnecessary.

2) The Spiritual Death of Jesus Christ:

1) The Supernatural Darkness: Just as the Passover lamb, that poignant type of Jesus Christ sacrificed for us, was commanded to be slaughtered “between the evenings (pl.)”, (i.e., at a time neither clearly day nor night: Ex.12:6; 29:39-41), so our Lord’s death on behalf of all mankind was destined to be accompanied by an analogous, yet supernatural, darkness. Scripture tells us that at “about the sixth hour” (i.e., around mid-day), darkness descended upon Golgotha, and that this darkness lasted “until about the ninth hour” (Matt.27:45-54; Mk.15:33-39; Lk.23:44-49), with Luke adding the important detail that “the sun gave out” (literally “eclipsed”). It was during this supernatural “blackout” that our Lord bore the sins of the world and stood judgment for them, being spiritually put to death in our place and for our sins (see section II.5 below, “Spiritual Death”). That the darkness was indeed supernatural (and that therefore no useful purpose is to be served by any attempt to correlate first century natural eclipses to this event) can be seen from the duration of the darkness: three full hours. In this we see a telling parallel between the judgment of the sins of the world in darkness and the other instances of supernatural darkness which attend significant divine judgments,⁸¹ with the extremely important

⁸⁰ See The Satanic Rebellion series, part 3A, “The Purpose, Creation, and Fall of Man”. Additional problems include the fact that these words create the impression that the cross was a mistake as opposed to a part of the plan of God (cf. “how then would the scriptures be fulfilled?” Matt.26:54-56); and they create the impression that it is the physical act of crucifixion which is the pivotal event whereas it is our Lord’s bearing of our sins and being judged for them so as to expiate them which provides salvation.

⁸¹ e.g., the judgments on the original earth (comparing Gen.1:1 with Gen.1:2), on Pharaoh’s kingdom (Ex.10:21-29; cf. Ps.105:28), during the fifth bowl judgment (Rev.16:10-11), at the second advent (Is.13:9-13; 34:4; 60:1-2; Ezek.32:7-10; Joel 2:2, 2:10, 2:31; 3:15; Zeph.1:15-18; Zech.14:6-7; Matt.24:29; Mk.13:24-25; Acts 2:17-21; Rev.6:12-13), in Hades (Lk.16:24; 2Pet.2:17; Jude 13), and in the Lake of Fire (Matt.8:12; 22:13; 25:30). See part 2 of the Satanic Rebellion series, section II.2.d, “Darkness Resulting from Divine Judgment”.

exception of course that Christ bore this judgment on our behalf, and that it is through His being judged in our place that the gate of eternal life has been opened for all who believe in Him and accept His work in dying for our sins.

2) The Blood of Christ: While the subject of the “blood of Christ” and Jesus’ spiritual death for us on the cross is covered respectively in sections II.4 and II.5 below, a few things need to be pointed out here. As is obvious from the fact that He breathed out His own spirit to end His physical life, our Lord Jesus Christ did not bleed to death (Matt.27:50; Mk.15:37; Lk.23:46; Jn.19:30; see below, section I.5.1.3).⁸² Also apparent from His final statements on the cross after the darkness lifted (covered in detail in the next point below), is the truth that our Lord’s death for sin was completed before He gave up His spirit. Taken together, this unquestionably means that the efficacious and atoning work of our Lord in dying for our sins consists in what He endured in the darkness for us while still physically alive. So while Jesus’ physical sufferings on our account visible to all before the darkness descended on Golgotha were immense and beyond true appreciation, the intensity of the sufferings He endured under that darkness in paying the penalty for the sins of the world, dying spiritually in a way we cannot even adequately conjecture, must exceed those preliminary sufferings to an incalculable degree.

(18) For you know that it was not with perishable things [like] silver or gold that you were ransomed from the futile manner of life passed down to you by your ancestors, (19) but [you were redeemed] with precious blood, like that of a lamb without spot or blemish, [that is, by the blood] of Christ.

1st Peter 1:18-19

The “blood of Christ” is the coin with which we are redeemed, but this is a sanctified analogy. Jesus is not literally a lamb, and likewise we are not redeemed by His physical blood. Rather, Jesus is the Father’s sacrifice, represented by the lamb, and the image of physical blood represents something even more precious than our Lord’s physical death – it represents His spiritual death, the death He died in the darkness on the cross, paying the penalty for the sins of the entire world.

For what He died, He died to sin, once and for all, and what He lives, He lives to God.
Romans 6:10

He made Him who had no [personal] experience of sinning [to be] sin (i.e., a sin offering) for us, so that we might have (lit., “become”) God’s righteousness in Him.
2nd Corinthians 5:21

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, in order that we might die to sins and live to righteousness. By His wound you are healed.
1st Peter 2:24

⁸² For details, see R.B. Thieme Jr., The Blood of Christ (Houston 1977).

3) Our Lord's Final Statements of Completion:

(28) After [all] this (i.e., His physical suffering *and* His spiritual death for the sins of the world), since Jesus knew that ***everything had now been accomplished*** in order for the [prophecy of salvation found in] scripture to be fulfilled, He said, "I am thirsty". (29) Now a jar of wine-vinegar lay there, so they placed a sponge full of the wine-vinegar on a hyssop [stalk] and brought it to His mouth. (30) So when He had taken the wine-vinegar, Jesus said, "***It*** (i.e., salvation) ***has [now] been accomplished!***", and having thrown back His head, He gave up His spirit.
John 19:28-30

The Greek verb behind the second highlighted portion of text above, *teleo* (τετέλεσται in the perfect tense as conjugated in context), corresponds to the identical form in verse 28 (πάντα τετέλεσται) and along with it refers to the completion of the goal of Christ's first advent. This statement is in fact a paraphrase of the final stanza of the Messianic Psalm 22, verse 31: "He has done it!". We have already seen how this Psalm prophetically foreshadows much of our Lord's suffering on the cross (e.g., the mocking of the crowds in vv.7-8, His "pierced hands and feet" in v.16, the "casting of lots" for His clothes in v.18, and the vivid poetic description of His suffering throughout). But not only does our Lord paraphrase the end of this psalm; He also directly quotes its beginning, so that this emphatic proclamation, "It has now been accomplished!", is the direct answer to the question posed by the previous quote: "My God, my God, why did You forsake Me?" (Ps.22:1; cf. Matt.27:46; Mk.15:34; see below). For the latter actually explains the former: the Father had to forsake the Son, give Him over to judgment for the sins of the world, in order for salvation to be "accomplished". The fact that Jesus Himself while still physically alive declares salvation accomplished (and His suffering and forsaking a necessary precondition for it), demonstrates *ipso facto* that this accomplishment of our redemption had already taken place before our Lord exhaled His spirit to give up His physical life. Thus, Jesus' victory on the cross consists in the spiritual death He died for our sins in the darkness (for He was still physically alive so as to be able to make this proclamation: "it has now been accomplished"), and not in His subsequent physical death. Far from being some sort of desperate plea of doubt from the cross (as it is sometimes blasphemously portrayed), the words "Why did You forsake Me?" are meant to show precisely the opposite. For the "forsaking" is now in the past ("why ***did*** You forsake Me?"), while Jesus' successful completion of the Father's mission and victory over sin is now an accomplished reality (τετέλεσται: "It ***has*** now been accomplished!").

He was handed over (i.e., forsaken) on account of ***our*** transgressions (i.e., to redeem us from sin), and was raised up on account of our justification (i.e., so that we too could be raised, having been justified by His death).
Romans 4:25

Jesus' drinking of the wine-vinegar is also a fulfillment of prophecy which likewise signals the accomplishment of the Messiah's mission:

For they mixed gall with what they gave Me to eat, and for My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.

Psalm 69:21 (Matt.27:34; 27:48; Mk.15:23; 15:36; Lk.23:36; Jn.19:29)

He will drink from a brook beside the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

Psalm 110:7 NIV

The first quotation, covered above, relates two events; one at the beginning of the ordeal when Jesus refused the gall, and the other at its successful completion where our Lord's request for and acceptance of the wine-vinegar bespeaks victory, a short refreshment after the accomplishment of the salvation of the world. The second passage likewise comes from a very well-known Messianic Psalm, one which (as is often the case in Old Testament prophecy as we have seen many times in the past) conflates the two advents. Psalm 110 is primarily a victory Psalm, celebrating the Messiah's accomplishment of salvation in His first advent and anticipating His return as Ruler of the world in the second. This final verse can be read to refer to the refreshment of Messiah's troops after the battle of Armageddon, but in our present context applies to Jesus Himself at the completion of His own mission during the first advent.⁸³ Therefore this act of drinking on our Lord's part has as its primary goal to call attention through the fulfillment of the prophecy to the fact that the true "battle" was now over, and that He had been victorious in the accomplishment of salvation through His death for sins on our behalf. This is also the significance of our Lord "lifting up His head" preparatory to exhaling His spirit as recorded in John 19:30, that is, here we have the fulfillment of the other prophecy in Psalm 110:7 in the raising up of His head after drinking.⁸⁴ Both fulfillments underscore the fact that salvation has already been accomplished at this point.

Lastly, our Lord's final statement from the cross, His quotation of Psalm 31:5, "Father, into your hands I commit My spirit" (Lk.23:46), also demonstrates the successful completion of His mission. For it is the Father who commissioned Him (see section I.3.c above), and here we see our Lord voluntarily returning to Him as these words portend – something He would never have done had that mission not been perfectly and completely fulfilled. Jesus had the power to lay down His life and to take it up again (Jn.10:18), not arbitrarily, but after accomplishing the

⁸³ That is to say, the verbs *yishtheh* and *yarum* may equally mean here "He will drink and lift up" or, understanding the third singular forms as impersonals, may be read "one [= people generally, and here the Messiah's troops] will drink and lift up", with the first reading corresponding to the first advent and the second to the second.

⁸⁴ The Greek participial form *klinas* is universally mistranslated in this context, and remarkably so, for, clearly, no one would "bow their head" (i.e., "forward") preparatory to "shouting with a loud voice" (Matt.27:46; Mk.15:37), but would instead of course throw their head back or "lift it up" in order to open up the vocal passages. The verb form admits of both possibilities, but the context of shouting, not to mention the fulfillment of Psalm 110:7, demands the latter meaning.

monumental task He had been given to do in dying for the sins of the world. That this quotation likewise speaks to salvation as an already accomplished fact at this point is made clear by the second stanza of this verse, not spoken by our Lord but well-known to all readers of the Psalms: “You *have* redeemed Me, O Lord, God of truth”. Jesus’ death to redeem us from sin was now an accomplished fact, and our redemption vouchsafed before He gave up His spirit.

3) The Physical Death and Burial of Jesus Christ:

Then Jesus shouted out again in a loud voice and sent forth His spirit.
Matthew 27:50

Then Jesus gave forth a great shout and exhaled.
Mark 15:37

And having shouted loudly, Jesus said, “Father, into your hands I commit My spirit”.
And having said this, He exhaled.
Luke 23:46

So when He had taken the wine-vinegar, Jesus said, “It (i.e., salvation) has [now] been accomplished!”, and having thrown back His head, He gave up His spirit.
John 19:30

Our Lord was here on earth to fulfill a particular mission: after teaching us the truth, to die for our sins in our place on the cross. Once that mission had been fulfilled, Jesus deliberately left this life of His own volition. With salvation now an accomplished fact, staying on the cross any longer served no useful purpose. For the rest of us, taking into our own hands the decision to leave this world is a horrendous act of rebellion against the will of God. Human life begins when at birth God imparts the human spirit, and it ends when the spirit returns to the One who gave it (no matter what secular science may believe),⁸⁵ and no one has the right to infringe on God’s prerogative in this respect. But our Lord, uniquely in all of human history, had been given the right and the ability to lay down His life once His work was accomplished (Jn.10:18). Just as the darkness which had covered Golgotha for three long hours while Jesus bore the sins of the world was an exceptional and incontrovertible miracle, so also the very manner in which our Lord died was in itself a miraculous sign which demonstrated that He was indeed who He claimed to be, the very Son of God. This fact is testified to by the Roman centurion, a combat veteran who had seen many men die before (for this rank was only achieved through meritorious service over many years):

And when the centurion who was standing opposite Him (i.e., being in charge of the detail) saw the manner in which [Jesus] exhaled [His spirit and so expired], he said, “Truly, this man was God’s son!”

⁸⁵ See part 3A of this series, section II.3, “The Human Spirit”.

Mark 15:39 (cf. Matt.27:54; Lk.23:47)

So remarkable was the way in which our Lord left this life, that even this hardened veteran soldier was so impressed that he came to believe the reports about Jesus at which he had no doubt hitherto scoffed. Other miracles accompanied Jesus' departure from life as well, all of which were meant to demonstrate His divinity and the fundamental change in all things which our Lord's victory on the cross entailed (e.g., Ps.110:1; Eph.1:10; 4:7-10; Col.1:13; 1:20; 2:13-15; Heb.2:14-15; 1Pet.3:22; 1Jn.3:8; and see section I.5.o below, "The Session of Christ").

(8) He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] death on [the] cross [for us all]. (9) **Therefore** God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the Name that is above every name (10) that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

1) The Earthquake: Earthquakes are the essential divine exclamation point (cf. 1Kng.19:11-12; Acts 4:31), and very frequently employed by God to demonstrate the beginning of a new period in history (e.g., Is.29:6; Matt.28:2; Heb.12:26-29; Rev.8:5; 11:13; 11:19).⁸⁶ An earthquake occurred after Christ released His spirit which "split the rocks asunder" as Matthew tells us (Matt.27:51), thus dramatically setting the Father's seal of approval on the work of His Son who is the Word of God.

"Is not my word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

Jeremiah 23:29 NIV

2) The Splitting of the Veil of the Temple: As with the earthquake (or perhaps even more so since the divine source is even harder to deny in this case), the supernatural splitting of the veil in the temple which separated the holy place from the inner sanctum of the holy of holies was a sign from God Himself (Matt.27:51; Mk.15:38; Lk.23:45). This sign, moreover, demonstrated the fundamental change of universal realities in a very graphic way. For the holy of holies represents symbolically the third heaven and the presence of God Himself, so that the splitting of the veil symbolizes the end of the unavoidable enmity between man and God because of sin, and the access mankind now has to God through the blood of Jesus Christ and by the body of Jesus Christ (see below, section II.9, "Reconciliation").

But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place

⁸⁶ See Coming Tribulation part 5, in section I.7, "Earthquakes".

had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings – external regulations applying until the time of the new order. When Christ came as High Priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, **having obtained eternal redemption.**

Hebrews 9:7-12 NIV

(19) Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence in this entrance of ours into the [heavenly] holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, (20) an entryway **through the [heavenly] veil** [of separation] which is new (lit., “newly slain”) and alive and which He has consecrated for us, that is, [through the sacrifice] of His flesh (cf. Heb.10:10; 10:18) . . .

Hebrews 10:19-20

3) The Resuscitation of the Dead:

The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

Matthew 27:52-53

In the manner of Lazarus, these individuals were restored to life, but to the life we all now lead. That is to say, they were temporarily resuscitated rather than being eternally resurrected, and Matthew is careful to distinguish in the passage above their status from that of our truly resurrected Lord. Nonetheless, this is an astounding miracle, and one clearly meant to call attention to the life-giving properties of the victory our Lord had just won. For through His death for our sins, we have been given eternal life through faith in Him (Jn.3:16; 1Jn.5:11).

The treatment of our Lord’s body after death also fulfilled several Old Testament prophecies demonstrating beyond question His true status as the Messiah. It was pierced by the soldier’s lance with the result that “blood and water” came out (Jn.19:34; see section II.4 below, “The Blood of Christ”), a sign according to most medical authorities that He had been physically dead for some time when this action occurred. Indeed, it was because He was clearly and demonstrably physically dead that the Roman soldiers did not break His legs to hasten His death (as they did in the case of the two crucified with Him: Jn.19:31-37).

(36) These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken” (Ps.34:20; cf. Ex.12:46; Num.9:12), (37) and, as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced” (Zech. 12:10; cf. Rev.1:7).

John 19:36-37 NIV

Joseph of Arimathea (a rich man: Matt.27:57) and Nicodemus requested and were granted leave of Pilate to take down Jesus' body and bury it. This they did, binding it in linen wrappings with approximately sixty pounds of myrrh and aloes (which would have cost an enormous sum), and placing it in the garden near Golgotha in an impressive "new tomb in which no one had ever [previously] been placed" (Jn.19:38-41; Matt.27:57-60; Mk.15:43-46; Lk.23:50-53), thus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecies about the burial of the Suffering Servant, a clear indication of divine approval following the horrendous abuse and judicial murder prophesied to precede Messiah's death.

(7) Though He was oppressed and afflicted, like a lamb led to slaughter He did not open His mouth, and like a ewe before her shearers He did not open His mouth. (8) **By repressive judgment** He was taken away, and who gave any thought to His posterity? For He was cut off from the land of the living. He was punished for the transgression of my people. (9) And they assigned Him **a grave with the wicked (pl.) and with a rich [man]** in His deaths (*sic*).

Isaiah 53:7-9

He lay bare His life unto death, and was dealt with **as transgressors [are]**, so that He bore the sin of the many, and substituted [Himself] for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:12b

The rejection of the Messiah was now complete. He had come to His own, but His own refused to accept Him (Jn.1:11). And yet as the Messiah He was precisely who and what the Law and the Prophets had prophesied (Lk.22:37; 24:44; Jn.5:39; 5:46), and He was precisely who and what Israel had asked the Lord for: an intermediary between themselves and the burning holiness of God Almighty:

(15) The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. (16) For this is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the Lord our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die." (17) The Lord said to me: "What they say is good. (18) I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. (19) If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 NIV

m. The Descent of our Lord into Paradise: As He hung on the cross, our Lord replied to the thief who rebuked his fellow, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Lk.23:43). This "paradise", also referred to as "Abraham's Bosom" in the report of Lazarus and the rich man (Lk.16:19-31), is one of the three "compartments" of the netherworld or *Sheol* (שְׁאוֹל), as it is called in the Old Testament (and it is *Sheol* which is referenced in regard to this descent in Ps.16:10 in the Hebrew text), or *Hades* (ᾗδης), the name it bears in the New Testament (and it is *Hades* which is referenced in regard to this descent in the quotation of Ps.16:10 in the Greek text

of Acts 2:27 and 2:31). Paradise, the place of the departed righteous prior to Jesus' ascension, is to be distinguished from the other two subterranean compartments, "Torments" (the place of the unsaved dead: Lk.16:28; 16:23), and "Tartarus" also known as "the Abyss" (the place of confinement for fallen angels who have violated God's ground rules for the present conflict: Lk.8:31; 2Pet.2:4; Jude 6; Rev.9:1-11; 20:1-3). Any of these three places, while technically distinct and inviolably separated from one another (cf. Lk.16:26), may be referred to in scripture by the more general names of *Sheol* or *Hades*. Additionally, these two words are also sometimes rendered "hell" or "the grave" in English versions of the Bible, and this helps to explain the occurrence of the phraseology in the Apostles' Creed, "He descended into *hell*". However, paradise in particular rather than *Sheol-Hades* in general is meant, that is, the place of all saved believers prior to their transfer to the third heaven in the wake of our Lord's ascension following His victory at the cross, and it is to this place of blessing that Jesus' human spirit descended to await His resurrection on the following Sunday. This is the place referred to by our Lord when He said, "today you will be with Me in Paradise". Our Lord's brief sojourn wherein He doubtless proclaimed His victory to all of our brothers and sisters awaiting His arrival (and their imminent transfer to the third heaven) is also mentioned by the apostle Peter.

It was also by means of the Spirit that [Christ] visited the [angelic] spirits in prison (i.e., in the Abyss), and proclaimed [His victory]. [These are the angels who] were disobedient in the days of Noah at the time when God patiently waited (i.e., delayed judgment) while the ark was being built.

1st Peter 3:19-20a

The word translated "proclaimed" above (and famously rendered "preached" by the KJV) is the Greek word *kerusso*. This verb is a back-formation of the noun *keryx*, or "herald", that sacrosanct Greek official, carrying a special wand identifying his status, who was immune from being killed or imprisoned as he treated with the opposite side in any sort of official negotiation or communication (similar in a way to ambassadors with immunity today, but taken rather more seriously by the ancient Greeks). Rather than "preach" in the sense it is used in contemporary Christianity, this verb really means "giving the King's message as His royal ambassador" (cf. 2Cor.5:20), and that is precisely what our Lord did vis-à-vis the incarcerated fallen angels in Tartarus (or "the Abyss"). At some point during the three days our Lord spent in paradise He made this proclamation of His victory. As in the case of the physical separation of Torments from Paradise (i.e., the "great chasm fixed" between the two: Lk.16:26), we may safely assume that Tartarus as well is fully isolated from the other two compartments (cf. the descriptions of it elsewhere in scripture: Lk.8:31; 2Pet.2:4; Jude 6; Rev.9:1-11; 20:1-3). Thus, our Lord's communication with these demons had to occur in exactly the manner in which Peter describes it, namely, "by means of the Spirit['s power]". This proclamation of His victory confirmed the success of His mission and the imminency of His reign. It was also an indication of the coming superiority of us His followers over the angels (1Cor.6:3; Heb.2:5). While we are given no additional details of either the manner of the journey or the specifics of the message, we can say

that this notice of victory was a message of doom for these followers of Satan, since the prevention of the cross was the devil's one [vain] hope of evading ultimate judgment.⁸⁷

(7) And to each of us this grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (8) For it says, "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive (i.e., He brought pre-cross believers from paradise below the earth to heaven). He gave gifts to men." (9) Now [as to] this [phrase] "He ascended", what can it mean except that He had also [previously] ***descended into the lower reaches of the earth*** (i.e., paradise in Hades, from whence He brought the pre-cross believers to heaven)? (10) The One who descended is also the One who ascended above all the heavens (i.e., into the third heaven, the place of the Father's residence), in order to fulfill all things (i.e., complete the victory won at the cross; cf. Ps.110:1).

Ephesians 4:7-10

[Jesus Christ], who appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the [Holy] Spirit, ***appeared to angels***, was preached among the nations, was believed upon in the world, was taken up in glory.

1st Timothy 3:16

n. The Resurrection:

(3) For I entrusted to you as of primary importance what I had also received, [namely] that Christ died on behalf of our sins according to the scriptures. (4) And that He was buried and that He rose on the third day according to the scriptures.

1st Corinthians 15:3-4

1) The Three Days: At Luke 24:21, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus report "***this*** [i.e., Sunday, the day of our Lord's resurrection; cf. v.13: these things happen "the same day" as our Lord's resurrection] ***is the third day*** since these things happened". Greek and Hebrew both use an inclusive system of counting, so that the three days mentioned must without question be Friday [the day of the crucifixion], Saturday, and Sunday [the present day in context]. This is confirmed by our Lord Himself in His first post-resurrection appearance to the assembled disciples when He says "Thus it has been written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead ***on the third day***" (Lk.24:46). The phraseology is important for the question of establishing that the "three days" were in fact the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of Easter week, and do not include a Thursday (let alone a Wednesday) as some interpretations would have it. For such a circumstance would require something like "after three days", whereas "on the third day" makes the inclusive count of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday unavoidable.⁸⁸ In this author's opinion,

⁸⁷ See the Satanic Rebellion series, especially parts 1 and 5.

⁸⁸ i.e., the phraseology in these two passages ***excludes*** the possibility. We do find "after three days", for example, in Mk.8:31; that terminology is, on the other hand, ***not*** exclusive since

Thursday (and Wednesday) schemes for the chronology preceding the resurrection are largely motivated by a desire to see Christ's prophecy of "three days and three nights in the grave" (Matt.12:40) fulfilled in a way they find acceptable. However, this is to impose our present cultural norms on Greek and Hebrew expression – contemporary audiences would have no problem understanding that a part of a day-night combination equals the entire segment for prophetic purposes. On the other hand, proponents of adding another day (or more) to the clear testimony of scripture have also to reckon with the fact that since Christ rose at first light on Sunday but gave up His spirit at mid-afternoon, no approach can yield "precisely" three days and three nights. While from our modern western perspective a longer duration than a precise 3/3 seems acceptable but a shorter one does not, from the ancient perspective things are exactly the reverse, so that had our Lord been crucified on Thursday, the phrases "this is the third day" (in Lk.24:21) and "on the third day" (in Lk.24:46) would be seen as technically incorrect, and violently so. When the two witnesses are killed by antichrist and their bodies left exposed to public view during the Tribulation's first half, scripture is very careful to say that this condition persisted for "three *and a half* days" (Rev.11:9; 11:11), a turn of phrase that seems a bit odd until one factors in the ancient perspective: more than a full three days must be noted, while a part of each segment may count for the whole.

Due to the prevalence of the false Thursday (and Wednesday) view, some additional scriptures need to be added here for consideration:

1) Mark 15:42 calls the day of our Lord's crucifixion the *prosabbaton* or "pre-Sabbath", indicating that it was a normal Friday.

2) Luke 23:54-55 compared with Luke 24:1 gives us the chronological sequence for the crucifixion to the resurrection of, first, *paraskeue*, (i.e., the "day of preparation" for the Sabbath, namely, Friday's daylight hours; second, "the Sabbath", Saturday; and third, "the first day of the week" (Sunday), with no discernible gap given between the three days, and thus with the only reasonable way to read Luke's sequence for the three days being as "Friday, Saturday, Sunday".

3) Matthew 27:62 through 28:1 has Matthew using the definite article ("the") with the word *paraskeue*, indicating that the day of our Lord's crucifixion was indeed *the* day of preparation, namely, the normal pre-Sabbath time of preparation or *paraskeue*, that is, the daylight hours of Friday.

it does admit of a Sunday resurrection following a Friday crucifixion because in the Greek inclusive counting system "after three days" means in effect, "after the three day prediction has been fulfilled" (i.e., it does not require a full 72 hour prior period to have elapsed). Compare Matthew 27:63-64 where "after three days" in v.63 is essentially equated with "the third day" in v.64 (and not as we might expect from our cultural perspective "the fourth day" which would for us be the day "after three days").

The three days in the grave are very important to fulfill our Lord's prophecies concerning His physical death (e.g., Matt.12:40; 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 26:61; Lk.9:22; 13:22; Jn.2:19; cf. Gen.22:4 with Lk.24:46), but also to demonstrate the reality of that death. Along with the blood and water that fell from His body after it was pierced by the Roman soldier's lance (Jn.19:34), the details of His body's preparation for burial and its laying in the tomb, the rolling of the stone in front of the tomb, and the sealing of that tomb with a guard stationed at its mouth (Matt.27:62-66), this chronology shows emphatically and decisively that our Lord Jesus *was* physically dead beyond any question or shadow of a doubt, and that therefore His rising from the dead was an irrefutable miracle – indeed, it is the Rock upon which we base all of our future hope.

2) The Meaning of the Resurrection: Besides confirming the prophecies of His coming resurrection (Ps.16:10; Acts 2:24-31; 13:30-38), and His status as Heir of the Kingdom (Acts 5:30-31; 10:40-43; 17:31; Rom.1:4; 1Pet.1:21), it is not too much to say that our Lord's resurrection (in company with the cross which precedes it) *is* human history, for with our Lord Jesus' rising from the dead, we have been given God's unmistakable seal that the life gate for all who follow Him in regeneration has now been opened up. Further, while the cross was necessary to wipe away the impediment of sin which kept us from God and eternal life, the resurrection is equally necessary in order actually to authorize the process of transforming us for that eternal life.

He was handed over (i.e., forsaken) on account of our transgressions (i.e., to redeem us from sin), and was *raised up* on account of our justification (i.e., so that we too could be raised, having been justified by His death).

Romans 4:25

(12) Now if we are proclaiming about Christ that He has risen from the dead, [and we are], how is that some of you say that there is no resurrection from the dead? (13) For if there is no resurrection from the dead, then Christ has not risen either. (14) And if Christ has not risen, then our message is pointless and your faith is pointless too. (15) For [in that hypothetical case] we are revealed as false witnesses against God because we have born witness against God that He raised Christ whom He did not raise – if the dead really are not raised. (16) For if the dead are not raised, then neither has Christ risen. (17) And if Christ has not risen, then your faith is vain. [For if that were the case] you are still in your sins.

1st Corinthians 15:12-17

As these passages indicate, there had to be a resurrection of Christ in order for there also to be an ascension to the Father and a formal acknowledgment of the efficacy and acceptability of our Lord's work of propitiation on our behalf (indicated by His session at the Father's right hand).⁸⁹ Resurrection is the Father's seal set upon our Lord's work on the cross, and was necessary in

⁸⁹ See below sections I.5.o, I.5.p, and II.6 for ascension, session, and propitiation respectively.

order for us to be justified through faith in Him and thus receive all the blessings of salvation (Eph.1:19-23; cf. Acts 2:34-36; Rom.1:4; 1Cor.6:14; Phil.3:10; Col.2:12). Thus, the resurrection both confirms the effectiveness of our Lord's sacrifice on our behalf (Phil.3:10; 1Pet.1:3; 3:21), and also forms the basis for us to share in that resurrection (Rom.6:5; 8:11; 8:34-35; 10:9; 1Cor.6:14; 15:21; 2Cor.4:14; 5:15; Col.2:12).

For since death [came] through a man, resurrection of the dead also [had to come] through a man. For just as in Adam, all die, so also in Christ, shall all be made alive.
1st Corinthians 15:21-22

3) The Nature of the Resurrection: Just as Jesus is first in all things in this creation (Col.1:15-20), so He is our forerunner in resurrection as well (cf. Heb.2:10; 6:20; 12:2).

But each [will be resurrected] in his own echelon. Christ [is the] *first-fruits*. Next [will be] those belonging to Christ at His coming (i.e., the Church at the 2nd Advent).
1st Corinthians 15:23

However, prior to being witnesses of the fact, the disciples were not entirely clear about just what it meant to rise from the dead (Mk.9:10; 9:32; cf. Jn.16:19). That is certainly understandable since no one in human or angelic history had ever seen an example of resurrection before. The miracles which Christ performed in raising the dead during His earthly ministry (e.g., the synagogue ruler's daughter, the widow of Nain's son, Lazarus) were not strictly speaking examples of resurrection, for each of these individuals has long since once again died physically and passed from this life. These unique cases we have elsewhere called "resuscitation", since each individual was restored to life in their original, earthly body. But resurrection is a permanent condition.

(35) Now somebody will no doubt say, "In what manner do the dead rise? And with what sort of body do they come back?" (36) Use a little common sense! When you plant a seed, it doesn't "come back to life" unless the seed itself is first destroyed, does it? (37) And what you put in the ground is not the actual plant which later sprouts, but an "empty shell", so to speak, of the wheat or of whatever you are planting. (38) God then transforms this seed into a plant in accordance with His creative plan, giving each specific seed its own unique structure. (39) [As it is with seeds and plants, the same is true of animate bodies.] For in an analogous way, not all bodies are the same. Obviously, the bodies of men are different from the bodies of cattle, the bodies of birds are different from the bodies of fish, (40) and, just as obviously, bodies capable of dwelling in heaven are different from the bodies we occupy here on earth. Moreover the splendor of our heavenly bodies will transcend that of our earthly ones. (41) [Nor should we imagine that all heavenly bodies will possess the same degree of splendor.] After all, the radiance of the sun and of the moon and of stars is different in each case, and even the stars differ amongst themselves in glory. (42) So it is with the resurrection of the dead. The body sown is corruptible, the one raised incorruptible. (43) The body sown is dishonorable, the one raised glorious. The body sown is weak, the one raised powerful. (44) The body

sown is suited to physical life, the one raised to spiritual life. If there is a physical body (and there patently is), then there is also a spiritual one. (45) For as it has been written that “Adam, the first man, became a physical being, possessing life”, so Christ, the last Adam, became a spiritual being, bestowing life. (46) However it is not the spiritual body, but the physical body which comes first, and the spiritual body follows. (47) The first man was earthly, being taken from the ground. The second Man is heavenly. (48) And as was the earthly man, so also are we of the earth. And as is the heavenly Man, so also shall we be when we too take on heavenly form. (49) For just as we have born the image of the earthly man, so also shall we bear the image of the heavenly Man.

1st Corinthians 15:35-49

While this is not the place to discuss our own resurrection in detail, we should at least point that scripture is very clear about the fact that our Lord Jesus is the pattern for our resurrection as described above by Paul, so that we shall have a glorious eternal body exactly like that of our now resurrected Lord.⁹⁰

For if we have been joined together with Him in respect to the likeness of His death [– and we have by being spiritually baptized into Him (Rom.6:3) –], then we certainly will be [joined together with Him in the likeness] of His resurrection also.

Romans 6:5

(20) For our [true] citizenship has a heavenly existence, and it is from there that we expectantly await our Savior, Lord Jesus Christ, (21) who will transform this humble body of ours into one that matches His glorious body through His powerful ability to subordinate everything to Himself.

Philippians 3:20-21

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose [from the dead (and we most certainly do)], [then we should also believe that] in the same way also God will lead [forth in resurrection] those who have fallen asleep through [faith in] Jesus with Him [when He returns].

1st Thessalonians 4:14

Beloved, we are already the children of God, but what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He is revealed [in glory], we will be like Him, that we shall see Him exactly like He is.

1st John 3:2

And while during His post-resurrection appearances our Lord appeared in a “not yet glorified” state (since the full revelation of His glory had to follow His ascension to heaven and session at the Father’s right hand; compare Jn.7:39 with Acts 9:1-6; 22:6-11; 26:12-18; Rev.1:12-18), yet

⁹⁰ This topic will be covered in detail in part 2B of the Bible Basics series: Eschatology. See also part 5 of Coming Tribulation, section V, “The Resurrection of the Lamb’s Bride”.

we may glean many things about our own future state in resurrection from the descriptions of our Lord's resurrection (for we "we shall be like Him", and since our earthly body will be transformed into "one that matches His glorious body").

1) The Resurrection Body is no longer Subject to Death: The resurrection is often described in terms of eternal life (Jn.6:40; cf. Matt.25:46; Mk.10:30; Lk.18:30; Jn.3:15-16; 5:24; 10:28; Rom.2:7; 6:23; Gal.6:8; Tit.1:2; 1Jn.1:2; 2:25), and we see this principle of immortality from Jesus' resurrection:

(8) Now if we have died with Christ, [and we have] (i.e., by being "in Him" through the Spirit's baptism, vv.1-4), we believe that we shall live [eternally] together with Him, (9) knowing that Christ, now that He has been raised from the dead, is no longer mortal; death no longer has any power over Him.
Romans 6:8-9 (cf. Heb.7:16)

(25) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even if he dies. (26) And everyone who lives and believes in Me will surely not die forevermore."
John 11:25-26

2) The Resurrection Body is Truly Human, only not Subject to Suffering and Pain: In resurrection we will be truly "who we are" only without sin, and will enjoy all the good and decent things of the body only in freedom from want and from tears forever after (Rev.7:17; 21:4; cf. Is.25:8; 35:10; 65:17:19; 1Cor.15:54-58; Heb.2:14; Rev.2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26-28; 3:4-5; 3:12-13; 3:21; 20:5; 21:27; 22:3-6; 22:14). This principle is clear from the case of our Lord's resurrection wherein Jesus was recognizable as Himself and behaved as Himself with no diminishment of personality in any way (Lk.24:31; Jn.20:16; 20:20; 20:26-28; 21:12). Christ's transformed body is solid and tangible (Matt.28:9; Lk.24:39; Jn.20:17; 20:27), and capable of the entire range of normal human activities (Matt.28:10; 28:18-20; Lk.24:15; 24:43; Jn.21:13-15).

3) The Resurrection Body will have New Capabilities: As is clear from our miraculous return with our Lord to earth "in clouds" after the resurrection, we too will enjoy all the additional benefits of the eternal body that is a large part of our hope as the means whereby we shall enjoy our eternal inheritance. As is clear from our Lord's post-resurrection appearances, the resurrection body possesses super-material capabilities without at the same sacrificing material advantages, being capable of negotiating material space at will (cf. Matt.28:1-3; Lk.24:31; 24:36; Jn.20:19; Acts 1:9-10). As Thomas and Gundry point out, the angels removed the stone from the tomb *not* "to let Jesus out", but rather to let others see that He was no longer there.⁹¹ In our cases, perhaps the most sublime benefit will be, in addition to the sweet fellowship we shall be able to enjoy with our Lord forever, the blessing of finally "knowing even as we are known", when we shall be at last "face to face" with Him for all eternity (1Cor.13:12).

⁹¹ *op. cit.* p.252, n.

4) The Chronology of the Resurrection:

(39) “We are witnesses of everything [Jesus] did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, (40) but God raised him from the dead **on the third day** and caused him to be seen. (41) He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. (42) He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. (43) All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Acts 10:39-43 NIV

Having exhaled His spirit on the cross on the Friday before the Passover, Jesus rose from the dead on the following Sunday, and proceeded to appear over the next forty days – not to everyone – but to worthy witnesses among those who had previously believed.

(1) In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach (2) until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. (3) After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:1-3 NIV

(30) “But God raised him from the dead, (31) and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.”

Acts 13:30-31 NIV

(3) For I entrusted to you as of primary importance what I had also received, [namely] that Christ died on behalf of our sins according to (i.e., in fulfillment of) the scriptures, (4) and that He was buried and that He rose **on the third day** according to the scriptures, (5) and that He appeared to Cephas (i.e., Peter), then to the twelve, (6) then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, of whom the majority abide [in life] until now, though some have fallen asleep (i.e., have died). (7) Next He appeared to James (i.e., His earthly half-brother), then to all the apostles, (8) and last of all, as if to the [one left out due to having been a] miscarriage (i.e., at the time of Christ’s earthly ministry), He appeared also to me.

1st Corinthians 15:3-8

When that first Easter Sunday dawned, our Lord was resurrected from the dead by the power of God (Rom.1:4; 1Cor.6:14; 2Cor.13:4; Eph.1:18-23; Phil.3:10; Col.2:12; Heb.7:16; cf. Rev.20:6). That is to say, His human body now dead since Friday afternoon was transformed into a new, eternal body incapable of decay, and His human spirit was placed back within it in a fashion comparable to God’s in-breathing of the spirit into every human body at the point of birth. From

this point forward, Christ in His humanity became alive forevermore, so that the Messiah in accordance with the prophecy recorded in Psalm 16 “never saw decay” (Ps.16:10; cf. Acts 2:27; 2:31; 13:35). After neatly folding up His grave clothes (Jn.20:5-6; an indication not only of the resurrection,⁹² but also of our Lord’s pattern of careful diligence in all things and proof of the wonderful fact that He is and we will be “the same person” after resurrection), our Lord simply walked out of the carefully sealed and guarded tomb (Matt.27:62-66), apparently without even being visible to the sentries.

Jesus’ rising and departure from the tomb were divinely punctuated, as was His death, by a mighty earthquake, as an angel refulgent in appearance rolled away the stone to reveal the place where Jesus’ body had lain (Matt.28:2). The angel’s appearance terrified the guards (Matt.28:3-4), and understandably so, to the point where they play no further role in the story (other than reporting these miraculous events later to the Sanhedrin: Matt.28:11-15). When the women who had attended Jesus during His earthly ministry came to the tomb to anoint His body, though they had been concerned about how to roll back the entry-stone, they found the tomb already opened up and empty when they entered. It was then this angel explained to the women who had come that our Lord was not there because He had “risen from the dead” (Matt.28:6-7; cf. Mk.16:6; Lk.24:5-7).⁹³

1) To Mary Magdalene (Jn.20:11-18): The importance of the women who accompanied Jesus throughout His earthly ministry and who supported Him and His disciples logistically (i.e., through monetary and domestic means, not to mention the encouragement and moral support of their presence) should not be underestimated even if it is not generally appreciated (cf. Lk.8:2-3). We can see something of the key role these women played from their appearance at the empty tomb early that first Easter Sunday. The list of women mentioned as going to the tomb in order to care for Jesus’ body includes Mary Magdalene (Matt.28:1; Mk.16:1; Lk.24:10), “the other Mary” (Matt.28:1; cf. Matt.27:61), who is probably Mary the mother of James (Mk.16:1; Lk.24:10; and apparently also “of Joses”, cf. Mk.15:40; 15:47), Salome (Mk.16:1), Joanna (Lk.24:10), and “the other women” (Lk.24:10). These last may have included the women mentioned by Luke at 23:55 “who had come with Jesus from Galilee” (cf. Lk.23:41), a group which no doubt included the women who had actively supported the ministry (Lk.8:2-3), and who stood by Him at the cross (Matt.27:55-56; Mk.15:40-41; Lk.23:49; Jn.19:25).

Preeminent within this group, even in respect to those mentioned by name as watching and waiting at the crucifixion, namely, Mary, Jesus’ mother (Jn.19:25), her sister (Jn.19:25), Mary

⁹² i.e., since, as Thomas and Gundry point out, *op. cit.* p.254, these would not be left behind and would certainly not be neatly folded if His body had been “stolen”.

⁹³ Matthew and Mark mention only one angel, the one who addressed the women, but Luke tells us that he actually had an associate (Lk.24:4-5).

the wife of Clopas (who may have been Mary's sister: Jn.19:25)⁹⁴, Mary the mother of James the lesser and Joseph (Matt.27:56; or Joses: Mk15:40), Salome, the mother of the disciples James and John (Matt.27:56; Mk.15:40; cf. Lk.24:10), is Mary Magdalene.⁹⁵ That is so for several important reasons. For Mary Magdalene was the first person to whom our Lord appeared after resurrection, and that is no small honor.

Contemporary scholarly opinion discounts the view of earlier times that saw Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany (sister of Martha and Lazarus) as the same person, but there are in fact good reasons for equating the two. We should begin by reiterating a point made above about Mary of Bethany, namely that she is more than likely also the woman described in Luke chapter seven who poured myrrh on Jesus' feet after first washing them with her tears (Lk.7:36-50). For Mary is definitely identified as the woman who performs a similar action six days before the crucifixion (and distinguished from the early anointing both by the lack of tears and the anointing of Jesus' head as well in anticipation of burial), demonstrating in the second instance that there was at least one person who had listened to Jesus' words to the effect that He was about to be put to death (Matt.26:6-13; Mk.14:3-9; Jn.12:1-8). As was said earlier, the uniqueness of these acts, the considerable expense they involved (which of necessity would preclude the vast majority of Jewish women from consideration), and the fact that both take place in the house of Simon (Lk.7:40 compared with Matt.26:6; Mk.14:3), are good evidence that we are dealing with the same person. Further, the fact that Mary had access to Simon's house (Jn.12:2-3) explains how this "sinful woman" could enter freely and wash Jesus' feet without so much as a reproach in Luke's description.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ The Greek text of John 19:25 seems to equate the two, but there are obvious problems with this interpretation; i.e., two siblings with the same name, unless we are to understand two separate names behind the unified Greek transliteration (deriving Mary from the Aramaic *Mari-Yah*, "The LORD is My Lord" instead of the traditional "Miriam" whose root has to do with either bitterness or rebellion would certainly be attractive in the case of our Lord's mother). If "sister-in-law" is meant, then Clopas would be Jesus' uncle (or alternatively His cousin, in which case "mother of" rather than "wife of" would be the correct translation: the Greek text merely says "she of" and admits of either possibility). There is a reasonable chance that Clopas is the same person as the Cleopas of Luke 24:18; though sometimes rejected on the grounds that the latter name is Greek, the probability is that the former is as well and merely possesses a more Semitic transliteration in John (i.e., the "L" sound directly following a consonantal stop is not a normal Hebrew or Aramaic combination).

⁹⁵ Even here Mary Magdalene receives first mention in both Matthew (Matt.27:56) and Mark (Mk.15:40).

⁹⁶ Earlier in Luke chapter seven messengers come from John to Jesus; as John was in the habit of baptizing "near Bethany" (cf. Jn.1:28), their appearance may also argue for the scene to be Bethany.

Immediately after reporting this story in chapter seven, Luke in chapter eight gives us an account of the women who followed Jesus and the disciples during their ministry, supporting it through their personal efforts and finances.

(1) After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, (2) and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; (3) Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Luke 8:1-3 NIV

The Greek phraseology which introduces this paragraph (Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ καθεξῆς) deliberately links the anointing with this description of Jesus' travels and the women who attended Him, and Luke seems to be signaling thereby that the woman in chapter seven is included in the list in chapter eight (only without being named out of deference to her identification as a "sinful woman"). In this list, Mary Magdalene is the first named, and also the one delivered from the greatest demonic attack. The demon possession described above is only possible in the case of unbelievers, and generally follows a rejection of God and His will (often as a result of extreme sinfulness).⁹⁷ As in the case of the Gadarene demoniac, however, Mary turned to God and embraced the offer of salvation wholeheartedly, being appropriately more grateful than most others precisely because she had been forgiven so much (Lk.7:40-49). The anointing of Luke chapter seven was Mary's first public expression of her gratitude following the deliverance from demon control which must have taken place earlier, and as with the Samaritan leper, she returned to give glory to God in this most dramatic and memorable way, indicating the depth of her gratitude and completeness of her conversion. Henceforth she would devote her life and her resources to Jesus' ministry (compare the support given by the sisters from Bethany and their similarly greater than average resources: Lk.10:38-42; Jn.11:9; 12:2; 12:3-6, Mary's delight in the Lord and His Word: Lk.10:39-42, and our Lord's love for the three siblings: Jn.11:5; 11:35). The picture we are given of Mary Magdalene's faith and faithfulness at the crucifixion (standing by the cross), burial (watching to see where He was buried), and resurrection of our Lord (buying spices – resources again – and going first, leaving last), is in complete accord with that of Mary of Bethany. In each case we have to do with a woman who had made serious mistakes in her youth, had eagerly embraced the offer of eternal life Jesus preached, and had become an exceptional believer as a result, demonstrating by deeds of faith and selflessness her love for our Lord and for His mission in dying for us on the cross.

I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.

Matthew 26:13 NIV (cf. Mk.16:9; Jn.12:7)

⁹⁷ See "Demon Possession" in part 4 of the Satanic Rebellion series, section V.4.

Mary's willingness to believe and so to understand both the necessity of our Lord's death and the reality of His resurrection (as evidenced by her behavior below) results not only in the kudos above but also the honor of being the first to see Jesus in resurrection – no small distinction as she is in this respect unique in the entire Church. It is for this reason that we have the name which has in truth been at the root of the reluctance of so many commentators to see this Mary as Martha's and Lazarus' sister, for most take it for granted that the name "Magdalene" is a gentile adjective, referring to a town in Galilee. However, as may be seen from other Greek adjectives, it is certainly possible that the entire ending *-ene* is a suffix. This would make the Aramaic word *magdal* (Hebrew *migdol*), meaning "tower", the root of this adjective (rather than the hypothetical town names usually proposed). As such, this title for Mary is *not* a gentile describing her place of birth or city (she was in fact from Bethany), but rather an *honorific* (explaining why she was "called" Magdalene: Lk.8:2),⁹⁸ bestowed upon her for the stalwartness of her faith displayed before, during, and after the crucifixion when she stood firm "like a tower" when many others gave in to despair. Mary's conduct and this resulting honor should be both an example and an encouragement to us all, as we remember that the Lord will bestow names upon us all in eternity, based upon our response to Him here in this life (Rev.2:17; Is.65:15; cf. Is.62:2b; Rev.3:12). This resilience of faith was the result of her actually *listening* to what the Lord had to say and *believing* it, then as now the "best part" of our life on this earth (Lk.10:42), and the only formula for spiritual growth and success.

Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands *will be called great* in the kingdom of heaven.
Matthew 5:19 NIV

We may now consider the circumstances of precisely how it was that Mary came to see Jesus risen from the dead. The three synoptic gospels report that the inner circle of faithful women had made a point of observing where Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus put the body of our Lord after taking it down from the cross (Matt.27:61; Mk.15:47; Lk.23:55-56), with Matthew and Mark specifically identifying and giving first mention to Mary Magdalene (along with "the other Mary", Mary the mother of Joses) in so doing. All four gospels record the coming of the women to the tomb on the Sabbath with the intention of anointing Jesus' body according to Jewish practice (Matt.28:1; Mk.16:1-2; Lk.24:1; Jn.20:1), with Mary again receiving first mention not only in Matthew and Mark, but also in John. John's description is particularly important in reconstructing the events of that first Easter morning as he gives us details that are only summarized by the other accounts:

⁹⁸ cf. the name given to the Levite Joseph of Cyprus: Barnabas "whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement)", Acts 4:36; also Peter or Cephas given to Simon by our Lord (Jn.1:42); and possibly on the other end of the scale, "Didymus" given to Thomas, often taken as meaning "twin" but also perhaps referring to his "double-mindedness" or doubting (Jn.11:16; 20:24; 21:2).

(1) Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. (2) So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

John 20:1-2 NIV

While the other women also come to the tomb, Mary was unwilling to wait for daybreak. Scripture does not say for certain, but we may infer from her being the first to arrive not only her great love but also some hope that she would find Jesus alive based on a small amount of faith in His words about rising from the dead – small only in relative terms (cf. Jn.20:9 NASB of the eleven: "For as yet they did not understand the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead"), for she was apparently the only one who clung to the possibility, a mustard-seed modicum of faith even so capable of moving mountains. It is no doubt just for this reason that our Lord honored her with the first resurrection appearance, just as she was honored with the assurance of her act of anointing Him ever being part of the gospel story. For the gospel is only beneficial to those who believe as Mary did.

As verse two of John twenty quoted above shows, the specific events of that morning need to be disaggregated to get a clear picture of what took place next. Mary was first to the tomb, leaving for it before day broke, but arriving just after dawn shortly after our Lord had risen when she saw that the stone had been rolled away. The other Mary and then the other women arrived shortly thereafter and entered the tomb (where the angels informed them of Jesus' resurrection and instructed them to carry the news to the apostles). But Mary had already gone, having discerned from outside of the opened tomb without entering (cf. Jn.20:11, where she is still reluctant to enter) that Jesus' body was no longer there. Just as she was unwilling to await the other women in going to the tomb, she must have departed before their entry and the subsequent appearance of the angels. This explains her report to the apostles "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" (whereas the other women, arriving later, gave the apostles the angels' report). As Peter and John raced to the tomb in response to Mary's words, the other women already at the site ventured to enter the tomb, received the good news of the resurrection from the angels, and immediately sought out the apostles to convey the message as instructed. At some point on their way, they were met by our risen Lord (see the section immediately below) – but not before Jesus appeared to Mary. For she must have returned to the tomb again, arriving after John and Peter had already come and gone, and not encountering them or the other women on the way. When she arrived, through her tears she too saw the angels, sitting at the place where Jesus' head and feet had been.

(13) And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." (14) When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. (15) Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." (16) Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means,

Teacher). (17) Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’”

John 20:13-17

While the other women receive directly and are told to give to the apostles indirectly a lesson reminding them of Jesus’ teaching on the resurrection (Matt.28:6-7; Mk.16:6-7; Lk.24:5-8; because they still as yet failed to understand what our Lord had repeatedly told them: Jn.20:9), Mary alone does not receive any such reminder, for she had been hoping for this blessed event all along. What she does receive is an explanation of what is about to happen: the joy she feels must be restrained, because our Lord was only going to be with her and His other disciples for a short time before ascending to the Father to await the day of His victorious Second Advent return. But these words of truth are given to her by our Lord Himself to the one person whose faith had put her in the right place and the right frame of mind to receive them.

2) To the Other Women (Matt.28:9-10): Following His appearance to Mary, our Lord appeared to the other women who had already been instructed by the angels to return and report to the apostles (Matt.28:9-10; and this appearance seems to have followed their doing so: cf. Lk.24:11 with Matt.28:8). It is significant that our Lord’s second resurrection appearance is also made exclusively to these women who had also come to the tomb even though Jesus was dead, an indication of their love, hope, and faith. The disciples to whom they report, on the other hand, considered their words “nonsense” (Lk.24:11; with the exception of Peter and John who had already raced to the tomb), even though in this second appearance our Lord had Himself commanded the women to report to the disciples and to reinforce the instruction to them from the angels to meet Him at the prearranged location in Galilee (Matt.28:10; cf. Matt.28:7; Mk.16:7).

3) To Peter (Lk.24:34; 1Cor.15:5): After receiving from the women the angels’ report about Jesus’ resurrection, these things “seemed like madness” to the rest of the disciples, but Peter and John had raced to the empty tomb as soon as they had heard Mary declare that it was empty (Jn.20:3-10).⁹⁹ John outran Peter, but Peter in his boldness to know the truth entered the tomb and saw the Lord’s grave clothes, after which John also entered, and the two of them “went to their own homes” (Jn.20:10). It was probably at this time or after arriving home that our Lord appeared to Peter (compare 1Cor.15:5 with Luke 24:34). It is significant that Peter, who had most visibly denied the Lord, was the first of the remaining eleven disciples to recover his faith and his hope (seconded by John), and no doubt for this reason rated the first appearance of our Lord to any man (cf. 1Cor.15:4-5).

⁹⁹ Luke synthesizes the report of Mary with that of the other woman (Lk.24:9-12), but nothing in his words precludes our understanding of her prior report (about the empty tomb only) followed in sequence by John and Peter’s departure, and later by the report of the other women to the remaining disciples.

4) To the Two on the Road to Emmaus (Lk.24:13-32): Cleopas, possibly Clopas, about whom we know little in either case (see above), and one other man (probably not one of the eleven: cf. Lk.24:36ff.) were met by our risen Lord while journeying that same day to the village of Emmaus. However, our Lord deliberately concealed His identity from them, and the point of our being given this information seems in large part to demonstrate the as yet skeptical state of all the male believers in spite of the detailed and emphatic testimony of many of the women who had been part of the ministry for years (cf. Lk.24:22-24) – without first hand experience of the resurrection, they remained reluctant to believe. Our Lord’s response to their continued doubt is to pronounce it foolishness and slowness of heart (Lk.24:25), and to instruct them from the scriptures – something He had done repeatedly before His crucifixion – about the necessity for the suffering and the resurrection of the Christ (Lk.24:26-27). Later, He does reveal Himself to be Jesus as He breaks bread, then disappears (Lk.24:30-32), and finally they believe once they have seen with their own eyes.

5) To the Ten and Others (Lk.24:36-43; Jn.20:19-25; 1Cor.15:5b): Cleopas and his companion immediately returned to the disciples in Jerusalem and found all ten with the exception of Thomas assembled there with certain unnamed others (Lk.24:33), now being ready to accept their testimony because they had by this point already heard and believed Peter’s report of the Lord’s appearance to him (Lk.24:33-35; cf. Jn.20:24-26), in addition to Mary Magdalene’s testimony (Jn.20:18), as well as that of the other women (implied by Matt.28:10). While the two were in the process of giving the details, Jesus appeared, entering directly into their company even though “the doors had been secured” (Jn.20:19). While this miraculous appearance demonstrated the power of His newly resurrected body, His eating of the fish (Lk.24:41-43) and the other proofs He gave them that this body was “tangible” (Lk.24:39-40; Jn.20:20) demonstrated beyond any question or doubt that it was really He Himself, that He was really alive – resurrected from the dead with a body that was now capable of so much more than the first one, and incapable of ever experiencing death again.

It was at this time that our Lord, in order to facilitate the important teaching ministry to the eleven (Matt.28:16-19; Lk.24:44-49; Jn.20:21-23; 20:30; 21:15-23; 21:25; Acts 1:2-8), which He would fulfill during these forty some days before His ascension (Acts 1:3), bestowed upon them a special unction of the Holy Spirit (Jn.20:22; cf. Ex.31:3; 31:35; Num.11:17; 11:25-26; 27:18; Deut.34:9; 1Sam.10:6; etc.). This was a temporary unction which would soon be replaced by the even better indwelling of the Spirit (Lk.24:49; Acts 1:4-8; i.e., the “baptism” of the Spirit given to all the assembled believers at Pentecost, and since the early days of the apostolic age to all believers at the point of faith in Christ: Rom.8:9; cf. Eph.4:5; 2Tim.2:1). It is for this very reason that our Lord gave very specific instructions on this occasion (Lk.24:49) to the effect that the evangelizing of the nations was *not* to begin until the giving of the Holy Spirit. This is the thrust of the command to “remain” in the city in Luke 24:49, and should not be taken to apply to their upcoming trip to Galilee in the meantime. Compare Luke 24:52 where we are told that “they stayed continually at the temple, praising God”; coupled with Acts 1:1-9, one might get the impression that there was no trip to Galilee at all (but the other gospels show clearly that there was). Although in his summary of events Luke has passed over that part of the post-resurrection

appearances, he has included the essential teaching our Lord left to the apostles, focusing on the commission to evangelize in Luke 24:45-49, and on Jesus' final message about the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:1-9. In this respect Luke's testimony is identical to that of Matthew's "Great Commission", when rightly understood (i.e., the command/commission is to evangelize the world, a process which leads through salvation to the baptism *of the Spirit*; and to teach the truth of the Word, whereby disciples, faithful followers of Christ, are "made"; see point 8 immediately below).

6) To the Eleven in Jerusalem (Jn.20:26-31): This appearance, similar to the previous one, is "the second time" that Jesus comes to His disciples (as implied by Jn.21:14). Thomas, who famously would not believe unless he too received the same tangible proof of our Lord's resurrection, is given just that by our Lord. When Thomas finally does express his belief, our Lord pronounces as blessed "those who have not seen and yet have believed" (Jn.20:29). John tells us that this appearance took place "eight days later" (Jn.20:26), so that we may safely assume that the disciples as yet had still not obeyed our Lord's command to meet Him in Galilee.

7) To the Seven at the Sea of Galilee (Jn.21:1-23): For the eleven to depart Jerusalem for Galilee directly after the crucifixion seems to have been what our Lord had planned all along, with even the specific place of rendezvous having been previously designated:

But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.
Matthew 26:32 NIV

But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.
Mark 14:28 NIV

But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, *just as he told you.*'
Mark 16:7 (cf. Matt.28:7) NIV

Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and *tell my brothers to go to Galilee*; there they will see me."
Matthew 28:10 NIV

But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, *to the mountain which Jesus had designated.*
Matthew 28:16 NASB

Ideally then, assuming perfect responsiveness, we may surmise that the disciples should have and would have listened to everything Jesus said about the necessity of His impending death, and about the reality of His resurrection destined to follow on the third day after His crucifixion; that they should have and would have departed for Galilee immediately to meet with the Lord at the appointed place, the designated mountain in Galilee. Even now, however, after waiting at least the additional eight days described above, though they did eventually go to Galilee, it was

apparently to their homes in the area of the sea of Galilee that they went first (Jn.21:1; cf. Matt.4:18-22). For John tells us that Jesus' appearance to them here as related in chapter twenty one was "the third time" that Jesus showed Himself to them all (Jn.21:14), and further, that only seven of them were together in that place: "Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples" (Jn.21:2 NIV). In this appearance, in addition to demonstrating yet again the real, physical nature of His new body, our Lord impresses upon Peter as the leader of the eleven the necessity for them all to "feed my sheep" (Jn.21:15-17), that is, to provide the Body of Christ with nutritious spiritual food on a consistent and regular basis, with "eating" then being a picture of faith in the truth being taught (Matt.24:45; Lk.12:42; Acts 20:28; 1Cor.3:2; 1Tim.4:6; Heb.5:12-14; 1Pet.2:2; 1Pet.5:2; cf. Matt.14:16; Mk.6:37; Lk.9:13; Jude 1:12).

8) To the Eleven on the Mountain in Galilee (Matt.28:16-20):

But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated.

Matthew 28:16 NASB

Matthew's narrative, after a digression which relates the report of the guards at the tomb to the Jewish authorities (Matt.28:11-15), jumps directly to the verse above from Jesus' appearance to the other women and His message for the disciples to "to leave for Galilee, for there they shall see Me" (Matt.28:10). Following the appearance at the Sea of Galilee in John chapter twenty one, then, all eleven finally gathered together on "the mountain which Jesus had designated" (Matt.28:16).

(17) And when they saw Him, they worshiped [Him], but some [of them still] had doubts. (18) Then Jesus came over and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, (19) so go and make all nations my followers by baptizing them into the Person (lit., "Name") of the Father and [into the Person] of the Son and [into the Person] of the Holy Spirit, (20) [and] by teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you all the days until the end of the age."

Matthew 28:17-20

While our Lord taught the disciples something at each appearance, as Galilee, and particularly the prearranged rendezvous on the mountain, had been the place He had purposed for this, it is no surprise that in this passage we see what is perhaps the most detailed example of His post-resurrection teaching (albeit given to us here in very brief synopsis; cf. Jn.20:30; 21:25; Acts 1:3). It is instructive to note that although by this time all of the disciples had seen our Lord at least twice (i.e., all but Thomas were present at the first appearance, all eleven at the second, and Thomas was among those listed in the John chapter twenty one appearance), yet we are told that even so some of them "had doubts", so difficult was the concept and idea of resurrection for this first group of believers, even though they were blessed to be first-hand witnesses to it. Even today, of course, with the detailed testimony of the Bible and the universal indwelling of the Spirit, it is this author's observation that the literal, bodily resurrection remains a stumbling block

for many Christians – and that is a tragic thing. For the resurrection *is* our hope, the hope of eternal life which cannot be separated from Jesus’ resurrection and our own (1Cor.15:12-17). This is the point of “primary importance” which has been “entrusted to us” as Christians (1Cor.15:1). For if our hope in Christ extends only to this life, then we are indeed “to be pitied above all others” (1Cor.15:19). The hope of the resurrection is found in nearly every chapter in the New Testament (e.g., Rom.5:2; 8:25; 1Cor.13:13; Gal.5:5; Eph.1:18; Col.1:23; 1:27; 1Thes.1:3; 5:8; 2Thess.2:16; 1Tim.1:1; 4:10; Tit.1:2; 2:13; Heb.3:6; 6:18; 7:19; 11:1; 1Pet.1:3; 1:13; 3:15; 1Jn.3:3), and it is not too much to say that this hope is the proper, primary focus of the Christian life. Therefore we are truly blessed to possess so many proofs our Lord’s rising from the dead in definite, bodily form, with a body no longer subject to death, but fit for eternal life.

The doubts expressed by some disciples on this occasion form a counterpoint to the coming of the Holy Spirit after which all of the disciples/apostles would display a zeal, courage and unbending faith that is remarkable to anyone who compares their behavior in the gospels to their deeds in “The Acts of the Apostles”. Therefore it is entirely understandable in this synopsis we are given by Matthew of the content of Jesus’ teaching at this time that the ministry of the Spirit figures large, even if that fact is often misunderstood. Three main points of our Lord’s teaching are recorded here. First, that the message of salvation, the gospel or “good news” about our Lord Jesus’ conquest of death (whereby He has won “all authority”) and the resurrection which is now available to all who put their faith in Him and follow Him, is now to be carried beyond Israel and made available to “all nations”. Secondly, Jesus relates the means by which these “marching orders” (often called “The Great Commission”) are to be accomplished. And thirdly, an important reassurance aimed not only at the doubters among the apostles but given also for the benefit of all who might have similar doubts in the future: we may not be able to see our Lord at present, but if we take Him at His Word given to us here, He is indeed “with us”, and more than that, “in us” to the end, even if we abide until the day of His return, the Second Advent “at the end of the age”, when all believers who remain alive will be “caught up together to meet the Lord in the air” (1Thes.4:17) in a living resurrection wherein our present bodies will be instantly swallowed up in eternal life.

On that day [of the coming of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn.14:15-19)] you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you.
John 14:20 (cf. Rom.8:10; 2Cor.13:5; Eph.3:17; Col.1:27)

The Spirit, of course, had “not yet been given, because Christ had not yet been glorified” by being seated at the right hand of the Father (Jn.7:39), and the doubts of some of the disciples are a clear indication that the temporary unction given them by our Lord did not alleviate all obstacles to their receiving the truth to the degree that the actual indwelling presence of the Spirit later would (Jn.20:22; cf. Acts 2:1-44; 4:13). And it is to this gift that our Lord refers in His second instruction, not to water baptism. For John baptized with water but Christ “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Matt.3:11; Mk.1:8; Lk.3:16; Jn.1:3; cf. Acts 1:5; 11:16) – this is the “one baptism” of the Church (Eph.4:5), and the baptism to which Jesus here refers by instructing the disciples/apostles to “baptize them *into the Person*” of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit: this

entering of the believer into union or “oneness” with the Trinity cannot be accomplished by any ritual; it can only be accomplished supernaturally, by the Spirit of God, and now occurs at the point of faith in Christ (Acts 10:43-44; cf. Rom.8:9; 2Tim.2:1). Thus “baptizing” refers to the mediation of the gospel message whereby we are saved and entered into the Christ (and the Father and Spirit) by Spirit baptism to become one with Him (and with Them), and pairs up perfectly with “teaching”, which properly has as its object those who have now become believers. Herein, therefore, we do indeed have the “Great Commission” not only to the disciples/apostles but to the whole Church, the essential task of all believers throughout this present age put forward in synoptic form: to work for the salvation of all, and for the spiritual growth of all who believe.

9) To the Five Hundred (1Cor.15:6): We know of this “mass” appearance only from 1Corinthians 15:6, and it most likely took place in Jerusalem. That is because after private teaching to the disciples/apostles in Galilee, later we find our Lord appearing to them in Jerusalem and instructing them not to leave until the promise of the Holy Spirit is given (for Jerusalem was where this was set to take place: Acts 1:4-5; 2:1-4). As late as circa A.D. 55, over twenty years later, Paul reports that most of these believers who saw our Lord on this occasion were still alive, and it is clear from this fact and from the use to which Paul puts it in context that this rather large number of witnesses giving their testimony over such a relatively long period of time was an important factor in confirming the reality and the truth of the resurrection for many early believers who had not seen Jesus’ resurrection personally.

10) Other Post-Galilee Appearances: There are two other passages which imply some further appearances by our Lord during the forty days of His time on earth following the resurrection and before the ascension which may not be specifically delineated in the other accounts. As John’s description of the appearance to the seven at the Sea of Galilee is “the third time” (Jn.21:14), and as the meeting on the mountain and a return to Jerusalem followed shortly thereafter, these other appearances probably took place in the time period after the apostles’ return to await the coming of the Spirit:

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:3 NIV

(30) “But God raised him from the dead, (31) and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.”

Acts 13:30-31 NIV

11) James (1Cor.15:7): Paul tells us that Jesus also appeared to His half-brother James, and this appearance also most likely dates to the post-Galilee period (as Paul’s sequence suggests: 1Cor.15:7). While none of our Lord’s siblings believed in Him before the resurrection (Jn.7:5; cf. Ps.69:8; Mk.3:21), a major change of heart took place thereafter (cf. also Jude 1:1), with

James' conversion either occasioning (or occasioned by) this appearance from Jesus Himself. As the later leader of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal.1:19; 2:9; Jas.1:1), it was also no doubt important for Him to have this special distinction, both for purposes of his own faith, and also as a measure of authority comparable to that of the eleven apostles (all of whom saw our Lord on more than one occasion).

12) The Disciples at the Ascension (Acts 1:1-9):

(1) The first account I produced [for you], O Theophilus, dealt with all the things which Jesus did and taught from the beginning, (2) until the day when Jesus was taken up [into heaven], having given instructions to those apostles whom He had selected through the Holy Spirit. (3) To these [apostles] He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by means of much convincing evidence, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and telling them the things of the Kingdom of God. (4) And gathering them together [Jesus] commanded [the disciples] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father (i.e., the Holy Spirit) “which you heard about from Me. (5) For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Spirit not many days from now”. (6) So when they had come together (i.e., for the last time), they were asking Him, “Lord, are you about to restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?” (7) And He said to them, “It is not for you to decide the times and occasions which the Father has ordained on His own authority (i.e., the Second Advent et al. will happen on His time-table, not yours). (8) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”. (9) And having said these things, He was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud obscured Him from their sight.

Acts 1:1-9

This passage written by Luke is not to be confused with the end of the gospel of Luke. There are clearly similarities between the last meeting the apostles had with our Lord after their return from Galilee (quoted here immediately above) and the first collective meeting on the night of the first Easter Sunday (Lk.24:36-53). The portion of the text in verse 51 of Luke chapter 24 which says “and He was taken up into heaven” is *not* a part of the original text but a later addition, added no doubt in an attempt to homogenize the end of Luke with the beginning of Acts (i.e., making Luke end with the ascension just as Acts begins with it). But as we saw above, these are two separate meetings, the former occurring on Easter *night* before the trip to Galilee, the latter occurring some forty days later on the *day* of the ascension. The special focus our Lord places on the baptism of the Spirit, and especially His contrasting of Spirit baptism with the water baptism of John, should be noted carefully (particularly as many churches continue to baptize with water as if these verses meant little or nothing). The passage above constitutes the final post-resurrection appearance of our Lord before His “glorification” (cf. Jn.7:39), for it concludes with His ascension (followed immediately by His session at the right hand of the Father in heaven: Ps.110:1ff.; see section 5.o directly below).

13) To Paul (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:9-18; 1Cor.9:1; 15:8), and to John (Rev.1:10-20):

Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?
1st Corinthians 9:1

Actually “seeing” the Lord in resurrection and thereby being a witness to the resurrection was an essential prerequisite for the office of apostle (Acts 26:16; cf. Acts 22:15),¹⁰⁰ of whom there are and will only ever be twelve (cf. Rev.21:14). Paul saw the Lord “in glory” (Acts 9:3; 22:6; 22:11; 26:13), as did John on Patmos (Rev.1:12-17), so that these post-ascension appearances are significantly different from the prior ones, and demonstrate the magnificence and the magnitude of the glorification that took place when our Lord ascended in the presence of the Father.

o. The Ascension and Session of Christ:

1) The Ascension: The “ascension” refers to our Lord’s literal journey from earth into the presence of God the Father in the third heaven (where He now resides):

(9) And having said these things (i.e., the contents of verses 3-8), He was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud obscured Him from their sight. (10) And while [the disciples] were [yet] looking on intently as [Jesus] was traveling into heaven, behold, two men took their stand beside them, dressed in white, (11) and they said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking up into heaven? This [same] Jesus who was [just now] taken up [there] into heaven [and] away from you will return in the very same way in which you saw Him traveling into heaven.”
Acts 1:9-11

In addition to this sole description in the Bible of the actual event itself given from the viewpoint of earthly observers,¹⁰¹ there are many passages of scripture which refer to our Lord’s literal, bodily ascending from earth into the presence of the Father in the third heaven – a thing which would clearly have been impossible without the resurrection body (Acts 2:33-36; 5:31; Eph.4:7-10; Phil.2:9; 1Tim.3:16; cf. Jn.3:13; 6:62; Heb.6:19-20):

Therefore since we have a Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens (i.e., into the presence of the Father), Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our conviction.

¹⁰⁰ i.e., Peter’s assumption that actual participation in the earthly pre-cross ministry of Jesus was a requirement (Acts 1:21-22) was wrong (as was the “election” of Matthias; cf. Acts 9:15: Paul is our Lord’s “*chosen* vessel” for evangelizing the gentiles).

¹⁰¹ The phrase sometimes included in translations of Luke 24:51 “and was taken up into heaven” is not a part of the Bible but is instead a late addition attempting to harmonize the end of Luke with the beginning of Acts. In between the two, the disciples went to Galilee, for Luke himself is our source for the 40 days of appearances by our Lord (Acts 1:3), demonstrating clearly that Luke 24:51 which took place on Easter evening cannot have been the time of the ascension.

Hebrews 4:14

[Jesus Christ], who, having traveled to heaven, is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

1st Peter 3:22

2) The Session of Christ: The formal acceptance of our Lord Jesus Christ into the presence of the Father, and God the Father's offer to our Lord Jesus, immediately accepted, to take His place beside Him at His right hand on the throne is referenced throughout the New Testament (Rom.8:34; Eph.1:20; 2:6; 3:1; Heb.1:3; 1:13; 8:1-2; 10:12; 12:2).

The Lord said to My Lord, "Sit down at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

Psalm 110:1

Jesus had applied the prophetic anticipation of the session in the verse above to Himself to demonstrate to His unbelieving contemporaries that David, writing under the ministry of the Spirit, understood full well that the Messiah, the son of David, would yet also be his (i.e., David's) "Lord", something only possible if the Messiah is also God (Matt.22:44; Mk.12:36; Lk.20:42). As this verse and the remainder of Psalm 2 make clear, this is a pronouncement from the Father to the Son at the point of His first formal appearance before the throne of God, an event which took place immediately after Jesus had ascended into the Father's presence in the third heaven, namely, the invitation "to be seated" at God's "right hand", the position of honor (1Kng.2:19; Matt.20:21-23; cf. Matt.25:33-34; 26:64).¹⁰²

[Jesus] is the shining forth of [the Father's] glory, the precise image of His essence, the One who sustains the universe by His mighty Word. When He had accomplished the cleansing of [our] sins, He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Hebrews 1:3

This verse complements Psalm 110:1, describing our Lord as having responded immediately to His Father's offer by taking His seat beside God in the throne room of heaven (i.e., this depicts the actual session of Christ).

(6)And I saw *in the midst of the throne* and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing [there, looking] as if He had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes (which are the seven spirits of God sent out into the entire earth). (7) And He came and took [the scroll] from the right hand of the One sitting on the throne.

Revelation 5:6-7

¹⁰² For more about the heavenly throne and its symbolism, see Coming Tribulation: part 2B: "The Heavenly Prelude", section I.3.b, "The Throne of God".

(16) “They (i.e., the tribulational martyrs) will neither hunger nor thirst again, nor will the sun beat down upon them nor any burning [heat], (17) because the Lamb **who is in the midst of the throne** will shepherd them and will lead them to fountains of living water [lit., “fountains of waters of life”], and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”.
Revelation 7:16-17

The time of our Lord Jesus Christ’s session at the Father’s right hand is soon coming to an end. Psalm 110:1 marks the conclusion of the period of session as being “until I [begin to] make your enemies a footstool for your feet”. The expansion of this translation is both permissible and necessary, for we know full well from many other scriptures that our Lord will not await the conquest of Armageddon before returning to earth, but will be the Father’s primary Agent of that future victory.¹⁰³ In the verses above our Lord Jesus Christ, is symbolically depicted as the Lamb of God, having arisen from His two thousand year session and on the point of beginning the process and the period of His return whereby all His enemies will indeed be laid prostrate at His feet (i.e., the scroll is the book of Revelation which when opened begins the Tribulation, the final period in world history before our Lord’s return and millennial rule). Until that glorious day, the final “Day of the Lord”,¹⁰⁴ Jesus is literally seated with the Father, at the right hand of the Father, sharing the throne. For the third heaven is only God’s temporary residence (to which He removed from the earth at the commencement of Satan’s rebellion).¹⁰⁵ It is His “battle headquarters” from which He is in the process of suppressing the devil’s revolt. And the throne itself, modeled by the ark of the covenant, is in actuality God’s “battle chariot” (a fact which explains its unique appearance and its unique functions; cf. 1Chron.28:18; Ps.132:7; Ezek.1:4-28; 10:9-22; Dan.7:9; Hab.3:3-15). The joint presence of the Father and Son in/on this chariot-throne is thus a symbol of imminent victory over God’s enemies soon to be achieved at the Second Advent when Christ returns and establishes His own throne on the earth (cf. the ark’s appearance in Rev.11:19, a passage which presages the Second Advent).

(9) I kept looking until thrones were set down and the Ancient of Days (i.e., the Father) took His seat. His attire was white as snow, as was the hair of His head, [white] like the purest wool. His throne was aflame with fire, and **its wheels** were a blazing fire. (10) A

¹⁰³ i.e., what we have in the use of “until” in Psalm 110 is an example of prolepsis, a prophetic anticipation of the event. As stated in regard to this passage in part 2B of Coming Tribulation, “The Hebrew imperfect tense in combination with the preposition ‘*adh*, וְ, allows in this instance for the commencement of the process rather than requiring its prior completion. The Messiah is not being told to wait passively in heaven until everything is resolved, but to wait upon the appointed time when things will begin to be resolved. Thus Christ’s direct participation in the Tribulation (most prominently in His personal destruction of the armies of antichrist at Armageddon) is not in any way in conflict with this passage.”

¹⁰⁴ See part 1 of Coming Tribulation, section IV.b, “The Day of the Lord Paradigm”.

¹⁰⁵ See The Satanic Rebellion series.

river of fire was flowing, and it poured forth from before Him. Thousands upon thousands were ministering to Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him. The court was seated and the books were opened. (11) Meanwhile, I kept looking on account of the sound of the arrogant words which the horn (i.e., antichrist) was speaking. I kept looking until he was killed and his body destroyed and given over to the burning fire. (12) As for the remaining beasts, their dominions were taken away, but an extension of life was given to them for an appointed time and season. (13) I kept looking during my vision of that night, and behold – with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming up, and He approached the Ancient of Days (i.e., the Father) and they brought Him before Him. (14) And to Him was given dominion and honor and a kingdom, so that all nations and peoples and tongues should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away, and His kingdom one which will not be destroyed.
Daniel 7:9-14

The offer of session (i.e., “Sit down”) marks the formal acceptance by the Father of the Son and of His work, something which was in truth never in doubt, but something which in the interest of strict divine justice has been withheld until this point (cf. Jn.7:39; Rom.3:25-26).

(7) I shall relate the Lord’s decree. He said to Me, “You are My Son. Today I have begotten You. (8) Ask of Me and I shall give You the nations as Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as your possession.”
Psalm 2:7-8

This verse likewise describes the official divine stamp of approval placed by the Father on the work of the Son at the time of His presentation before the throne of God for the first time. The phrase translated above “Today I have begotten You”, in the context of the session means, essentially, “Today I have pronounced You My own”, for we are to understand these words, in addition to their prophetic application at Christ’s birth (cf. Heb.1:5; 5:5), their further application here in the sense of the Father’s formal acknowledgment of the Son and His work (cf. Acts 13:32-33). The possession of the nations and of the entire world refers to our Lord’s millennial kingdom, the inheritance He will claim as soon as the Church age has run its course. For Jesus’ successful completion of the Father’s plan for the first advent is the turning point of all human history, conquering the devil’s rebellion (see below) and delivering mankind from sin, and the session of Christ is His official and formal acceptance and recognition by the Father of this victory and as such opens the way for all the blessings to come.

(1) Since then we too [like the believers of chapter 11] have such a large audience of witnesses surrounding us [both men and angels], let us put off every hindrance – especially whatever sins habitually affect us – and run with endurance the race set before us, (2) turning our gaze unto Jesus, the originator and completer of our faith, who, for the joy set before Him, endured the shame of the cross, treating it with despite, and took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.
Hebrews 12:1-2

Moreover, in Acts 2:36 Peter tells us that in recognition of our Lord Jesus' victory at the cross, the Father has "appointed Him Lord and Christ" (cf. Acts 5:31), that is "the Lord anointed (to rule the world)", signaling not only Christ's replacement of Satan as ruler of the world, but His acceptance of the regency of the world as the Father's representative. The session of Jesus Christ is thus the formal dividing point between the forward-looking pre-cross economy and the current situation which has the cross as its retrospective. With the victory of the cross complete and formally acknowledged, the Messiah receives His glorification, with all the benefits and results of His history-changing accomplishment now either placed into immediate effect or rendered prophetically imminent – for us as well as for Him.

1) Glorification: As God, divine glory is an intimate and irremovable characteristic of our Lord Jesus Christ's divinity (Is.40:5 compared with Jn.12:41). He has always possessed infinite divine glory and always will.

(1) The Word [Jesus Christ] existed at the very beginning, and there was reciprocity between the Word and God [the Father]. And the Word was God. (2) This One both existed and enjoyed reciprocity with God from the very beginning. (3) Everything came into being through Him, and without Him, nothing has come into being which has in fact come into being.

John 1:1-3

Therefore the glorification in question here pertains to His humanity. Before the victory of the cross and its formal acknowledgment in the presence of the Father resulting in Christ being seated with Him on His throne, this divine glory had been masked. For on the one hand Jesus had to experience life in a humbled and non-glorified, normal human state in order to save us from our sins by dying for us on the cross (i.e., the principle of *kenosis*; see section I.5.e above), and on the other hand glorification for His humanity is described in scripture as the manifestation of the Father's approval of all our Lord Jesus did, most especially in dying for us on the cross, so that the overt and visible glorification of His humanity had necessarily to follow His earthly mission (cf. Jn.7:39).

(31) Therefore, when [Judas] was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. (32) If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.

John 13:31-32 KJV

"And now glorify Me, Father, with your own glory, [that glory] which I had in your presence before the world existed."

John 17:5 (cf. Jn.12:28)

The first and most visible aspect of this glorification, the unveiling or revealing of the glory in His humanity which Christ possessed in His deity since before creation, is His new appearance. For even after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to the disciples, His appearance was not uniquely glorious. However in all cases after His ascension and session, our Lord manifests His

divine glory bodily (Matt.16:27; 17:2; 24:30; 25:31; Mk.8:38; 9:2-8; 9:29-31; 13:26; Lk.9:26; 21:27; 1Tim.3:16; Heb.1:3; 2:9; 1Pet.4:13).

(13) About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. (14) We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Hebrew, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (15) Then I asked, "Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," the Lord replied.

Acts 26:13-15 (cf. Acts 9:3-4; 22:6-8)

(12) So I turned around to see [the source of] the voice that was speaking to me, and when I had turned around, I saw seven golden lampstands. (13) And in the middle of the lampstands was what looked like a man, dressed in a long robe with a golden belt tied around His waist. (14) And His head and his hair were as white as wool or as snow, and His eyes were like a fiery flame, (15) and His feet were like white-hot bronze when super-heated in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. (16) And He held seven stars in His right hand, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword. And His face shone like the sun in its glory.

Revelation 1:12-16

The opposite side of the coin to visible glorification manifest in His personal appearance is His status as Heir to all things, for in Psalm 2:7-8 after the Father formally acknowledges the Son "You are My Son", He then says "Ask of Me and I shall give You the nations as Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as your possession". Jesus' rulership of the world, already won at the cross and prophetically imminent, carries with it the glory of His Name which represents His person, along with every legitimate title of highest authority.

(9) Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the Name that is above every name (10) that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

(16) And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written: "King of Kings and Lord of Lords".

Revelation 19:16

(4) John, to the seven churches which are in Asia [Minor]: Grace to you and peace from the One who is and was and is coming (i.e., the Father), and from the seven spirits (i.e., the Holy Spirit) which are before His throne, (5) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth.

Revelation 1:4-5

(20) Which [divine power] He (i.e., the Father) exercised in Christ by having raised Him from the dead and having seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly [places] (21) far above every other rulership or authority or power or lordship and [far above] every other name which may be mentioned not only in this age but also in the age to come. (22) And He (i.e., the Father) subordinated all things under [Christ's] feet and gave Him [as] Head over all things in the Church (23) which is His Body, the fullness of the One who fills up all things in all ways.

Ephesians 1:20-23

As we see from these verses, a key part of the glory and authority which Christ has won and been given extending over everyone and everything in the universe (cf. Heb.1:6; Eph.3:10-11; 1Pet.3:22) is His unique status as Head of the Church. For this is His “Body” (1Cor.12:27; cf. Matt.26:26; Rom.12:5; 1Cor.12:12-13; Eph.1:22-23; 3:6; 4:4; Col.1:18; 3:15), His “Bride” (Eph.5:31-32), the “joy that was set before Him” as He anticipated the fiery ordeal of the cross (Jn.15:13; Eph.5:25-27; Heb.12:2) – we are the “prize” for which He strove, and an important part of the glorification He now enjoys.¹⁰⁶ This aspect of His glorification could only come to Him in His humanity after He had won us for Himself through His death for us on the cross (Matt.20:28; Gal.1:4; 2:20; Eph.5:2).

(15) He is the exact image of the unseen God, the First-Born of all creation (i.e., preeminent in the universe). (16) Everything in the heavens and on the earth was created by Him (Jesus Christ), things invisible as well as those visible – whether thrones, authorities, rulers or powers, everything was created through Him and for Him. (17) And He Himself is before everything, and everything subsists in Him. (18) And He Himself is the Head of the Body, the Church. He is the Origin, the First-Born from the dead (i.e., preeminent in the resurrection). (19) For it was [God's] good pleasure for the fulfillment [of His plan] to reside entirely in [Christ], (20) and so through Him to reconcile everything to Himself, having made peace through Him, through the blood of His cross, whether things on earth, or things in heaven.

Colossians 1:15-20

As a result of the baptism of the Spirit with whom every believer is now baptized at the point of faith in Christ (Rom.8:9; 1Tim.2:1), we are made “one with Him” (1Cor.1:30; 15:22; 2Cor.5:17; Eph.1:13; 2:6; 2:10; Col.1:27; Heb.3:14), and this unity with Christ will become a visible and exquisitely wonderful experiential reality when He “marries” the Church at the resurrection on His second advent return to earth (Rev.19:7-9; cf. 1Thes.4:16-17).

¹⁰⁶ The Bride, the second echelon of resurrection (1Cor.15:24), will in time be complemented by the Friends of the Bride, the third echelon of resurrection consisting of millennial believers and constituting the “double portion” which is the right of the First-Born. See part 5 of The Satanic Rebellion, “Day 7” under section II.8.b, “The Seven Days of Re-Creation”.

2) Victory:

(4) And I began to cry much, because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look inside of it. (5) And one of the elders was saying to me, “Don’t cry! Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, ***He has won the victory*** [so as to be worthy] to open the scroll and to undo its seals.”

Revelation 5:4-5

The victory proclaimed here is the victory of the cross, for it is by His successful completion of the Father’s mission to die for our sins that our Lord has defeated the devil and won for all time the Name, the glory, and honor that are His as the First-Born. It is our Lord’s victory at the cross which has established His supreme authority in all things and over all things, that is confirmed in His session at the Father’s right hand (Matt.28:18; Lk.10:17-18; Jn.14:2-3; 16:11; Acts 2:32-36; 5:30-31; Rom.16:20; 1Cor.15:21-25; Eph.1:20-23; 3:10-11; 4:7-10; Phil.2:9-11; Col.1:13-20; 2:14-15; Heb.2:14-15; 1Pet.3:22; 1Jn.3:8; Rev.1:18; Rev.17:14), having rescued us through His death on our behalf.

(31) Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the prince of this world be driven out.

(32) And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to Myself.

John 12:31-32

[For by means of the cross, God] has stripped [demon] rulers and authorities [of their power] and subjected them to public humiliation, having triumphed over them in [Christ].
Colossians 2:15

(14) Therefore since these children have a common heritage of flesh and blood, [Christ] too partook of these same [common elements] in a very similar fashion (i.e., not identical only in that He was virgin born and so without sin), in order that through His death He might put an end to the one possessing the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and might reconcile [to Himself] those who were subject to being slaves their whole lives long by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Thus Christ’s victory over sin is intimately connected with His victory over the devil who first led mankind into sin. Not only does the cross make salvation universally available to all human beings in spite of sin, but it also closes the book on Satan’s rebellion, refuting in the court of human history for all time the devil’s calumnies against the Justice of God (cf. 1Tim.3:16; 1Pet.1:12).

(10) God [did this] so that [His] enigmatically intricate wisdom might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms through the agency of the Church, (11) according to His plan for the ages (i.e., history) which He has implemented in [the person of] Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 3:10-11

(4) [And at His session (v.3), Jesus] became [manifestly] superior to the angels to the degree that He received as [a part of] His inheritance a Name so much more glorious than theirs. (5) For to which of the angels did He ever say, “You are my Son. Today I have begotten you (Ps.2:7).” And again, “I will be a Father to Him, and He will be my Son (2Sam.7:14).” (6) But when He brings back the Firstborn into the world, He says, “And let all the angels of God worship Him! (Ps.97:7b)”.

Hebrews 1:4-6

[Jesus Christ], who, having traveled to heaven, is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

1st Peter 3:22

3) The Transfer of Believers from the Subterranean Paradise to the Third Heaven: One ineffably marvelous result of our Lord’s victory on the cross and its results in the unseen conflict that rages beyond our vision was the prophesied “liberation of the captives” (Ps.146:7; Is.14:17; 42:7; 49:9; 61:1; Matt.12:29; cf. 1Pet.3:18-22), the release from Hades (that is, from the “Paradise” to which our Lord also descended in His physical death: Lk.23:43; see section I.5.m. above) of all departed saints who believed prior to the cross. These could not be admitted into the presence of God in His perfect holiness until their sins had actually been propitiated by Jesus’ sacrifice (Rom.3:25). But by His entrance into the true Holy of Holies and the acceptance of His sacrifice officially recognized by the offer of session, Jesus our High Priest has split the veil of the heavenly temple on high so that believers may now enter into the presence of God (Heb.4:14-16; 6:19-20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:8; 9:11-28; 10:19-20; cf. Matt.27:51), with all those believers who had died prior to the cross having been led to heaven by Him in triumph at the time of His ascension (Ps.68:18; Eph.4:8; cf. Ps.68:24-27; Jn.14:2-3; Col.2:15; 1Pet.3:18-22; Rev.1:18).

(7) And to each of us this grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (8) For it says, “**When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive** (i.e., He brought pre-cross believers to heaven). He gave gifts to men.” (9) Now [as to] this [phrase] “He ascended”, what can it mean except that He had also [previously] descended into the lower reaches of the earth (i.e., to Hades, from whence He brought the pre-cross believers to heaven)? (10) The One who descended is also the One who ascended above all the heavens (i.e., into the third heaven, the place of the Father’s residence), in order to fulfill all things (i.e., to complete the victory won at the cross; cf. Ps.110:1).

Ephesians 4:7-10

Although the devil “wouldn’t let the captives go home” (Is.14:17b), our Lord “took the captives captive”, releasing them from Hades-paradise and leading them as His triumphant victory train directly into the presence of the Father in the third heaven. As a result, all who have died in the Lord from that point forward have gone directly to heaven as well (compare Jn.14:2-3 with 2Cor.5:8; cf. Rev.6:9-11; 7:9-17).

4) The Sending of the Holy Spirit:

(4) And gathering them together [Jesus] commanded [the disciples] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to await the promise of the Father (i.e., the Holy Spirit) “which you heard about from Me. (5) For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Spirit not many days from now”.

Acts 1:4-5

For the Spirit was not yet [being poured out in Spirit baptism], because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

John 7:39b

(16) I will ask the Father, and He will give you another comforter to be with you forever – (17) the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, for it neither sees Him, nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He abides with you, **and will be in you.**

John 14:16-17

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:26 NIV

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

John 16:7 NIV

(32) God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. (33) Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Acts 2:32-33 NIV

The benefit and blessing of the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit is an inestimably sublime blessing and empowerment in its own right, and also the basis of many other additional benefits and blessings which combine to make this age of the Church unique (Eph.1:3; cf. Is.48:16). As can be seen from the verses above, the success of our Lord’s earthly mission and His session in heaven on high along with the glorification which it entailed were essential prerequisites for the actual carrying out of the promise to send the Spirit. Not that the Holy Spirit had not always had a critical role in the plan of God – indeed He always has (and that subject will require an entire installment of this present series to develop: part 5, “Pneumatology”). The Spirit has always been “with” believers, but since the first Pentecost of the Church and the subsequent universal baptism of the Spirit at the point of faith in Christ, all believers of this present age are blessed to have the Spirit literally indwelling them (Rom.8:9; cf. 1Cor.2:16; Eph.4:5; 2Tim.2:1), and it is through our Spirit baptism that we are rendered “one” with Jesus Christ (1Cor.12:13; Eph.4:5; cf. Matt.3:11; Mk.1:8; Lk.3:16; Jn.1:3; Acts 1:5; 11:15-17).

(3) Or do you not realize that as many of us as have been baptized [by the Spirit] into Christ have been baptized into His death? (4) Therefore we have been buried with Him

through this baptism [of the Spirit] into His death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the Glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been joined together with Him in respect to the likeness of His death [– and we have by being spiritually baptized into Him –], then we certainly will be [joined together with Him in the likeness] of His resurrection also.

Romans 6:3-5

(26) For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. (27) For as many of you as have been baptized [by the Spirit] into Christ, have put on Christ [like a garment]. (28) There is no longer Jew nor Greek, nor slave nor free, nor male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:26-28

5) Rewards:

“The one who wins the victory, I will grant him to sit with Me on my throne just as I also have won the victory and have taken my seat with My Father on His throne.”

Revelation 3:21

As the verse above states so clearly, our Lord’s victory at the cross verified by His session is also the basis for our sharing in that victory through our own “victory of faith” (1Jn.5:4).

(26) And to the one who wins the victory and gives heed to My works until the end, I will give to him authority over the nations. (27) And he will shepherd them with an iron rod and crush them like vessels of clay, just as I have received [the authority] from My Father.

Revelation 2:26-27

Our Lord’s status as Ruler over the entire created world demonstrated by His session in sharing the very throne of God the Father likewise becomes the basis for our sharing in that rule as a part of the reward won in this life through our service to Him. Rewards form an integral part of the Christian hope (Heb.11:6; 11:24-26; cf. Is.40:10; 62:11; Matt.6:19-21; 10:40-42; 25:21-23; 25:34-36; Lk.19:17; 1Cor.3:8-15; 9:24-27; 15:58; 2Cor.5:10; Gal.6:9; Eph.2:6-7; 6:8; Col.3:24; 1Thes.2:19; 1Pet.1:7; 2Jn.1:8; Rev.20:4-6; 22:12), for it is with these rewards that our resurrection bodies will be decorated in a way that glorifies our Lord Jesus forever (1Cor.9:25; cf. 1Cor.15:40-42; Phil.4:1; 2Tim.4:8; Jas.1:12; 1Pet.5:4; Rev.2:10; 3:5; 3:11-12; 19:8), and it is through our Lord Jesus Christ’s victory confirmed by His session that these rewards are made available as we share in the “plunder” of that victory (cf. Lk.11:22; Eph.4:7-8).

Therefore I will allot to Him [the plunder] among [His] many [brothers], and He will apportion plunder to the mighty [among them].

Isaiah 53:12a

6) Access and Intercession: One of the most encouraging and presently active blessings to result from the entrance of our Lord into the third heaven and His session of the Father's throne is the dual privilege of access we now enjoy for our prayers directly to both the Father and the Son (Jn.14:13-14) as they preside on the heavenly throne (cf. Zech.4:7; Rom.5:1-2a; 1Pet.3:18) . . .

For through Him [Jesus Christ] we both [Jews and gentiles] have access to the Father by one Spirit.
Ephesians 2:18

Being in Him [Jesus Christ] and having confidence through our faith in Him we possess this access [to the Father] and freedom to speak [to Him].
Ephesians 3:12

So let us approach with confident free speech to the throne of grace [of the Father] that we might receive [His] mercy and gain [His] favor for timely help.
Hebrews 4:16

. . . while at the same time benefitting from the intercessory prayer that our Lord in His capacity as High Priest is constantly offering on our behalf (1Tim.2:5; Heb.7:24-25; cf. Job 16:20-21; Is.53:12b; Heb.4:14; 6:19-20; 9:11-12; 9:24), augmented by the intercessory prayers of the Spirit:

(33) Who will [dare to] bring charges against God's elect? God is the One who is pronouncing [us] justified. (34) Who is he that condemns [us]? Christ Jesus is the One who died [condemned in our place], and the One, moreover, who was raised from the dead [for us], who is [seated] at the right hand of God, who is also making petitions on our behalf.
Romans 8:33-34

My children, I am writing these things to you so that you won't sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate to [approach] the Father [on our behalf], Jesus Christ the righteous.
1st John 2:1

(26) In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. (27) And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.
Romans 8:26-27 NIV

7) Things to Come: Presently, our Lord is seated with the Father "until the time when I [begin to] make your enemies the footstool for your feet" (Ps.110:1). That "time", also known as the end times, will begin with the Tribulation at the end of the two thousand year long Church Age. Jesus' session has made those events certainly future (Ps.110:1-7; Heb.1:13; cf.

1Cor.1:7-8; 1Thes.1:10; 2Thes.1:6-10; Tit.2:13; Jas.5:8), and thus His eventual assumption of the de facto rulership of the world awaits only the completion of the Church, His Bride.¹⁰⁷

(19) So repent and turn back [to God] for the blotting out of your sins, so that times of revival may come from the Lord, (20) and so that He may send to you the One acknowledged as the Christ [Messiah], [namely] Jesus, (21) who must remain in heaven (lit., “whom heaven must receive”) until the times of the restoration of all things of which God has spoken through the mouths of His holy prophets from of old.

Acts 3:19-21

a) The Second Advent and Armageddon: At the conclusion of the Tribulation, just as antichrist stands poised to destroy the Jewish people concentrated in Jerusalem, our Lord Jesus Christ will be “revealed” (Lk.17:30; 1Cor.1:7; 2Thes.1:7; 1Pet.1:7; 1:13; 4:13; Rev.1:1; cf. Rom.8:19; 1Pet.1:5), returning in glory with all of us, His newly resurrected saints (1Thes.4:13-17; Rev.19:11-16). The sign of the Son of Man, the cross, will appear in the sky visible worldwide (Matt.24:30), and “every eye will see Him” (Rev.1:7).¹⁰⁸ Unbelieving Israel will repent (Zech.12:10-14), so that thus “all Israel will be saved” (Rom.11:25-27; cf. Is.59:20-21). The armies of the beast will be destroyed (Rev.19:15-21), he and the false prophet will be summarily deposited in the lake of fire (Rev.19:20; cf. Is.24:21-22), and the devil and his angels will be sequestered in the Abyss (Rev.20:1-3).

b) The Millennial Kingdom: After dispensing divine justice in a series of judgments which will begin His thousand year reign,¹⁰⁹ our Lord will commence His millennial rule seated now in the temple at Jerusalem as the rightful Heir and prophesied Messiah-King (Rev.11:15). His millennial reign will bring peace, abundance and prosperity the likes of which the world and human kind has not seen since the garden of Eden.¹¹⁰ The Church, resurrected and rewarded (Rom.2:16; 1Cor.4:5), will share in that glorious rule (Matt.25:19-23; Lk.22:28; 1Cor.6:3; Rom.8:17; 2Tim.2:12; Rev.1:6; 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4-6). But despite a thousand years of perfect

¹⁰⁷ For God’s chronology of human history, see part 5 of The Satanic Rebellion series, section II, “The Plan of God in Human History”.

¹⁰⁸ All of these events are covered in detail in the Coming Tribulation series (see especially part 5: “The Second Advent and Armageddon.”).

¹⁰⁹ i.e., the judgments represented by the “seven thunders” of Rev.10:3-4, namely, on Babylon, the armies of Armageddon, the beast and the false prophet, Magog and the Coastlands, Satan and his Demons (who are incarcerated for the duration of the Millennium), Israel (purged of unbelievers and beast-worshippers before any are allowed to enter the land), and the Church (for the purpose of reward). These are covered in part 6 of Coming Tribulation.

¹¹⁰ See part 5 of The Satanic Rebellion series, in section IV, “Phase II Restoration: The Millennium”; and part 6 of Coming Tribulation.

justice, perfect administration, prosperity and freedom of want, when the devil is released at the end of this period of bliss, the majority of mankind will quickly flock to Satan's standards and rebel against the Son of God (Rev.20:7-10), proving once and for all that rejection of God and His truth has nothing whatsoever to do with environmental issues.

c) The Last Judgment: At the end of the Millennium, following our Lord's rapid and final dispatch of the devil and those most recently seduced into opposing Him (the Gog-Magog rebellion), the final phase of the resurrection will occur with all those who put their faith in Christ from the Second Advent forward now resurrected to eternal life (Dan.12:2-3; Matt.25:34-40; 1Cor.15:24), and all those from Cain to the end of time who have rejected the Lord resurrected to face Him at the Last Judgment (Matt.25:41-46; Rev.20:11-15). As the One to whom all judgment has been entrusted, it is Jesus Christ who will sit in judgment over all those who have rejected Him.

(21) Just as the Father raises the dead and brings them to life, so the Son brings to life whomever He wishes. (22) And neither does the Father judge anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, (23) in order that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. (24) Truly, truly I say to you, that the one who hears My Word and believes in the One who sent Me has eternal life and does not enter into judgment but has passed from death into life. (25) Truly, truly I say to you that an hour is coming, and is now [imminent] when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear it will come to life. (26) For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given to the Son to have life in Himself. (27) And He has given authority to Him to render judgment, because He is the Son of Man. (28) Do not be amazed at this [statement], that an hour will come in which all those in their tombs will hear His voice. (29) For they shall come forth – those who have done what is good to a resurrection of life (i.e., those who have faithfully followed Jesus Christ), but those who have done what is worthless to *a resurrection of judgment*.
John 5:21-29

d) New Jerusalem and the Eternal State: Immediately after disposing of all who willfully rejected Him in history (men and angels both; cf. Matt.25:41), the Lord will create for us the New Heavens and the New Earth (Is.65:17; 66:22; 2Pet.2:10-13; Rev.21:1; 21:5), a pristine universe “where righteousness [alone] will dwell” (2Pet.3:12), and the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven to the earth as the habitation of the Church of Jesus Christ forevermore (Rev.21:9; cf. Jn.14:2-3). In this blessed place our Lord will share the throne with our heavenly Father and we shall enjoy glorious and ineffably blissful fellowship with them and with each other for all eternity.

(15) For this reason (i.e., of salvation through faith) they (i.e., the saints) are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. And the One who sits upon the throne will pitch His tabernacle over them. (16) They will neither hunger nor thirst again, nor will the sun beat down upon them nor any burning [heat], (17) because the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and will lead them to

fountains of living water (lit., “fountains of waters of life”), and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 7:15-17

II. The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

1. Our Need for a Savior: As delineated in part 3B of this series, Hamartiology: the Biblical Study of Sin, section I.1.1.1, “Spiritual Death”, scripture is crystal clear about the fact that each and every human being since the fall of Adam and Eve has been born into sin with the result that they commit sin, a circumstance which, from the standpoint of eternity, places us all in an absolutely hopeless situation of impending judgment and condemnation apart from God’s help.

Now the Lord saw that Man’s evil had spread abundantly on the earth – indeed, the underlying intent of all his innermost thoughts was invariably evil.

Genesis 6:5

What is Man that he could be pure (i.e., innocent), or that one born of woman could be righteous?

Job 15:14

If You, O Lord, kept a close watch on [our] iniquities, then who, O Lord, could stand?

Psalms 130:3

For there is no man on earth who is [so] righteous that he [always] does what is good and [never] sins.

Ecclesiastes 7:20

[Jesus] went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ (21) For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, (22) greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. (23) All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’ “

Mark 7:20-23 NIV

God’s wrath is being revealed (i.e., dispensed) from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness – on men who suppress the truth in their unrighteousness.

Romans 1:18

For all sin and fall short of God’s glory.

Romans 3:23

So just as through one man (i.e., Adam) sin came into the world and, through sin, death, and thus (i.e., Adam physically passing on his sin nature) death spread to all mankind – for [obviously] everyone sins (i.e., universal sinning proves universal spiritual death), . . .

Romans 5:12

(17) But now it is no longer I [who] does it (i.e., commits sin), but the sin dwelling in me. (18) For I know that nothing good dwells in me – that is, in my flesh. For to will what is good lies in my power, but to carry it out does not. (19) For I do not do the good I want to, but the evil I do not want to do, this is what I do. (20) And if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who am doing it but the sin dwelling in me. (21) So in respect to the Law I find that, even as I wish to do good, evil has me in its power. (22) For I delight in the Law of God in my inner person. (23) But I perceive a different law [at work] in my bodily members, waging war against the Law in my mind and taking me prisoner – [a prisoner to] this law of sin that dwells in my body. (24) Wretched man that I am! Who will save me from this body of death?

Romans 7:17-24

(1) And you [too were once spiritually] dead in the transgressions and sins (2) in which you then lived your life, after the fashion of this temporal world, after the pattern of the ruler who holds sway in the air [around us (i.e., the devil)], that spirit who is now at work in those who have chosen disobedience. (3) In company with these we too all conducted our lives in the lusts of our flesh (i.e., sin nature), carrying out the will of our flesh and its desires. For we were [all thus] children of wrath by nature just like the rest [of the human race].

Ephesians 2:1-3

(5) So put to death your [bodily] members which are of the earth, [for it is they that produce] sexual sinning, impurity, passion, evil lusting, and greed, which is [effectively the same thing as] idolatry. (6) Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon those who are [wilfully] disobedient. (7) You too once walked in these ways when your life was defined by them [as unbelievers].

Colossians 3:5-7

And inasmuch as it is ordained for mankind to die once (i.e., the first, “physical” death), and after this [face] judgment (i.e., “the second death”; cf. Rev.2:11; 20:6; 20:14-15) . . .

Hebrews 9:27

In short, we are spiritually dead at birth, being “children of wrath” with only the expectation of divine judgment and the execution of condemnation absent some miraculous intervention far beyond our power and ability to effect for ourselves. And that is precisely what God has done for us in Jesus Christ!

(9) Because God has not appointed us for wrath, but for [taking] possession of [our] salvation (i.e., for resurrection) through our Lord Jesus Christ, (10) the One who died on our behalf, that, whether we stay awake or sleep (i.e., pass on to heaven), we shall live together with Him.

1st Thessalonians 5:9-10

Salvation, that is, deliverance from eternal condemnation on the one hand and the provision of eternal life instead on the other, has been effected for us in our hopelessness through the most astounding event in world history, so monumental in fact that it *is* world history from the proper, divine point of view, namely, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ unto death in our place and on our behalf.

2. The Substitutionary Death of Jesus Christ on our behalf: In broad terms, since God's perfect justice demands satisfaction for all sin, and since we human beings are without any means of providing that satisfaction short of suffering eternal condemnation, God Himself in His inexpressibly great mercy and kindness provided us with a substitute, His own dear Son our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For this reason while salvation has been made available to all mankind through Jesus' death on our behalf, absent the acceptance of His Person and work by faith, the sure and certain prospect of condemnation remains.

For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not being judged, but the one who does not believe has already been judged on the grounds that he has not put his faith in the Name (i.e., the Person) of God's only Son.

John 3:17-18

He who believes in the Son has life. He who does not have the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him.

John 3:36

Jesus died in our place, and we most certainly did need Him to do so, for there was absolutely nothing that we could have done to avoid eternal condemnation otherwise. We were faced with a debt we could not pay, a debt moreover that *had* to be paid because of God's perfect character. Only the perfect Son of God was qualified to pay this debt, and that is exactly what our Savior did for us, dying on the cross *for us*, atoning *for our sins*, that we might not be condemned but instead live forever with Him (Rom.5:19; 6:10; 8:3; 2Cor.5:14-15; Gal.3:13; Eph.2:14-16; 5:25; Heb.2:10-18).

This is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins concerning many people.

Matthew 26:28

(25) God made Him a means of *atonement* [achieved] by His blood [and claimed] through faith, to give proof of His justice in leaving unpunished in divine forbearance [all] previously committed sins, (26) so as to prove His justice in the present, namely, so that He would be [shown to be] just [in this] and [justified] in justifying the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:25-26

(6) For not only did Christ die *for us while we were helpless* – He even did so at the critical time, [dying] *on our behalf*, ungodly though we were. (7) For scarcely will someone die on behalf of a righteous person; and perhaps someone might also risk death on behalf of a good person. (8) But God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died *for us*.

Romans 5:6-8

For I entrusted to you as of primary importance what I had also received, [namely] that Christ died *on behalf of our sins* according to (i.e., in fulfillment of) the scriptures.

1st Corinthians 15:3

He made Him who had no [personal] experience of sinning [to be] sin (i.e., a sin offering) *for us*, so that we might have (lit., “become”) God’s righteousness in Him.

2nd Corinthians 5:21

[Jesus Christ], who gave Himself *on behalf of our sins*, that He might deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.

Galatians 1:4

And I no longer live myself, but Christ lives in me. And that which I now do live in the flesh, I live in faith for the Son of God, the One who loved me and who gave Himself up *on my behalf*.

Galatians 2:20

And walk in love, just as also Christ loved you and *gave Himself up as sacrifice and offering* for a sweet smell to God.

Ephesians 5:2

He Himself *bore our sins* in His body on the tree, in order that we might die to sins and live to righteousness. By His wound you are healed.

1st Peter 2:24

[Jesus Christ] who *gave Himself on our behalf* to redeem us from all lawlessness (i.e., sin; cf. 1Jn.3:4) and to cleanse for Himself a people [to be His] own unique possession, zealous for good works.

Titus 2:14

3. Unlimited Atonement: It is God’s desire that all people be saved (Ezek.18:23; Matt.18:14; Jn.12:47; Acts 17:27; 1Tim.2:4; 2Tim.2:24-26; 2Pet.3:9; cf. Lam.3:33), and it was precisely to accomplish this mission of salvation that He sent His one and only beloved Son into the world – to *save* the world.

(16) For God loved the world so much that He gave [up] His only Son, [with the purpose] that everyone who believes in Him should not be lost [forever], but have eternal life

[instead]. (17) For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him.

John 3:16-17

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

1st John 4:14

It should therefore come as no surprise that our Lord died for all, that all might be saved. And indeed, Jesus died for all people, for every human being who has ever drawn breath.

And He Himself is the atonement for our sins, and not just for ours, but also for the entire world.

1st John 2:2

Thus His sacrifice on the cross was entirely effective, expiating the penalty for sin for all mankind. Therefore, because of Christ's work on the cross, salvation is available to everyone with no exceptions.

[God] has erased the charge against us along with its bill of particulars (i.e., the record of our personal sins). This stood against us, but He removed it [as an obstacle] between us by nailing it to the cross.

Colossians 2:14

Christ's sacrifice is the cornerstone of the plan of God (Ps.118:22; Is.8:13-15; 28:16; Dan.2:34-45; Matt.16:18; 1Cor.10:4; 1Pet.2:4-8). All of history as it actually unfolds according to the eternal decrees of God is predicated upon the cross (Eph.1:9-11; Col.1:17-20; 2Tim.1:9-10; cf. Matt.21:42; Rom.5:6; 8:29-30; 1Cor.8:6; Eph.2:20-22; 1Pet.2:6-8; Heb.9:26), and every scripture in the written word is ultimately focused upon the work of Him who is the Living Word of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Jn.5:39; cf. Jn.1:1-14; Heb.1:1-4; 1Jn.1:1-4; Rev.1:2; 19:13). In His eternal plan, therefore, decreed before the foundation of the universe before the creation of angels or men, God foreknew creature free will as exercised in faith or in the corresponding rejection of Him on the part of many that this provision of free will would entail. In His incalculable mercy and wisdom, our God provided a solution for the death and loss that such creature rebellion would produce (seen initially in Satan's rebellion and then in the fall of man), namely, the redemption of fallen mankind through the blood of His very own Son, to be received by all who would accept His Person and His work. The resolution to the problem of our death on account of sin is Jesus' death for our sin (Rom.6:10), ultimately resulting in the defeat of that last and most terrifying enemy, death itself, which will be swallowed up in life for all who believe (Is.25:7-8; 1Cor.15:26; 15:54-57; Heb.2:14). The cross of Jesus Christ has eliminated for all mankind the impossible problem of sin, even in the case of all sins committed before our Lord's death undertaken on behalf of the world:

(23) For all sin and fall short of God's glory, (24) [but we are all] justified without cost by His grace through the redemption (lit., "ransoming" from sin) which is in Christ Jesus. (25) God made Him a means of atonement [achieved] by His blood [and claimed] through faith, to give proof of His justice in leaving unpunished in divine forbearance [all] previously committed sins, (26) so as to prove His justice in the present, namely, so that He would be [shown to be] just [in this] and [justified] in justifying the one who has faith in Jesus.
Romans 3:23-26

The passage above very plainly refers to all sins committed before the historical crucifixion of our Lord (v.25), and corresponds directly to the critical fact with which the passage begins: all sin, therefore all stand in need of atonement. This universality of Christ's sacrifice, His death for all the sins committed in world history, past, present and future, is taught in a number of scriptures (2Cor.5:19; 1Tim.2:4-6; 1Jn.2:2):

On the next day, [John] saw Jesus coming towards him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, the One who takes away the sin of the world".
John 1:29

But if anyone hears My words and does not hold on to them, I do not condemn him. For I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world.
John 12:47

For it is the love of Christ that constrains us, having brought us to this conclusion: One died for [us] all; so then we all have died [in Him]. And He died on behalf of all so that those who are [now] alive might no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised [from the dead].
2nd Corinthians 5:14-15

But now we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor on account of the death He suffered, even He who became "a little lower than the angels" [for a brief] span so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of us all.
Hebrews 2:9

Unlike the [human] high priests, [Jesus] has no need of making sacrifice day by day, first on behalf of His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. For this [latter] He did once and for all when He offered Himself [as a sacrifice].
Hebrews 7:27

And you know that that One appeared to take away our sins, and sin is not in Him.
1st John 3:5

It is because Jesus died for all sins that no further sacrifice for sins is necessary (Heb.10:15-18). Universal atonement, however, does not mean universal acceptance of the atonement on the part of the human race. The fact that Christ died for all, does not mean that all accept His sacrifice,

putting their faith in Him and His work for eternal life. Universal atonement does mean that Jesus has taken away sin as a barrier to salvation (see below, section II.9, “Reconciliation”). Universal atonement does not mean that mankind universally accepts the offer of forgiveness of sin and deliverance from sin that is universally available through faith in Jesus Christ.

For this is the blood of my covenant which is poured out concerning many for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 26:28 (Mk.14:24; cf. Lk.22:20)

Deliverance from sin and death is available to all, but not all embrace it. The failure of some to accept who Jesus is and what He did in dying for our sins does not invalidate the atonement of the cross either generally or individually, but it does render that atonement of no practical benefit for those who reject it. For by refusing to accept what God has done in taking away our sins through the sacrifice of His one and only Son, a person must necessarily stand before God on his own merits instead. Jesus is the Savior of all mankind, but only those who accept, believe, and follow Him gain the benefits of the salvation God offers to all in Him.

For this reason we toil and strive, for we have put our hope in the Living God who is the Savior of all men, especially believers.

1st Timothy 4:10

The one who believes in Him is not being judged, but the one who does not believe has already been judged on the grounds that he has not put his faith in the Name (i.e., the Person) of God’s only Son.

John 3:18

When He [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will call the world to account regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment:

- regarding sin, because they do not believe in Me.
- regarding righteousness, because I am going to my Father and you are not going to be seeing Me any longer.
- regarding judgment, because the ruler of this world has now been judged.

John 16:8-11

The last two passages above make it abundantly clear that failure to receive the benefits of the atonement of the cross are a result of personal choice, the choice not to believe in Jesus. This is the one sin for which our Lord could not die, the sin of refusing to accept His sacrifice for our sins. God stands ready to forgive all other sins as impediments to salvation, except the sin of denying the truth of Jesus Christ. Calling God “a liar” when He sacrificed His one and only Son to die on our behalf is the “unforgivable sin”, the “eternal sin” of “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”, namely, the rejection of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt.12:31-32; Mk.3:28-30; Lk.12:10). But for all who do accept the truth, who do trust in Jesus, and who do follow Him faithfully maintaining their faith to the end, His atoning sacrifice has already removed sin as an issue in entering into a relationship with God, and by grace through faith

though sinners in practice we are made righteous in principle, justified by the blood of the One who shed His blood on our behalf (Rom.3:24; 4:25; see section II.8 below, “Justification”).

4. The Blood of Christ: As explained in section I.5.1.2.2 above, “The Blood of Christ”, the efficacious and atoning work of our Lord in dying for our sins, consists in what He endured in the darkness for us while still physically alive (that is, His spiritual death in being judged for our sins in our place; see the section immediately following). So while Jesus’ physical sufferings on our account visible to all before the darkness descended on Golgotha were immense and beyond true appreciation, the intensity of the sufferings He endured under that darkness in dying for the sins of the world, dying spiritually in a way we cannot even adequately conjecture, must exceed those preliminary sufferings to an incalculable degree. This work, this death by which He provided redemption for us all, is termed in scripture “the blood of Christ”.

Throughout the Bible, blood is a symbol of life for the very simple and understandable reason that when blood is fatally shed, life comes to an end. This is why even the consuming of animal blood is forbidden – because blood represents the life of the creature; and this also explains the principle of “blood guilt”: for shedding blood and taking life are one and the same thing (Gen.9:4-6; Lev.17:11; Deut.12:23; cf. Gen.4:10). This principle was developed under the Mosaic Law wherein “nearly all things are cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb.9:22). The blood of the sacrifice was necessary to procure forgiveness, not because of any magical power resident in animal blood, but because the blood of animals shed in sacrifice provides us with a very potent and graphic symbol of the need for death (i.e., blood representing life lost), of substitutionary death on our behalf, of someone else’s blood atoning for our sins, if we are to be forgiven and saved.

(7) Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abraham replied. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” (8) Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together. (9) When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. (10) Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. (11) But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. (12) “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” (13) Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. (14) So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.”

Genesis 22:7-14 NIV

The passage above from Genesis chapter twenty-two looks forward perspicuously and unswervingly not only to the rites of animal sacrifice which the Law of Moses would ordain, but much more importantly to the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, dying for our

sins. He is the “lamb” which “God will provide for Himself” (v.8), “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (Jn.1:29).

(18) For you know that it was not with perishable things [like] silver or gold that you were ransomed from the futile manner of life passed down to you by your ancestors, (19) but [you were redeemed] *with precious blood, like that of a lamb* without spot or blemish, [that is, by the blood] of Christ.

1st Peter 1:18-19

(6) And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, *a Lamb* standing [there, looking] *as if He had been slain*, with seven horns and seven eyes (which are the seven spirits of God sent out into the entire earth). (7) And He came and took [the scroll] from the right hand of the One sitting on the throne. (8) And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell [down] before the Lamb, each with a lyre and golden bowls of incense, which [incense] are as prayers of the saints. (9) And they sang a new song, saying, “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain and have purchased with your blood for our God [men] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, (10) and have made them into a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will rule upon the earth!” (11) And I looked and heard, as it were, the voice of many angels around the throne and [around] the [living] creatures and [around] the [twenty-four] elders, and their number was myriads upon myriads and thousands upon thousands, [and they were] saying in a loud voice, (12) “*The Lamb who has been slain* is worthy to take the power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing and every created thing in heaven and on the earth and in the sea and everything in them.”

Revelation 5:6-12

It is extremely important for all Christians to understand clearly that this is a metaphor. Jesus Christ is *not* a literal “lamb”; and His “blood”, the “blood” by which we are saved, is not literal blood. Just as from the beginning of the Old Testament blood represented life and its loss represented death, so in the case of our dear Lord Jesus’ sacrifice for us on the cross the “blood” scripture mentions refers to His giving up of His life on our behalf, that is, it refers to His spiritual death in the darkness on the cross whereby He “washed away” all of our sins (see section II.5 directly following). By the use of this metaphor, the New Testament ineluctably connects the *real* sacrifice of Christ on the cross with the *representative* sacrifices of the Law which foreshadowed that true and efficacious sacrifice to come.

(10) For it was the Lord’s good pleasure (i.e., “will”) to crush Him, to subject Him to torment. But though you make His life *a guilt offering*, He will see His seed, He will lengthen His days, and the good pleasure (i.e., “will”) of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

Isaiah 53:10

Few metaphors in the Bible have been as badly misunderstood as the “blood of Christ”, often with very disturbing consequences in the form of false doctrine (“transubstantiation” being the most famous but by no means the only one). The “blood of Christ” is, in scripture, always a symbol and *never* refers to literal blood. It cannot and should not be taken literally any more than the corresponding symbol of the “Lamb of God” (Jn.1:29; 1Pet.1.19; Rev.5:6; 13:8). This is not to diminish in any way what our Lord did for us on Golgotha – far from it. Rather, a proper understanding of precisely what He did do to win us back from death and hell can only be gained by first appreciating what this metaphor really means. The “blood of Christ” is a symbolic phrase which graphically sums up for us Jesus’ saving work on the cross, His sacrificial death on our behalf which is foreshadowed by the Mosaic Law, and most clearly in the Tabernacle, its furniture, and the animal sacrifices which attend thereto. Just as Old Testament believers offered up animals “without spot or blemish” – pictures of Christ in His perfection – so the blood shed by these animals depicts the precious sacrifice of Christ in giving up His own life. The animals represent Christ (so He is called “the Lamb of God”). The animal blood represents Christ’s giving of His life for us, His spiritual death (so this death is referred to as “the blood of Christ” – because blood shed stands for the loss of life). In his gospel, John makes a very deliberate point of demonstrating that Jesus *did not* bleed to death on the cross. Not only did Jesus of His own volition “breath out” His spirit once the sacrifice was complete (so that there can be no question of death through loss of blood: Matt.27:50; Mk.15:36; Lk.23:46; Jn.19:30), but John very clearly testifies that after His physical death His blood had still been retained in His body (Jn.19:33-35; cf. 1Jn.5:6-8). It is thus critical for Christians to understand that it is *not* through Jesus’ literal blood but through His genuine suffering in paying the penalty for our sins being judged for them in our place, that is, through His spiritual death wherein He was condemned and punished for all our sins, that we are saved. That is what “the blood of Christ means”, with blood representing the loss of life or death, a spiritual death of a sort so intense and profound that we can scarcely come to anything close to a proper comprehension of it this side of heaven. By understanding “the blood of Christ” in these true, biblical terms, we enhance our appreciation of what Jesus did for us, not diminish it.

(1) Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who, though outcasts dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, (2) were yet selected in the foreknowledge of God the Father, by means of the Holy Spirit’s consecration, *for the obedience in and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you!

1st Peter 1:1-2

The symbol of sprinkled blood is also taken from the Old Testament sacrifices, specifically from the rituals God instituted among the Israelites to teach them about Himself and the coming sacrifice of His Son. When Moses had finished reading the “book of the covenant” (that is, the Mosaic Law as outlined in summary in Ex.20-23), he had sacrifices of “peace offerings” made, and had all the blood from them collected. Then Moses sprinkled this blood upon all the people, saying “behold, the blood of the covenant”. The blood represented a violent death (as it does in all the Old Testament sacrifices), and the phrase “blood of the covenant” meant that by the death of someone else, the Israelites had entered into a special agreement with God. This fact was

visibly and dramatically portrayed to them by Moses when he literally sprinkled blood from the animal sacrifices upon all the people. Although this may seem a somewhat shocking thing to us, it was meant to be just so. Christ's sacrifice on the cross cost Him more than we can ever know. We did nothing to help Him, we are merely "spattered" with His blood, so to speak. We receive the benefit of His sacrificial death when we believe in Him, accepting His work on our behalf. But it is of extreme importance that we understand that this sacrifice by which our sins were "washed away" entailed far more than "bleeding to death" (which our Lord most emphatically did not do) – it entailed being judged for all our sins and paying the price and penalty for them. That is what the "blood of Christ" means, His spiritual death on our behalf whereby we are delivered from the coming wrath and judgment whose end is the lake of fire. And that is why when we drink the cup of communion we are not drinking blood or anything that represents real blood; rather, we are demonstrating our appropriation by faith of Christ's saving work on our behalf:

This is My blood of the [New] Covenant which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins concerning many people.

Matthew 26:28

5. The Spiritual Death of Christ:

And walk in love, just as also Christ loved you and gave Himself up as sacrifice and offering for a sweet [sacrificial] aroma to God.

Ephesians 5:2

The words "sweet [sacrificial] aroma to God" clearly indicate that the Father was well-pleased with Jesus' sacrifice, that it was effective or "efficacious" in satisfying the righteous demand of His divine justice that the full price be paid for our sins before we could be saved. But if the words used here for our Lord's death, "sacrifice and offering" and "aroma", while calling upon the symbolism of the animal sacrifices of the Law, are not actually meant to be understood as referring to His physical death (since His body was not immolated so as to produce a "pleasing aroma" in the manner of the Levitical sacrifices) or literal blood (and since salvation was accomplished before He gave up His spirit, and since He did not bleed to death, clearly they do not), and are instead likewise meant to be understood symbolically (which clearly they are), then the question then becomes, "what precisely *do* these words represent?" The answer to this question as suggested above is that "the blood of Christ", the phrase which sums up all the Old Testament symbolism which foreshadowed the cross, refers to the penalty paid by our Lord in the darkness on the cross in bearing and expiating our sins, that is, it refers to His spiritual death. But what precisely *do* we mean by the term "spiritual death"? In addressing this question, Dr. L.S. Chafer makes the following comment:

In respect to spiritual death, there is no clear indication how far Christ entered that realm. He of course did say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt.27:46). Where God is silent the devout mind should hesitate to intrude.¹¹¹

While agreeing with Dr. Chafer’s circumspection in general terms, and while acknowledging that there is much about our Lord Jesus’ death for sin through which we are saved that cannot be known this side of heaven, it is also fair to say that scripture does provide a good deal of information on this subject (even if of necessity somewhat obliquely). Given that there is no more important event in the history of the universe than Jesus’ death whereby we are delivered from a fate worse than mere physical death, we would be remiss in not investigating this question as fully as possible. It will be our task in this section, therefore, to say as much as can be said without, it is hoped, saying more than should be said.

a. Christ Died Spiritually: This is a key point deserving of reiteration (see sections I.5.1.2.1-3 above). The physical death of our Lord which took place when He lay down His life by exhaling His human spirit (Matt.27:50; Mk.15:36; Lk.23:46; Jn.19:30) occurred *after* He had been judged for the sins of the world. It is this prior judgment in the darkness wherein Jesus paid the penalty for our sins that we are studying here, namely, His “spiritual death”, otherwise known as the blood of Christ, as a result of which our sins are forgiven.

He lay bare His life *unto death*, and was dealt with as transgressors [are], so that He bore the sin of the many, and substituted [Himself] for the transgressors.
Isaiah 53:12b

(8) He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even [His] *death on [the] cross* [for us all].
Philippians 2:8

In all such passages as the one above, “death” means spiritual death, not physical death. Our Lord’s spiritual death wherein He underwent the judgment due us for all our sins had already taken place at the point when He gave up His human spirit and expired. Jesus’ emphatic statement from the cross, *tetelestai!*, “It *has* now been accomplished!” (Jn.19:30; Greek: τετέλεσται), is a forceful and powerful proclamation of victory, underscoring the already completed fact of salvation won by His blood – not a physical bleeding to death, but the pouring out of His life unto spiritual death in paying the price and penalty for our sins.¹¹²

(28) After [all] this (i.e., His physical suffering *and* His spiritual death for the sins of the world), when Jesus knew that *everything had now been accomplished* in order for the

¹¹¹ Systematic Theology (Dallas 1948) v.8, p.115.

¹¹² cf. Hebrews 7:28; 10:14; 11:40 where this verb is also used of the completed work of our Lord, with these forms of *teleo* often translated “made perfect”.

[prophecy of salvation found in] scripture to be fulfilled, He said, “I am thirsty”. (29) Now a jar of wine-vinegar lay there, so they placed a sponge full of the wine-vinegar on a hyssop [stalk] and brought it to His mouth. (30) So when He had taken the wine-vinegar, Jesus said, “It (i.e., salvation) **has [now] been accomplished!**”¹¹³, and having thrown back His head, He gave up His spirit.
John 19:28-30

Spiritual death has always been the problem for the human race, for physical death is a result of spiritual death, not the other way around (i.e., Adam and Eve lived many years after they ate of the fruit of the tree whose penalty was “dying thou shalt die” – immediate spiritual death followed eventually by the physical death which results, and, absent salvation through the grace of God in Jesus Christ, finally by eternal death).¹¹⁴ By dying spiritually in our stead, our Lord won the greatest victory in universal history, freeing us from the evil one and from the otherwise sure and certain condemnation which had otherwise awaited us.

(13) And though you were [*spiritually*] dead in your transgressions and in the un-circumcised state of your flesh, [God the Father] made you alive together with [Christ], having forgiven you all your transgressions. (14) [God] has erased the charge against us along with its particulars (i.e., our sinful nature and personal sins) which opposed our [relationship with Him], and He removed it [as an obstacle] between us by nailing it to the cross. (15) [For by means of the cross, God] has stripped [demon] rulers and authorities [of their power] and subjected them to public humiliation, having triumphed over them in [Christ].
Colossians 2:13-15

b. Christ Died Spiritually for us: The great victory of the cross won over the devil and his minions in this invisible conflict in which we are all presently enmeshed was fought and won **for our benefit**. **We** are the recipients and beneficiaries of the boundless grace of God poured out upon us as a result of what Jesus did for us on the cross. He died spiritually **for us**, and it is by His spiritual death that we are saved, for that death removed our sin forever as an impediment between ourselves and the holiness of God.

(6) For not only did Christ die **for us while we were helpless** – He even did so at the critical time, [dying] **on our behalf**, ungodly though we were. (7) For scarcely will someone die on behalf of a righteous person; and perhaps someone might also risk death on behalf of a good person. (8) But God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died **for us**.

¹¹³ As noted earlier, this statement is in fact a paraphrase of the final stanza of the Messianic Psalm 22, verse 31: “He [God] has done it!”.

¹¹⁴ See part 3B of Bible Basics: Hamartiology: the Biblical Study of Sin, section I.1, “The Three Aspects of Death”.

Romans 5:6-8

(14) For it is the love of Christ that constrains us, having brought us to this conclusion: ***One died for [us] all***; so then we all have died [in Him]. (15) And ***He died on behalf of all*** so that those who are [now] alive might no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised [from the dead].

2nd Corinthians 5:14-15

And I no longer live myself, but Christ lives in me. And that which I now do live in the flesh, I live in faith in/for the Son of God, the One who loved me and who gave Himself up ***on my behalf***.

Galatians 2:20

[Jesus Christ] who ***gave Himself on our behalf*** to redeem us from all lawlessness (i.e., sin; cf. 1Jn.3:4) and to cleanse for Himself a people [to be His] own unique possession, zealous for good works.

Titus 2:14

c. Christ Died Spiritually to Expiate Sin: Solving the “sin problem” is the way in which Christ’s spiritual death benefits us. That is the primary image behind the “blood of Christ” which, in the simile, covers our sins. In animal sacrifice, the death of the sacrificial animal is obvious from its spilled blood, while the one making the offering is cleansed symbolically by the sprinkling of that blood (Heb.9:13-21; 11:28; 12:24; cf. Ex.24:6-8; 29:16-21; Lev.1:5-11; 3:2-13; et *passim* in Lev. and Num.).

He made Him who had no [personal] experience of sinning [to be] sin (i.e., a sin offering) ***for us***, so that we might have (lit., “become”) God’s righteousness in Him.

2nd Corinthians 5:21

Thus, in the analogy, actual blood represents the spiritual death of Christ which, when sprinkled on the worshiper (a picture of faith: 1Pet.1:2), cleanses from sin. The spiritual death of Christ was necessary in order to remove sin as an impediment to salvation. As a result, it is sin – all human sin ever committed, past, present or future – which is the object or “target” of Christ’s spiritual death on our behalf. He died spiritually to expiate all sin and remove its penalty, impossible impending obligations for which no other human being could ever hope to atone.

For what He died, ***He died to sin***, once and for all, and what He lives, He lives to God.

Romans 6:10

For I entrusted to you as of primary importance what I had also received, [namely] that Christ died ***on behalf of our sins*** according to the scriptures.

1st Corinthians 15:3

[Jesus Christ], who gave Himself ***on behalf of our sins***, that He might deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.

d. Christ Bore our Sins in His Body: Human beings are universally dichotomous, possessing both a body and a human spirit.¹¹⁵ The body is the place where we are subject to the material world, and it is only through the interaction of body and spirit in our “heart”, “mind”, “soul” (i.e., our inner person where the body and spirit interface) that we are presently capable of experiencing pain. In eternity, both in heaven awaiting the resurrection (where we will possess an interim body), and after the resurrection, where that body will be perfect and eternal, for believers, pain and suffering will be entirely things of the past (cf. Rev.7:14-17). To expiate our sins, that is, to remove them as an issue or “barrier” between ourselves and Holy God (Eph.2:14-18), Jesus had to bear them in His body, that is, He had to suffer the penalty for every sin ever committed by receiving the full pain of punishment for them in His body – literally. That is why His incarnation, His taking on of a true human body as a genuine human being (in addition to His undiminished deity) was absolutely essential for us to be saved. Without a body, Christ could not bear our sins in His body, could not, that is, suffer the punishment due for those sins; and without His suffering on our behalf those sins could never be removed as an impediment to our salvation. Thus our Lord’s taking on of a human body was the fundamentally necessary step for Him to be able to die spiritually in our place, and thus make salvation available for the whole human race.

(5) Therefore as [Jesus Christ] was coming into the world (i.e., at His birth) He said, **“You [Father] did not desire sacrifice or offering, but you have prepared a body for Me.** (6) In burnt offerings for sin you have taken no pleasure. (7) At that time (i.e., His birth) He [Jesus Christ in His deity] said, ‘Behold, I have arrived (i.e., been born) – in the scroll of a book it is written of Me – to do your will, O God’’. (8) Above when He speaks of sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings for sins [as things which] “You did not desire nor take pleasure therein”, [these are the things] which are being offered according to the Law. (9) [But] “Then”, He has added, “Behold, I have arrived to do your will”. [God the Father] is [thereby] taking away the first [covenant] in order to establish the second one, (10) [and it is] by [His] will [in this matter] that you have been sanctified, **through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ** once and for all.

Hebrews 10:5-10

This is why scripture emphasizes that Christ “bore our sins **in His body**”. For it was in His genuine human body that He suffered spiritual death, enduring the entire penalty for all sin:

(4) For **He bore our sicknesses and He carried our weaknesses**. And yet we considered Him as [the One who had been] punished, smitten and afflicted by God.

Isaiah 53:4

¹¹⁵ See the discussion if part 3A of Bible Basics, Anthropology, section II.3, “The Human Spirit”.

(11) **He Himself will carry their guilt** (lit., “guilts”). (12) Therefore I will allot to Him [the plunder] among [His] many [brothers], and He will apportion plunder to the mighty [among them]. Because He lay bare His life unto death, and was dealt with as transgressors [are], so that **He bore the sin of the many**, and substituted [Himself] for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:11c-12

(14) For He Himself is our peace, for He has made both [Jews and gentiles] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, that is, the enmity between us, (15) by discharging the Law of the commandments and its requirements **in His [own] flesh**, so that He might re-create the two into one new Man by making [this] peace, (16) and might reconcile both in one Body to God through His cross, having by means of it abolished the enmity [between God and mankind].

Ephesians 2:14-16

(21) You were once alienated from God – your very thoughts were hostile towards Him and your deeds were evil. (22) Yet God has now made peace with you through the death of Christ **in His physical body** so that you may stand before Him as holy, without blemish and free from accusation.

Colossians 1:21-22

(27) And inasmuch as it is ordained for mankind to die once (i.e., the first, "physical" death), and after this [face] judgment (i.e., “the second death”; cf. Rev.2:11; 20:6; 20:14-15), (28) so Christ having been offered up once **to bear the sins of many** will appear without [any need to bear] sin a second time unto those who are awaiting salvation.

Hebrews 9:27-28

For Christ died once for us on account of our sins, the Righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, **having been put to death in [His] flesh** (i.e., His spiritual death to remove the barrier of sin), but having been made alive by the Spirit.

1st Peter 3:18

He Himself **bore our sins in His body** on the tree, in order that we might die to sins and live to righteousness. By His wound you are healed.

1st Peter 2:24

As Peter tells us in this last passage above, it is by this means that we have died to sin – Jesus bearing our sins and dying spiritually for us in suffering the penalty due us; it is by this means that our wounds have been healed – Jesus being wounded for every sin ever committed by us and by all of human kind, past, present, and future.

(14) Therefore since “these children” (i.e., believers given to Christ by God: v.13) have a common heritage of **flesh and blood, [Christ] too partook of these same [common**

elements] in a very similar fashion (i.e., not identical only in that He was virgin born and so without sin), *in order that through His death* He might put an end to the one possessing the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and might reconcile those who were subject to being slaves their whole lives long by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15

This is the spiritual death of Jesus Christ on our behalf. This is the “blood of Christ”: our dear Lord Jesus’ bearing the penalty, the punishment, and the pain of all mankind’s sin *in His body* on the cross that all might be saved. It is by this “wounding” of His genuine human body that we have been “healed” (1Pet.2:24):

(19) Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence in this entrance of ours into the [heavenly] holy of holies *by the blood of Jesus*, (20) an entryway through the [heavenly] veil [of separation] which is new (lit., “newly slain”) and alive and which He has consecrated for us, that is, *[through the sacrifice] of His flesh* (cf. Heb.10:10; 10:18), (21) and since we have [this] Great High Priest over the household of God, let us approach [the throne of grace (cf. Heb.4:16) to pray] with a truthful heart in complete faith, (22) our hearts sprinkled [clean] of [any] bad conscience and our bodies washed with pure water [of the Word (cf. Eph.5:26)].

Hebrews 10:19-22

e. Christ was Forsaken for us in Dying for us: God in His perfect holiness can have no direct contact with sin and sinfulness – without, that is, executing righteous judgment upon it. Creature sin and sinfulness thus explains the voluntary sequestration of the Father in the third heaven following Satan’s revolt (the original paradise being on earth¹¹⁶), and the separation from God which everyone experiences at birth as a result of the spiritual death that is our common heritage as human beings born in Adam’s line.¹¹⁷ It is only because of the promise and the anticipation of the Messiah’s sacrifice on our behalf that punishment for sin before the cross was held in abeyance (Rom.3:25; cf. Acts 14:16-17; 17:30), and only because of Jesus’ historical expiation of sin at Calvary that we are reborn to spiritual life from spiritual death when we accept in faith that gracious sacrifice (Eph.2:1-9).

Our Lord Jesus, of course, was born without sin and never sinned. Thus He never had any occasion to be separated from the love and fellowship of the Father – until the cross. One very important aspect of Christ’s suffering in the darkness in bearing our sins is the fact that He did so in a state of alienation from God (in His humanity). For “He was made sin for us” (2Cor.5:21), that is, though sinless, He was treated as the one to whom the punishment for sin was due. In

¹¹⁶ See part 1 of the Satanic Rebellion series, section II.6, “The Seven Edens”. The Father’s advent and return occurs only after sin and sinfulness have been completely removed from the universe, and the New Jerusalem has descended to the New Earth (Rev.21-22).

¹¹⁷ For all these issues, see part 3B of this series, Hamartiology: the Biblical Study of Sin.

such a case, continued fellowship with the Father was impossible, at least as long as Jesus was being judged for all of our sins.

My God, My God, why did You forsake Me?

Psalm 22:1 (cf. Matt.27:46-47; Mk.15:34-35)

These words spoken were *after* the sins of the world had been judged in Jesus' body in the darkness on the cross. Moreover, as observed earlier, they were spoken for *our* benefit. For Jesus knew very well why the Father had broken fellowship with Him, and He had known it even before the cross. He was judged in our place, and therefore had to be forsaken for our sake in order to undergo that judgment.

This cry of dereliction [i.e., "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?": Matt.27:46; Mk.15:34] reflects the heart of Jesus' purpose in His first advent and death; to bear the penalty for human sin (Heb.9:28). Since sin separates from a holy God, He had to endure that separation in the moment of His death. Otherwise, the penalty could not have been paid.¹¹⁸

Hell in its essence is being without God. All inconsolable pain in this life is part and parcel of estrangement from God; all of our true joy is inseparable from our closeness to Him. It is doubtful that, this side of heaven, anyone can come close to appreciating the magnitude of this particular part of Jesus' sacrifice, either what this separation cost Him or what it cost the Father. What we can say in this regard is, firstly, that the judgment for our sins was over after the darkness lifted, for in Psalm 22:1 quoted directly above our Lord presents the forsaking as now past (i.e., "why *did* You forsake me?"). Secondly, His forsaking, far from being in vain, accomplished the mission for which He had been sent, the removal of the sins of the world as an impediment to salvation, for He Himself pronounces that mission successfully accomplished (i.e., *tetelestai*: "it has been accomplished"; Jn.19:30 compared with Jn.19:28 and Ps.22:31). And, thirdly, the death which delivers us from sin was not His physical death (still future at this point), but the death He died to sin in the darkness, namely, His spiritual death, the blood of Christ, the suffering of our dear Lord Jesus in paying the penalty for all human sin. For it was there in the darkness on the cross that He was "cursed", made sin, a curse for us, forsaken for us, separated from the love of the Father and made to undergo His wrath in our place so that we might be delivered from that wrath through faith in Him (cf. the stricken rock of "forsaken" Mt. Horeb: Ex.17:5-7).

Christ bought us free (i.e., "redeemed" us) from the Law's curse, *having become a curse on our behalf*. For it is written: "Cursed is everyone [who is] hanged upon a tree" (Deut.21:23).

Galatians 3:13

¹¹⁸ Thomas and Gundry, A Harmony of the Gospels (Chicago 1978) p. 245 note q.

Thus His hanging on a cross, His being made a curse for us (cf. Rom.9:3; Heb.6:8), and His exile into the darkness (Matt.8:12; 22:13; 25:30; 25:41) all speak of the separation or forsaking that Jesus had to endure in order to be made sin for us, in order to bear our sins, in order to be judged and punished in our place for our sins. All of these things speak of the alienation from the Father which His spiritual death necessarily entailed, a horrific price whose true cost we can scarcely begin to understand.

f. Christ Paid the Penalty for our Sins: Simply put, our Lord's expiation of all human sin required that He suffer for them physically and literally – not the sufferings leading up to and including His being nailed to the cross (as horrendous as these were), but the sufferings involved in being punished corporally for our sins in the three hours of darkness on the hill Calvary before He gave up His spirit. The gauntlet He ran to get to the cross is itself a tale of woe and endurance beyond our ability to truly appreciate, but its chief function in this respect is to give us some very small idea of what the true judgment for sins in the darkness immediately thereafter was going to entail: if the sufferings that led to the cross were beyond imagination, what then of the task of bearing and suffering for the sins of the world?

The most extensive and explicit passage dealing with this issue is Isaiah chapter fifty-three. It seems appropriate, therefore, to quote the pertinent parts of that passage in full as our departure point for considering what our salvation cost our Lord Jesus and His heavenly Father. For Isaiah's prophecy, while explicating many aspects of our Lord's passion, also vividly describes the suffering of the Messiah in bearing our sins. He "bore our sicknesses and He carried our weaknesses" (v.4); He is the One we considered "punished, smitten and afflicted by God" (v.4); He was subjected "to torment on account of our transgressions" (v.5), and He was "crushed because of our collective guilt (lit. "guilts")" (v.5); the "punishment [required] for making peace [with God] on our behalf [fell] upon Him" (v.5); and we have been healed "because of His wounding" (v.5); the Father "caused the guilt of us all to strike Him" (v.6); He was "oppressed and afflicted"; He was "cut off from the land of the living" (v.8); and He was "punished for the transgression of my people"; He suffered "His deaths (*sic* – plural)" on our behalf (v.9); for it was the Father's will "to crush Him" (v.10) and to "subject Him to torment" (v.10); He had "trouble [inflicted] upon His life" (v.11), and He "carried our guilt (lit., "guilts")" (v.11); He "lay bare His life unto death" (v.12), was "dealt with as transgressors [are]" (v.12); He "bore the sin of the many"; and He "substituted [Himself] for the transgressors":

(4) For He bore our sicknesses and He carried our weaknesses. And yet we considered Him as [the One who had been] punished, smitten and afflicted by God. (5) But [in fact] He was made subject to torment on account of our transgressions, and He was crushed because of our collective guilt (lit., "guilts"). The punishment [required] for making peace [with God] on our behalf [fell] upon Him. Because of His wounding, we have been healed. (6) We have all gone astray like sheep. Each of us has turned to his own way. And the Lord caused the guilt of us all to strike Him. (7) Though He was oppressed and afflicted, like a lamb led to slaughter He did not open His mouth, and like a ewe before her shearers He did not open His mouth. (8) By repressive judgment He was taken away,

and who gave any thought to His posterity? For He was cut off from the land of the living. He was punished for the transgression of my people. (9) And they assigned Him a grave with the wicked (pl.) and with a rich [man] in His deaths (*sic*). Not for any violence that He had done. Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. (10) For it was the Lord's good pleasure (i.e., "will") to crush Him, to subject Him to torment. But though you make His life a guilt offering, He will see His seed, He will lengthen His days, and the good pleasure (i.e., "will") of the Lord will prosper in His hand. (11) [Released] from the trouble [inflicted] upon His life, He will [again] see [the light of life] and be satisfied (i.e., in resurrection). My righteous Servant will provide righteousness for the great [of heart] (i.e., believers) through the[ir] acknowledgment of Him, and He Himself will carry their guilt (lit., "guilts"). (12) Therefore I will allot to Him [the plunder] among [His] many [brothers], and He will apportion plunder to the mighty [among them]. Because He lay bare His life unto death, and was dealt with as transgressors [are], so that He bore the sin of the many, and substituted [Himself] for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:4-12

It would be difficult to imagine scripture being any clearer about the *physical* toll of pain and torment our Lord's suffering to pay the penalty for our sins entailed. That penalty required His death (Rom.6:23; cf. Gen.2:16-17; Rom.5:12), not the ending of His physical life (which He voluntarily gave up *after* redemption was an accomplished fact), but the "death" of being separated from His previously unbroken and perfect fellowship with the Father, wherein He was made a curse to deliver us from the curse of the second death (Gal.3:13), that is, His spiritual death in the darkness wherein He paid the penalty charged to our account, a death of suffering in alienation from God so intense that Isaiah, writing under the inspiration of the Spirit, because He had nothing else to call it, called it "deaths" instead of death (Is.53:9), pluralizing the experience to express in some small way just what the Messiah would have to suffer for us to be saved. And, indeed, since the penalty for sin is death, the "deaths" our Lord Jesus suffered were in effect the total collective penalty of deaths for every human being who would ever be born. He died for us all. He died for every sin ever committed.

(27) And inasmuch as it is ordained for mankind to die once (i.e., the first, "physical" death), and after this [face] judgment (i.e., "the second death"; cf. Rev.2:11; 20:6; 20:14-15), (28) so Christ, having been offered up once ***to bear the sins of many***, will appear a second time – without [any further need to bear] sin – unto those who are awaiting salvation.

Hebrews 9:27-28

In the passage above, we see clearly that Christ's spiritual death in bearing sin on the cross is set in parallel to the second death of unbelievers who refuse to accept His sacrifice for their sins. He was judged in their places and in ours so that we and they might not have to face the Last Judgment whose end is the lake of fire. We are redeemed and transferred from judgment into life through faith in Jesus Christ (Jn.5:24; Col.1:13; 1Jn.3:14), through our acceptance of His work on the cross on our behalf. But the lake of fire is reserved for all unbelievers who could not even be troubled to give the slightest minimal nod of appreciation to Jesus for what He did for them

(Jn.3:36). As sobering as this realization is, for our purposes here the critical thing to observe is that we are delivered from the lake of fire, the second death, the darkness and the fire, because our Lord endured the punishment for our sins in our place, and the final fate of all who willfully fail to avail themselves of the grace provided through the blood of Christ points us in the direction of what has been substituted in our case: we are spared the eternal lake of fire, because what our Lord endured in the darkness for us hanging on Golgotha's cross is deemed by the Father to be an acceptable equivalent to the eternal torment of all mankind, both for those who refuse release, and especially for those of us who have chosen Jesus and eternal life instead.

Before considering our Lord's bearing of our sins per se, it will be helpful to examine three important analogies scripture gives us to help to explain Christ's spiritual death on our behalf. While all three are of course primarily concerned with the suffering of the Messiah Himself, each of these three examples helps us to understand the role of the members of the Trinity in this regard.

1) Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac: The Role of the Father: All Old Testament sacrifice looked forward to the cross, with the sacrificial victim representing Jesus Christ, and the blood shed representing His spiritual death on our behalf, "covering" our sins with the suffering He would endure in paying the price for them on the cross. In Genesis chapter twenty-two, Abraham was told to sacrifice the son of promise for whom he had waited all his life. Faithful to God to a complete degree few of us will ever achieve, and completely confident in God's faithfulness and ability to retrieve this seemingly impossible situation (Heb.11:17-19), Abraham proceeded without hesitation to take Isaac to Mount Moriah (the actual location where Jesus would later sacrifice Himself for our sins; cf. 2Chron.3:1 with Gen.22:2), and would have sacrificed his one and only beloved son had not God intervened at the last possible moment. From this extraordinary test we not only see displayed the legendary faith of our father in faith, Abraham, but we also are given by way of analogy a human parallel to help us understand the Father's ineffably great sacrifice in putting His Son to death on our behalf. For even though removed from the event by so much time and space, we can all nonetheless feel Abraham's excruciating emotional pain as he prepares to sacrifice Isaac. In this we are given some very small idea of what our salvation cost the Father, who for our sake considered His One and only beloved Son to be "sin for us" (2Cor.5:21), and judged the sins of the world in His flesh. Abraham was spared having to follow through with the ordeal, and, in any case, Isaac's death would have been physical, not spiritual, and over in an instant (with miraculous resuscitation following immediately: such was Abraham's divinely acknowledged hope: Heb.11:19), but the Father inflicted the penalty for all the world's sins on His willing, obedient Son – so great is His love for us!

For what the Law could not accomplish (i.e., solving the sin problem) because it was weak on account of [its dependence on sinful human] flesh, God [did accomplish]: having sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for the purpose of [expiating] sin, *[the Father] rendered summary judgment on [all] sin in [Christ's] flesh.*

Romans 8:3

2) The Baptism of Christ: The Role of the Holy Spirit: While *water* baptism is always symbolic of something, some scriptural baptisms are “dry”, that is, literal (as in the case of the baptism of the Spirit wherein we are endued with the Spirit and placed into union with Christ by the Spirit). One such “real” baptism is the baptism of the cross, or, more specifically, our Lord Jesus Christ’s identification with (or immersion in) the sins of the world.

(49) I came to cast a fire upon the earth, and how I wish that it were already kindled! (50)
But ***I have a baptism to undergo*** [first], and how I am pressed until it be completed!
Luke 12:49-50 (cf. Mk.10:38)

This literal “baptism” wherein Christ was identified with and punished for our sins was foreshadowed and explained by His water baptism which took place at the beginning of His three and a half year ministry. This was a symbolic baptism which was completely unique to Him in its meaning. For John’s water baptism was, for everyone else, “a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mk.1:4; Lk.3:3), and it is for this very reason that John was so resistant to the sinless Messiah being baptized with water. But Jesus responded to John that it was necessary “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt.3:15). In fact, Jesus’ water baptism portrays His death on the cross, His literal baptism, in a very vivid way. The water into which He was immersed had previously been used to “wash away” the sins of all those who were repentant. It was into this water symbolically laced with sin that the Messiah was plunged, not for any need on His part to be cleansed (for He is sinless), but to expiate with His perfect body and through His death to sin all sin which that water symbolically contained. Moreover, when He came up out of the water, a picture of His successful emergence from spiritual death, the Spirit visibly alighted on Him, and herein we are given some indication both of the Spirit’s role and of the relationship of the Trinity in this regard as Jesus’ humanity suffered for the sins of the world. For the Spirit had been given Him “without measure” and “since birth” (Is.11:2; Jn.3:34; cf. Lk.1:14), but we see in this symbol the Spirit *returning* “after the suffering of His soul” (Is.53:11). Thus Christ’s humanity was in some sense isolated from the Trinity as His human body bore and was punished for all sin, a necessity as it would seem, since Holy God cannot have direct contact with sin. This is one aspect of the “forsaking” to which Jesus Himself attested after the fact. The question is, how was this even possible? The following verse gives a clue:

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer sprinkled upon the unclean render a person holy in respect to bodily cleansing, how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself (i.e., His body; cf. 1:Pet.3:18) without defect to God ***through the eternal Spirit***, cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we may serve the living God?
Hebrews 9:13-14

The Spirit, with Christ before the cross and returning after His spiritual death for sin, would seem to have been the member instrumental in making the sacrifice possible. That is to say, Jesus offered up His human body “through the eternal Spirit”. The Father acted as judge, carrying out the sentence of death on His own beloved Son (as symbolized by Abraham and Isaac), but the Spirit’s mediation was necessary for that judgment to take place – just as the Father is our Lord’s

Father, yet the Spirit's role in Jesus' conception is key (Matt.1:18; 1:20; Lk.1:35; cf. Jn.1:14). And just as it was only through the Spirit that our Lord Jesus could become a human being as well as God, being made the human Son of the Father, so also at the cross only through the Spirit was it possible for Christ's human body to be judged by the Father in spite of Jesus' divinity (the two natures being in hypostatic union through the Spirit; see section I.5.e above). Thus the Spirit's pivotal connection with the human body of Christ – at its conception, sacrifice, and also resurrection (Rom.1:4; 1Pet.3:18) – is clear. Scripture does not come any closer than this to explaining the mechanics of a process that in many respects is beyond our ken. What we can say is that the Spirit made it possible for the Father to judge sin in Jesus' body, and for Christ's human body to be judged in spite of His divinity (Heb.9:14). This required facilitation and restraint (both key characteristics of the Spirit's other known ministries), facilitation in making the sacrifice and the judgment possible, and restraint in preventing the complications of Christ's deity, perfect humanity and union between the two from making the sacrifice and judgment impossible.¹¹⁹ To use a rather rough analogy, just as steel cannot be forged without an anvil to support it, so the Spirit was the "anvil" on which our Lord's human body was hammered to purge away the sins of the world. For Jesus to stay physically alive long enough to be punished for every human sin ever committed required supernatural intervention.

. . . . Christ, who offered Himself *through the eternal Spirit*
Hebrews 9:14b

3) The Meaning of the Communion Memorial: The Role of the Son: Communion is the one and only biblically authorized ceremony for the Church, and its essential purpose is very clear: "Be doing this *in remembrance of Me*" (Lk.22:19; 1Cor.11:24-25). The bread represents Jesus' body, the wine His blood. We have already seen how that the blood of Christ is a symbol representing His spiritual death rather than any physical bleeding. When we drink of the communion cup we acknowledge His sacrifice in dying for our sins and say by our action that we believe in and accept His death on our behalf. The bread, on the other hand, represents His Person, who He truly is, God become man as well in order to physically bear our sins and save us from eternal condemnation. And it is in this human body represented by the bread that He bore the sins of the world. When we eat the communion bread we acknowledge the wonder of who He is and what He has done for us, the reality of His incarnation and of the giving up of His life unto spiritual death to save us from our sins by taking our punishment in His own human flesh. Thus the wine representing the blood focuses on the work of redemption; the bread on the One who sacrificed so much to win it. It is important to note that our Lord actually says in this regard that His body was "given" ("broken" is an incorrect translation of 1Cor.11:24; cf. Lk.22:19), "given", that is, over to judgment to satisfy the penalty of death on "our behalf" (1Cor.11:24).

¹¹⁹ In addition to the upcoming part 5 of Bible Basics: Pneumatology, see part 2B of Coming Tribulation, section III, "The Restraining Ministry of the Holy Spirit".

The cup of blessing which we bless – is it not *fellowship in the blood of Christ*? And the bread which we break – is it not *fellowship in the body of Christ*? For one bread, one body we many are, since we all partake of that One Bread.

1st Corinthians 10:16-17

Just as Christ in His divinity did not aid His human nature beyond measure during all the prior events of the first advent (i.e., the doctrine of *kenosis*; see section I.5.e above), so we may be sure that the same principle applied as He bore our sins in His human body on the tree. But the verse above demonstrates as of prime importance in the thinking and remembering of the Church that He gave up His human nature unto spiritual death, bearing all sin in His body, so that we might become One Body with Him. It is indeed precisely because the sacrifice He made for us was so great that it is described as giving up His body for us to eat, and pouring out His blood for us to drink. He used up His humanity as the coin with which to redeem us.

This cup is the *new covenant* [ratified] by My blood which is shed on your behalf.

Luke 22:20b

For [on this matter] I received [directly] from the Lord what I passed on to you, namely that on the night on which He was betrayed He took bread and having blessed it He broke it and said, “This is my body which is [offered up] on your behalf. Keep on doing this in order to remember Me”. And in the same way [after eating] He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant [made] by my blood. Keep on doing this as often as you drink [it] in order to remember Me”.

1st Corinthians 11:23-25

And having taken the bread and blessed it, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is *my body* which is being given on your behalf. Be doing this to remember Me”.

Luke 22:19 (cf. Matt.26:26; Mk.14:22; Jn.6:51-59; 1Cor.11:23-25)

g. The Nature of the Penalty Christ Paid for our Sins: The rendering of terminal divine judgment is characterized by three essential elements, all of which involve pain and suffering on the part of those upon whom sentence is carried out: 1) alienation and *separation* from God (the very definition of spiritual death: e.g., Gen.2:17; Is.59:2; cf. Gen.3:24; 2Kng.17:18); 2) utter, palpable *darkness* (e.g., Joel 2:30-32; cf. Gen.1:2); and 3) *fire* (e.g., Is.66:15-16; Rev.20:9-10). We see all three of these, for example, in the case of the final end of those who reject Christ’s sacrifice for their sins and choose to stand on their own works instead. For while the ultimate, final “hell” is the lake *of fire* (Is.66:15-24; Dan.7:9-11; Matt.3:11-12; 5:22; 18:8-9; 25:41; Mk.9:43; 9:48; Jas.3:6; Rev.19:20; 20:10-15; 21:8), we also see it described as “the outer *darkness*” (Matt.8:12; 22:13; 25:30), a place *separated* from God (2Thes.1:9; cf. Rev.21:8; 22:15).

(5) And I said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” (6) Then one of the seraphs flew over to me, and in his hand was a *glowing coal* which he had taken with tongs from [the fire of the] altar. (7) He touched [it to] my

mouth and said, “Behold, [now that] this has touched your lips, your iniquity has departed from you, and your sins have been atoned for”.
Isaiah 6:5-7

How does a live coal charged with the fire of divine judgment in the brazen altar of judgment not burn a man’s lips? Only when someone else has endured the fiery punishment that is rightfully his. Only when someone else has been made sin for him. Only when someone else has been punished for the curse he has merited by becoming a curse in his stead (Gal.3:13). And that “curse” in the case of the one who has been spared was the lake of fire, the alienation of darkness and eternal burning (cf. Heb.6:8):

Then He will say to those on His left, “Away from Me, *you accursed ones*, into the *eternal fire* [already] prepared for the devil and his angels.
Matthew 25:41

In contrast to John’s baptism, our Lord baptizes “with the Spirit and with fire” (Matt.3:11; Lk.3:16), and His right to do so, the victory whereby He won the authority of the Name above every Name, was His own baptism on the cross, His “immersion” into the sins of the world (Luke 12:49-50; cf. Mk.10:38). Thus the baptism of fiery judgment He will bring down upon the world, culminating in its final fiery end (2Pet.3:7-13; cf. Is.34:4; Rev.21:1), is based upon the prior endurance of His own fiery judgment, wherein He was put to death for the sins of that world (as symbolized by His appearance to Moses in a Christophany¹²⁰ in the bush that though on fire kept burning without being consumed – the fire of judgment on the cross went on for three full hours: Ex.3:2-3):

And walk in love, just as also Christ loved you and *gave Himself up as sacrifice and offering* for a sweet smell to God.
Ephesians 5:2

The “sweet smell” is produced by the immolation of the sacrifice *in the fire* of the altar. It is through His spiritual death, the blood of Christ, Jesus’ suffering on our behalf in paying the penalty for our sins, that we are saved.

For You (cf. vv.1-2) have set Me ablaze in the dust of death.
Psalm 22:15

(11) [Released] from *the trouble* (i.e., suffering) [inflicted] upon His life, He will [again] see [the light of life] and be satisfied (i.e., in resurrection). My righteous Servant will provide righteousness for the great [of heart] (i.e., believers) through the[ir] acknowledgment of Him, and He Himself will carry their guilt (lit., “guilts”). (12)

¹²⁰ see part 1 of Bible Basics, Theology, section II.c.3, “Appearances of Christ in the Old Testament”.

Therefore I will allot to Him [the plunder] among [His] many [brothers], and He will apportion plunder to the mighty [among them]. Because ***He lay bare His life unto death***, and was dealt with as transgressors [are], so that He bore the sin of the many, and substituted [Himself] for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:11-12

(12) Therefore Jesus too, in order that He might sanctify the people through His own blood (i.e., His death on the cross), ***suffered*** outside the gate (i.e., separated from fellowship).

Hebrews 13:12

(10) For it was fitting for [the Father] to make complete ***through sufferings*** Him on whose account all things exist and through whom all things exist, namely, the Captain of their salvation, even Him who has led many sons to glory, [our Lord Jesus Christ].

Hebrews 2:10

In the above verse, we see the spiritual death of Christ directly equated with His suffering. And that suffering was clearly intense (Heb.2:10-18; 13:12-13). For the penalty of sin is death, the second death of the lake of fire.¹²¹ How exactly Christ was put to death for ***every*** human sin, punished and made to suffer in our places that we might be saved, is as awe-inspiringly unfathomable as the contemplation of God Himself. But just as we know that there is a God from what He has done and does, so we know that Jesus paid the price for all our sins in His own blood, because we owe our salvation to Him and what He did for us during those three hours of darkness on the cross.

He made Him who had no [personal] experience of sinning [***to be***] ***sin*** (i.e., a sin offering) ***for us***, so that we might have (lit., “become”) God’s righteousness in Him.

2nd Corinthians 5:21

Thus it is wrong to think of our Lord’s sacrifice merely in terms of the punishment He suffered at human hands, as horrific as that was. It was only ***after*** being betrayed, forsaken, denied, abandoned, arrested, falsely accused and condemned, maligned, ridiculed, spit upon, tortured, beaten to the last reserves of His strength, was nailed to a cross, and shown the loss of everything He had, that our Lord entered the darkness to die for our sins. The gauntlet of suffering He went through to reach the time and place of judgment merely gives us some small idea of what our salvation cost Him, for the suffering of the death He endured in darkness exceeded those preliminaries by unknown orders of magnitude. For our Lord, those three hours of darkness must have lasted more than a lifetime. After all, He created the universe in an instant. But in those three hours, the true history of the universe was written. They are the basis of all that ever was or

¹²¹ It is important to note that the unrighteous dead will most certainly ***not*** be “paying off” their sins in the lake of fire. The lake of fire ***is*** the penalty for failure to accept the work of Christ.

will be good and blessed and glorious for us and for all who have gratefully accepted and delight in the ineffable gift of Jesus Christ.

Although there is much we shall never know about the monumental sacrifice our Lord made, suffering the ultimate punishment for us all in order to deliver us from death, we do know that when it was over He proclaimed “*tetelestai*”, “It has now been accomplished!” (Jn.19:30). With those words the entire plan of God was complete: Man who had been created to answer creature rebellion had been saved and made one with God forever (for all who choose Him), and the entire universal rift that had been started eons ago by the evil one had been made whole and right in principal – but at a tremendous cost, ***the blood of Christ***. Now we who have gratefully accepted the grace bought for us by Jesus’ death on our behalf need only wait for God’s good timing when all things will be put under Christ’s feet, and then will come the final end when He hands over the kingdom to the Father so that God will finally be “all in all” (1Cor.15:28).

He paid the death penalty on the cross for you and every other human being. Every sin ever committed – past, present and future – was judged on the cross. God the Father pronounced the sentence, and Jesus Christ obeyed it.¹²²

That obedience and death for our sins on the part of our dear Lord Jesus is what has opened the gate of salvation for us all. Moreover, scripture describes the results of the blood of Christ, Jesus’ spiritual death on our behalf, in four separate ways in terms of its efficacy in solving the problem of sin: ***propitiation*** (the provision of the fundamental requirement of salvation in the removal based upon the blood of Christ of God’s displeasure towards sin); this foundation has three immediate results for sinful man: ***redemption*** (the deliverance of man from sin’s grasp), ***justification*** (the judicial pronouncement of forgiveness for all who believe), and ***reconciliation*** (the removal of the enmity on account of sin between God and man and the restoration of a relationship of blessing).

6. Propitiation: God the Father is completely satisfied with His Son’s work on the cross in dying for all human sin. As a result, sin is no longer an issue as a barrier to salvation in regard to divine justice. For while prior to the cross God in His perfect righteousness could never accept sinful mankind or indeed even abide our presence (a fact that explains His self-imposed temporary “exile” from the earth to the third heaven), after the cross He is pleased to accept anyone and everyone into His family as sons and daughters, anyone, that is, who accepts the work of His Son on their behalf. All divine grace towards human beings after the fall and prior to the cross was given “on credit”, so to speak, in anticipation of what Jesus would do for us on Calvary (cf. Rom.3:26). In effect, while God used to frown on us because of our sins, and so kept His distance, now through the cross of Christ the Father smiles on us, since Jesus has removed those sins forever as an offense as far as salvation is concerned. Indeed, as we shall shortly see, the Greek words which express this biblical teaching put the matter nearly in those precise terms. However, it is traditional for this doctrine to be referred to by the non-Hebrew and

¹²² R.B. Thieme Jr., A Matter of Life and Death (Houston 1990) p. 7.

Greek derivatives, propitiation, expiation and atonement, each of which call attention to some aspect of this concept of God's justice being satisfied by the work of Christ towards sin.

Propitiation and expiation, are Latin, atonement English in terms of their derivation. Propitiation comes from *pro* ("on behalf of") and *peto* ("to seek"). Thus the word propitiation in its etymology calls to the mind the idea of Christ seeking forgiveness for us from the Father (and we understand that such forgiveness is based on His death to sin for us). Expiation comes from *ex* ("completely") and *pio* ("to do what is right so as to appease" – from *pious*, the source of our English word "pious"). Thus the word expiation in its etymology calls to mind the idea of Christ effectively changing the Father's attitude through acceptable conduct or sacrifice (and we understand that the conduct concerned is His death on our behalf which blotted out our sins). Finally, atonement is in its etymology a purely English construct: "at one -ment". Thus the word in its etymology expresses the idea of our being "made one" with God (and we understand that the means for this reconciliation is the blood of Christ shed on our behalf). Of course, as can be seen perhaps most especially in the case of the last word but also with the first two to some degree, the actual *usage* of these words in common and even in theological English has become convoluted to the point where they often result more in confusion than elucidation. For one finds them frequently employed in ways that strain and even sometimes break their already somewhat tenuous etymological connection with the teaching being considered here, which is that God the Father is satisfied in His justice with Christ's work: the Son's death for sin, the blood of Christ, has effectively put an end to the obstacle of sin when it comes to salvation. For the Father considers, and justly so, all our sins to have been paid in full by Christ.

It is true that the Greek and Hebrew vocabularies used to teach this concept (of divine justice pleased to accept Jesus' sacrifice in payment for our sins) approach the issue in different ways, a fact which may explain the inconsistencies in English terminology. For the predominant Hebrew verb used to express propitiation is *caphar* (כַּפַּר; cf. "Yom Kippur", the "Day of Atonement"). The key idea of the root behind this word is that of ransoming. Thus, in the analogy, propitiation, expiation or atonement would be the payment of an acceptable ransom sufficient to satisfy, please or appease the demands of divine righteousness, with our sin being the debt which needs to be paid. In other words, just as literal animal blood is the necessary means of ritual propitiation, so the symbolic blood of Christ is the necessary means of actual propitiation. In the former, the payment of ransom for our lives, expiating our sins, is merely represented (in a very graphic way); in the latter the sin for which God's justice demands our death is truly put away in exchange for a suitable ransom which placates divine righteousness, Christ's death in place of ours.

(6) Then [the guilty party] shall bring his guilt offering to the Lord; [he shall bring] to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock according to the penalty assessed for his guilt offering. (7) Then the priest will **make atonement** (כַּפַּר) for him before the Lord, and he will be forgiven once and for all for everything he has done to incur guilt.

Leviticus 6:6-7

When our iniquitous deeds overcame us, you **made atonement** (כַּפַּר) for them.

In the passages above and also in the case of the Day of Atonement, the English word “atonement” is meant to convey the idea of satisfying the penalty of sin charged to one’s account. One could likewise translate in each of these cases “make propitiation for” or “make expiation for” or “pay ransom for”, since in all of these uses of *caphar* the same central idea is present: satisfactory payment for sin and its penalty which results in forgiveness. Once atonement is made for our sins, once they have been expiated and an acceptable ransom price paid to release us from their penalty, we find God the Father no longer hostile towards us on account of our offenses, but now graciously disposed towards us, since He is well satisfied with the price paid for our sins by His beloved Son, His death for ours. This is, theologically speaking, propitiation.

(12) “When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the Lord **a ransom** (Heb. רפכ, noun) for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them. (13) Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the Lord. (14) All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the Lord. (15) The rich are not to give more than a half shekel and the poor are not to give less when you make the offering to the Lord **to atone for your lives** (Heb. רפכ, verb).”

Exodus 30:12-15 NIV

Here we see what is even more clear in the Hebrew, namely, the direct connection between paying the ransom price (*copher*, a noun form of רפכ) and the atonement/propitiation/expiation it achieves (*cipper*; the *piel* form of the verb רפכ). In this last case, the money price, which is emphatically stated to be exactly the same for all, represents the blood of Christ, the “coin” of forgiveness, which suffices to satisfy the demands of God’s perfect justice for the forgiveness of all sin.

The Greek root employed for teaching the principle of propitiation is directed more towards the effect Christ’s sacrifice has had in changing the Father’s attitude towards us than it is with the removal of sin producing that change of attitude. That is, the Greek vocabulary is concerned more with the work of Christ in the analogy accomplishing the “appeasement” or “mollification” of God’s justice on our behalf. Nevertheless, we can say with certainty that these two ideas are really one, being merely two sides of the exact same coin. That is because of the direct and deliberate connection which the Greek vocabulary makes with its Hebrew counterparts. The solid gold top of the ark of the covenant, often and somewhat misleadingly translated “the mercy seat”, is called in Hebrew the *capporet* (also from רפכ), and translated into Greek as the *hilasterion* (ἱλαστήριον; Rom.3:25; Heb.9:5; cf. Ex.25:17-22; Lev.16:13 in the Greek Septuagint version). This is the place where the blood of the sacrifice was poured out on the Day of Atonement “to make propitiation for the sins” of the whole people (Lev.16:34; Heb.9:7). Now the ark was a type of Christ, and the cherubim on the cover represented the Father and His court (cf. Ex.25:22) looking down at the blood on the cover of the ark (which contained

representations of the people's sins: Heb.9:4), and being satisfied with the sacrifice.¹²³ The word *hilasterion* is analogous in its formation to the Hebrew word *capporet* in that both words have noun suffixes which may be considered locative (i.e., "place of ___"). However, the Greek root *hila-* (ἵλα-) has to do not with ransom but with joy, and, when specifically attributed to a person, with being joyful or joyfully disposed (cf. English "hilarity"). In other words, the Greek idea focuses on the *result* of the payment of the ransom, the good favor we now enjoy from the Father in place of the previous hostility toward our sin, rather than focusing on the sin cancelled out by Christ's blood payment (as in the case of the Hebrew terminology). In other words, while the Hebrew root for propitiation, (כפר), looks to the means, "ransom", the Greek root for propitiation, (ἵλα-), looks to the result, "appeasement" (when the ransom is found acceptable). This meaning is evident in all of the Greek vocabulary occurring in the New Testament relating to this concept:

Be graciously (lit., "cheerfully" [*hilastheti* – ἰλάσθητι]) inclined to me, O God, sinner that I am!
Luke 18:13b

(25) God made [Christ] a means of atonement (lit., "appeasement" [*hilasterion* – ἱλαστήριον]) [achieved] by His blood [and claimed] through faith, to give proof of His justice in leaving unpunished in divine forbearance [all] previously committed sins, (26) so as to prove His justice in the present, namely, so that He would be [shown to be] just [in this] and [justified] in justifying the one who has faith in Jesus.
Romans 3:25-26

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful [*hilaron* – ἡλαρόν] giver.
2nd Corinthians 9:7 NIV

For this reason [Jesus] had to be like His brothers in every way, in order to become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the things relating to God in order to propitiate (lit., "appease away" [*hilaskesthai* – ἱλάσκεσθαι]) the sins of the people.
Hebrews 2:17

For I shall have mercy upon (lit., "be kindly disposed to" [*hileos* – ἕλεως]) their unrighteous deeds and shall remember their sins no more.
Hebrews 8:12 (quotation and translation of Jer.31:34b)

And He Himself is the appeasement (*hilasmos* – ἱλασμός) [of God] for our sins, and not just for ours, but also for the entire world.
1st John 2:2

¹²³ The typology of the tabernacle, its furniture and its rituals is discussed at length in Coming Tribulation part 2B, section I, "The Heavenly Prelude", and in The Satanic Rebellion, part I, section II.5.b, "The Illustration of the Tabernacle".

(9) In this God's love has been revealed in us, that He sent His only Son into the world that we might live through Him. (10) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atonement (lit., "appeasement" [*hilasmon* – ἱλασμόν]) [of God's justice] for our sins.

1st John 4:9-10

Sin is the problem which has plagued mankind since the fall. But through propitiation by means of the ransom of Jesus' blood the Father's righteous wrath has been forever mollified and appeased. Because of Christ's atonement, sin no longer holds us in its grasp (we who accept His work have been "redeemed"; see point 7 below); because of our Lord's act of propitiation, our sins no longer stand in the record against us, implacably demanding a sentence of death (we who believe in Him have been "justified"; see point 8 below); because of Jesus' work of expiation, the wrath of Holy God towards sin no longer forms an impenetrable barrier separating us from Him in spiritual death (we who have come to Him have been "reconciled" to God; see point 9 below).

Who Jesus is and what He did for us on the cross is at the center of everything we believe, of all that we are, and of all that God has ever done and will ever do in the world. The precious blood of Jesus Christ our Savior, His work on the cross in dying spiritually for our sins, has once and for all put an end to the Genesis curse and opened the door to heaven for all who are willing to hear His voice. For while we were helpless and hopeless and doomed (since without the perfect sacrifice for sin having the perfect effect on the One who perfectly judges sin there can be no forgiveness), the Father and His holy justice have now been satisfied by the death of His one and only dear Son, with the aroma of the ransom price paid in His sacrifice on the altar of Calvary's cross being a sweet savor in His nostrils, well-acceptable to Him and ever able to propitiate Him on our behalf (2Cor.2:14-15; Heb.7:27; cf. Gen.8:21; Ex.29:18; 29:25; Lev.1:9; 1:13; 1:17).

And walk in love, just as also Christ loved you and gave Himself up as sacrifice and offering for a sweet smell to God.

Ephesians 5:2

7. Redemption: Redemption is the doctrine which expresses our current freedom from the bondage of sin as a result of Christ's work on the cross in paying the price for our lives. As a result of our common birth in Adam's line all human beings are born spiritually dead, possessing a sin nature with the necessary consequence that we all commit sin as well. From the point of view of the teaching of redemption, mankind is portrayed as held in bondage by this sin, with no way to escape or gain freedom absent the work of Christ on our behalf.

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, *everyone who sins is a slave to sin*. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

John 8:34-36 NIV

What then? Do we [Israelites] have an advantage? Not at all. For we have already brought forth the charge that both Jews and gentiles, all [of us], **are under sin's control**.
Romans 3:9

For we know that the Law is spiritual. But I am fleshly, **sold [into bondage] under [the power of] sin**.
Romans 7:14

Redemption is a Latin word meaning, etymologically, to “buy back” (*re-emo*).¹²⁴ In the Old Testament, we find two roots expressing this idea (*padhah*, פדה and *ga'al*, גאל), both of which are used for literal redemption (though it can be argued that the underlying symbolism of redemption from sin is always present: cf. Ex.6:6; 13:13; Deut.7:8; Lev.27:13; Ps. 49:7-8), and are also both used for explicit redemption from sin as well. In the latter case, their usage is so synonymous as to be virtually indistinguishable in expressing God’s deliverance of believers from the bondage in which we are held without His deliverance:

(7) Let Israel keep waiting on the Lord, for with the Lord is mercy, and with him is abundant **redemption** (*padhah*) (8) For He himself will **redeem** (*padhah*) Israel from all her iniquities (i.e., sins).
Psalm 130:7-8

I have wiped away your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like vapor. Return to Me, for I have **redeemed** (*ga'al*) you (i.e., from your sins)!
Isaiah 44:22

In the New Testament, there are two very closely conceptually related ways in which Christ’s work as it is directed towards releasing us from sin is described, and these are reflected in the Greek vocabulary: 1) [the more common] metaphorical **ransoming** us from an otherwise implacable force [root: *lytr-*, λυτρ-] (e.g., Matt.20:28; Lk.1:68-69; 2:38; Jn.8:31-38; Rom.3:24; 1Cor.1:30; 1Tim.2:6; cf. Acts 7:35)¹²⁵, and 2) **buying** us out of slavery [root: *-agoraz-*, ἀγοραζ-] (e.g., 2Pet.2:1; Gal.4:5). These two ideas are obviously very similar, and it is not uncommon for versions of the Bible to translate all the words involved in this concept the same way regardless of the Greek root actually employed (i.e., with some form of the English words “redeem” or “redemption”).

¹²⁴ The “d” in redeem is added for euphony only and is not part of the root.

¹²⁵ The critical difference here between redemption and the “ransom” behind the Hebrew vocabulary of propitiation being the object to which ransom is paid, i.e., to God and His justice in the first instance (literally), but to sin (metaphorically) here in the case of the New Testament’s teaching of redemption.

Christ *bought us free* (i.e., “redeemed” us: *exagorazo*) from the Law’s curse, having become a curse on our behalf. For it is written: “Cursed is everyone [who is] hanged upon a tree” (Deut.21:23).

Galatians 3:13

In whom (i.e., Christ) we possess our *ransoming* [from sin] (i.e., “redemption”): *apolytroxis*, the forgiveness of our sins.

Colossians 1:14

In all of these cases, the coin that pays the ransom or redemption price is “the blood of Christ” (cf. Rom.3:24; Gal.4:5; 1Cor.6:20; 7:23; Heb.9:15; Rev.5:9), that is, the spiritual death of Jesus which paid the penalty for our sins, accomplishing propitiation.

In whom (i.e., Christ) we possess our *ransoming* [from sin] (i.e., “redemption”) *through His blood*, the forgiveness of our transgressions according to the riches of His grace.

Ephesians 1:7

Thus the blood of Christ cannot be separated from any detailed discussion of redemption, since it is the blood of Christ which redeems us from sin (cf. Heb.9:12). We are “slaves”, headed for death and condemnation, headed for the fires of hell, with no way, no means to prevent either our imminent physical death or the eternal death that will inevitably follow – unless someone intervenes. God is just, and cannot overlook sin. But God is also merciful, and in His great mercy He devised a way for us to be saved, sinners though we are. He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh into the world to be judged for sin in the flesh that we might be saved (Rom.8:1-4). That is how Jesus paid our redemption price – with His own blood. Without this payment we were lost and already condemned in principle, and held in bondage at a price which we had no means to pay ourselves since the Father’s justice could be assuaged by no less than a perfect substitute, a Lamb without spot or blemish, our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But, blessedly, the Father’s justice *is* satisfied with the ransom price Jesus paid for us on the cross in regard to sin, so that all who put their faith in Him have been redeemed.

(18) For you know that it was not with perishable things [like] silver or gold that you were *ransomed* from the futile manner of life passed down to you by your ancestors, (19) but [you were redeemed] with precious blood, like that of a lamb without spot or blemish, [that is, *by the blood*] of Christ.

1st Peter 1:18-19

As the passage above and indeed all redemption passages suggest, while the price has been paid for all mankind (i.e., propitiation and atonement are universal since the Blood of Christ avails for the payment of all human sin), the act of actual redemption is accomplished only for those who seek it. For redemption is directed towards sin, and sin only releases its grasp through faith. That is to say, only believers are redeemed, even though God has made the offer of free redemption through Jesus Christ available to all. This explains not only why redemption passages are addressed to believers, but also why some passages where this doctrine is taught

emphasize the special relationship of believers to Jesus Christ that obtains as a result of redemption (cf. 1Cor.1:30; 2Pet.2:1):

Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you (whom you have from God), and that you don't belong to yourselves? ***You were bought at a [precious] price.*** So glorify God with your body.
1st Corinthians 6:19-20 (cf. 1Cor.7:23)

And they sang a new song, saying, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain and have ***purchased with your blood*** for our God [men] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made them into a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will rule upon the earth!"
Revelation 5:9-10 (cf. Re.14:3-4)

It should not be surprising, therefore, that the doctrine of redemption, while usually referring to our present position in Christ and spiritually released from sin, ***also*** occasionally looks forward to our ultimate status as part of His Bride, the physical release through resurrection from this body of sin in which we now dwell, and the eternal rewards that accompany it:

When these things (i.e., signs and wonders of vv.25-27) begin to happen, stand up and raise up your heads, because ***your redemption*** is near (i.e., the resurrection which occurs at Christ's return).
Luke 21:28

(23) And not only the created world, but we too who have received the Holy Spirit as a foretaste [of the good things to come] agonize within ourselves as we eagerly await our adoption, that is, ***the redemption of our body*** (i.e. resurrection). (24) This is the hope with which we were saved.
Romans 8:23-24a

[The Spirit] who is a guarantee of the inheritance that is ours in the [future] ***redeeming*** of what we have been working for (i.e., our resurrection and reward) bringing praise for His glory (in eternity).
Ephesians 1:14

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed ***for a [future] day of redemption*** (i.e., the day of resurrection).
Ephesians 4:30

In sum, under the concept of redemption God in Christ purchases us out from under the charges, penalties, and entanglements by which we are held by sin. Redemption is the work of Christ, the suffering Servant, who fulfilled His mission by ransoming us from the bondage of sin and death by giving up His life in exchange for ours, a boon which must be accepted in faith to be effective.

For the Son of Man also did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a **ransom** on behalf of many.

Mark 10:45 (cf. Matt.20:28)

To the One who loves us and has **released us from our sins by His blood** – and He has made us a kingdom, priests of His God and Father – to Him be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 1:5b-6

8. Justification: Justification teaches the way God now relates to us, no longer as those who are stained by and steeped in sin, but as those who have been made truly righteous, justified and washed clean from sin through the blood of Christ, having placed our faith in Him for eternal life.

He (i.e., our Lord Jesus) was handed over on account of our transgressions (i.e., to redeem us from sin), and **was raised up on account of our justification** (i.e., so that we too could be raised, having been justified by His death).

Romans 4:25

Thus, justification is also for believers, we who have responded to the redemption provided by Jesus' sacrifice, and who now look forward to sharing in His resurrection, having been justified by faith. In Romans chapter eight, "justification" is the decision-making step in God's plan of salvation for individual believers wherein our decision to choose to come back to God through the blood of Christ, accepting the redemption He has made available, is validated.

(28) And we know that everything works together for good for those who love God, for those who have been called according to His plan. (29) For those whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to share the likeness of His Son, so that He might be the Firstborn over many brothers [and sisters]. (30) And those whom He foreordained, these He also called [to salvation], and those whom He called, **He also made righteous** (i.e., through faith in Christ; cf. Rom.4:1-5; 4:25; 5:1), and those whom He made righteous, these He also glorified (i.e., our future resurrection and eternal life).

Romans 8:28-30

The doctrine of justification expresses the righteousness we now possess positionally, that is, by virtue of our being united to Jesus Christ, not our own maculate pseudo-righteousness, but God's own perfect righteousness credited to us on account of our being washed free of all taint of sin through acceptance of Jesus' work of redemption on our behalf.

(23) For all sin and fall short of God's glory, (24) [but we are all] **justified** without cost by His grace **through the redemption** (lit., "ransoming" from sin) which is **in Christ Jesus**. (25) God made Him a means of atonement [achieved] by His blood [and claimed] through faith, to give proof of His justice in leaving unpunished in divine forbearance [all] previously committed sins, (26) so as to prove His justice in the present, namely, so

that He would be [shown to be] just [in this] and [justified] in justifying the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:23-26

As these verses show, it is because all sin has been expiated by Christ's sacrifice that God can justly pronounce us "righteous" when we believe in Jesus and are now one with Him. Instead of residing under God's condemnation, we who believe have now been "justified", are made righteous and are considered righteous in God's eyes through our acceptance of the work of Christ and our union with Him.

(1) So now, there [awaits] ***no judgment of condemnation*** for those who are ***in Christ*** Jesus. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the Law of sin and death. (3) For what the Law could not accomplish (i.e., solving the sin problem) because it was weak on account of [its dependence on sinful human] flesh, God [did accomplish]: having sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for the purpose of [expiating] sin, [God] rendered summary judgment on [all] sin in [Christ's] flesh, (4) so that the [perfect] righteousness which the Law demands might be fulfilled in us – we who walk not according to the [sinful] flesh, but according to the Spirit (i.e., believers).
Romans 8:1-4

As the final verse of the passage shows, justification also challenges us to live up to the new status of perfection we now possess in principle (i.e., "positionally", that is, by virtue of being "in Christ"), walking in a godly Christian way (Rom.8:4; cf. Rom.6:4; 6:13-20; Eph.5:8; 1Jn.2:6), appropriating the experiential forgiveness that attends our "righteous" status by confession of our sins when we do fail (1Jn.1:9; cf. Zech.3:3-4; 1Jn.1:7; Rev.3:18), and by producing a crop, the "fruit of righteousness" (Phil.1:11; cf. Rom.7:4; Eph.5:9; Col.1:10; Jas.3:17), in loving response to our Lord. For whereas without justification everything reputedly done "for God" is in fact tainted by sin and therefore completely unacceptable to Him, we have now been cleansed from our sin, justified and made righteous in Jesus Christ through sharing His righteousness, and are thus now free to produce good works of Christian ministry which are acceptable to the Lord (cf. Eph.2:10).

[Jesus Christ] who gave Himself on our behalf to redeem us from all lawlessness (i.e., sin; cf. 1Jn.3:4) and ***to cleanse*** for Himself a people [to be His] own unique possession, ***zealous for good works***.

Titus 2:14

Justification is thus the judicial pronouncement of forgiveness for all who believe. God examines us, and despite our prior filthiness, He now sees us "dressed in white" (as we ultimately shall always be: Rev.3:4-5; 4:4; 6:11; 19:14), cleansed by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev.7:14; in contrast to the unbeliever: Matt.22:11-14).

“Come now, and let us consider your case (i.e., judicially examine you)”, says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be *white as snow*. Though they are red like crimson, they will be *like [white] wool*.”

Isaiah 1:18

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes (i.e., was not clothed with the righteousness that comes through faith in Christ). ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Matthew 22:11-14 NIV

(13) “These people dressed in white robes – who are they and where have they come from?” (14) And I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who are about to come forth from the Great Tribulation. And they have washed their robes and made them *white in the blood of the Lamb*.”

Revelation 7:13-14

Though we were fundamentally *unrighteous* at birth, condemned to death and alienated from God through sin and with no means of cleansing ourselves, by believing in Jesus Christ who released us from our sin through His death, we have now received God’s righteousness in place of our own intrinsic unrighteousness, and have thus been “justified by faith” (Rom.1:17; 3:22-24; 3:28; 4:1-25; 5:1; 5:9; 5:16-21; 8:30; 9:30; 10:4-6; 1Cor.1:30; 6:11; 2Cor.5:21; Gal.2:16; 3:24; Tit.3:7). The sentence of death hanging over our heads has been quashed, for the penalty of death has already been carried out against the Person of our Lord, and we have gratefully accepted His death in our place. Since the Father’s justice is completely satisfied with the substitution of His Son’s condemnation on our behalf, He declares us righteous, justified not by any “works of righteousness which we have done” (Tit.3:5), but through faith in the Righteous One who became sin for us.

(3) For we were also once mindless, disobedient, wandering [pointlessly] astray, enslaved to all sorts of lusts and pleasures, living our lives in wickedness and envy, loathsome and hating each other. (4) But [in spite of our prior sinfulness], when the goodness and benevolence of God our Savior appeared [in the flesh], (5) not on account of [any] works which we had done in [so-called] righteousness did He save us, but through the *washing* [away of our sins which leads to our] rebirth and [to our] new beginning from the Holy Spirit (6) whom He poured out upon us bountifully through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) so that [now] having been *justified* [in this way] by His grace, we might become heirs in regard to the eternal life for which we hope.

Titus 3:3-7

Therefore while propitiation expresses the payment for our sins by Jesus Christ, and while redemption illustrates the breaking by His death of sin’s stranglehold on us, justification consists

in our cleansing from sin whereby we are now clean in God's eyes. For through Christ's vicarious death on our behalf and our embracing of it, we are now considered righteous in the judgment of the justice of God.

(9) Don't you know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor practitioners of homosexuality (10) nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And this is [exactly] what some of you were – but ***you were washed [clean]***, but you were made holy, but ***you were made righteous*** by [faith in] the Person (lit., Name) of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.

1st Corinthians 6:9-11

This “cleansing from sin” aspect of justification whereby all the charges against us are dropped because of Christ's sacrifice is ubiquitous in scripture (e.g., Is.43:25; 1Cor.6:11; Col.2:14; 1Pet.1:2; Heb.9:13-21; Heb.12:24). This was the primary message in water baptism, otherwise known as “John's baptism”, a symbolic washing away of sins following true repentance in turning back to God (Acts 19:4; cf. Acts 1:5; 11:16). After the cross, rather than a solely symbolic cleansing based upon what God ***would*** do, we now have genuine cleansing and forgiveness as a result of what God ***has*** done in judging our sins in Christ and forgiving us based upon the cleansing power of the blood of Christ.

(1) God, from antiquity having communicated to our fathers in the prophets at many times and in many ways, (2) has in these last days communicated to us in a Son, [the One] whom He has appointed heir of all things, [the One] through whom He created the universe. (3) He is the shining forth of [the Father's] glory, the precise image of His essence, the One who sustains the universe by His mighty Word. ***When He had accomplished the cleansing of [our] sins***, He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Hebrews 1:1-3

(19) Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence in this entrance of ours into the [heavenly] holy of holies by the blood of Jesus, (20) an entryway through the [heavenly] veil [of separation] which is new (9) and alive and which He has consecrated for us, that is [through the sacrifice] of His flesh (cf. Heb.10:10; 10:18), (21) and since we have [this] Great High Priest over the household of God, let us approach [the throne of grace (cf. Heb.4:16) to pray] with a truthful heart in complete faith, (22) ***our hearts sprinkled [clean]*** of [any] bad conscience and ***our bodies washed with pure water*** [of the Word (cf. Eph.5:26)].

Hebrews 10:19-22

This is the “new covenant” God has made with us “by sacrifice” (Ps.50:5), forgiving us and considering us righteous by virtue of what Jesus did in dying for us (when we embrace that work and the forgiveness that attends it).

(12) “For I shall have mercy upon their unrighteous deeds and shall remember their sins no more (Jeremiah 31:34).” (13) In mentioning a “New [Covenant]”, He has rendered the Old one obsolete. And that which is obsolete and antiquated is close to disappearing.
Hebrews 8:12-13

In short, justification means having God’s righteousness as far as He is concerned, not based upon anything we have done, but upon Christ’s work on our behalf. We are justified, rendered and considered righteous as those who are one with Jesus Christ when we believe in Him. Justification is the first blessed benefit we seek and receive when we set ourselves to come to God through Jesus Christ. For, once we are considered righteous by the justice of God, the door has been opened through Jesus to all the blessings heaven contains.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, *and his righteousness*; and all these things shall be added unto you.
Matthew 6:33 KJV

(7) But whatever I had gained [in my former godless life], compared to Christ I have come to consider these things as losses. (8) Indeed, I consider everything to be a loss compared to the surpassing importance of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord, for whose sake I have suffered the loss of everything, and consider [everything I have lost] as garbage, compared to gaining Christ, (9) and being found *in Him* – not having a personal righteousness [developed] through [following] the [Mosaic] law – *but having that righteousness [that comes] through faith in Christ, that righteousness [that comes] from God based on faith.*
Philippians 3:7-9

9. Reconciliation: The biblical teaching of reconciliation views salvation as the reestablishment of our relationship with God. Since we are all born spiritually dead “in Adam”, that is, since we all possess a sin nature through physical birth, a fact which guarantees that sin will follow our inherent sinfulness, we are all also born alienated from God (Col.1:21), the Father of our spirits (Heb.12:9). But just as the prodigal son’s father loved him dearly, and was overjoyed when he returned (Lk.15:11-32), so too our heavenly Father loves us beyond our comprehension, and has indeed done the most for us that we might be able to return to Him and reenter the grace and blessing reserved for His true sons and daughters. For in order for us to be reconciled to Him, not only do we have to be willing to turn away from the world and return to Him in humility and repentance and faith, but He first had to resolve the issue of sin, that is to say, a means had to be provided for us to be made righteous and acceptable to God before we were *fit* to be reconciled to Him (i.e., justification must precede reconciliation).

[God] has erased the charge against us along with its bill of particulars (i.e., the record of our personal sins). This stood against us, but He removed it [as an obstacle] between us by nailing it to the cross.
Colossians 2:14

In this teaching, sin thus forms a barrier, so to speak,¹²⁶ which separates us from holy God, a wall of enmity and impending wrath, which can only be removed by the complete and righteous judgment of all of our sins.

(14) For *[Jesus] Himself is our peace*, for He has made both [Jews and gentiles] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, that is, the *enmity*, (15) by discharging the Law of the commandments and its requirements with His [own] body, so that He might re-create the two into one new Man *by making [this] peace*, (16) and might *reconcile* both in one Body to God through His cross, having by means of it abolished the *enmity* [between God and mankind]. (17) For when He had come (i.e., the 1st advent), He proclaimed *the gospel of peace* to you who were far away [from God], and *peace* to those who were near. (18) For it is through Him that we both have our *access* to the Father by means of one Spirit.

Ephesians 2:14-18

The prerequisite for reconciliation with the Father has thus in ineffable blessedness been carried out by the full and fully effective judgment of the sins of the world in the body of Jesus Christ. It is our Savior's blood that has torn down the wall of hostility and impending wrath and opened up the door of grace and peace.

(8) But God commends His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) So how much more is it not true now, after we have been rendered righteous [through faith] in His blood, that we shall be saved from the [coming] *wrath* through Him? (10) For if when we were His enemies *we were reconciled to God* through the death of His Son, how much more is it not true [now], since *we have been reconciled [to Him]* through Jesus' death], that we will be saved by His life? (11) And not only that, but we even flaunt [our new relationship] with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained this *reconciliation*.

Romans 5:8-11

In the symbolism of reconciliation, Jesus has made peace for us with God – through His own death which paid our outstanding debts – and in so doing has transformed us from being God's enemies by nature and by birth into members of God's own household, sons and daughters fully restored into the good graces of the loving Father who made us.

(19) For it was [God's] good pleasure for the fulfillment [of His plan] to reside entirely in [Christ], (20) and so through Him *to reconcile* everything to Himself, having made *peace* through Him, through the blood of His cross, whether things on earth, or things in heaven. (21) You were once *alienated* from God – your very thoughts were hostile towards Him and your deeds were evil. (22) Yet God has now accomplished *reconciliation* [for you] through the death of Christ in His physical body so that you may

¹²⁶ see R.B. Thieme Jr., The Barrier (Houston 1977).

stand before Him as holy, without blemish and free from accusation – [this you will do] (23) if you remain solidly grounded and firmly fixed in the faith, and un-moved from your hope in the gospel which you have heard proclaimed in all creation under heaven, of which [gospel] I, Paul, have become a minister.
Colossians 1:19-23

Though as sinners by birth, we were previously God's enemies, we have now been reconciled to Him by the blood of Jesus Christ through our faith in Him and His sacrifice for us on the cross, so that the wrath we once anticipated has been replaced by confidence in the justification we now possess, for now in place of enmity, we have access to God Himself (Rom.5:1-2; Eph.2:18; 3:12; Heb.4:16; 1Pet.3:18), and peace with the Father through the intercession of the Son.

(1) So now that we have been justified by faith, let us take hold of *the peace* [we have] with God [the Father] through our Lord Jesus Christ, (2) through whom we have also obtained our *access* into this grace in which we stand, and let us boast in the hope of the glory of God (i.e., in anticipation of our resurrection).
Romans 5:1-2

It is the Father Himself who initiated this process of reconciliation, striving to bring all of His lost sheep back to Himself through the greatest sacrifice He could possibly make, and empowering us who have returned to spread the message that, since Christ has removed the barrier of wrath and enmity that once separated us, instead of anger for sins past, God's attitude towards us is now one of loving acceptance, if only we are willing to accept the gift of Jesus Christ and be reconciled to Him.

(18) And all things come from God who *reconciled us to Himself* through Christ, and gave us the ministry *of reconciliation*, (19) for that God was [and is] in Christ making overtures *of reconciliation* between the world and Himself – not taking their transgressions into account – and has entrusted us with this message (lit., “word”) of *reconciliation*. (20) As ambassadors of Christ, as though God were urging you through us, we beg you on Christ's behalf: *be reconciled* to God!
2nd Corinthians 5:18-20

The Son is also said to be an agent of reconciliation in the context of His becoming – like us – a genuine human being, with, moreover, that taking on of humanity being implied in the following verses as necessary in order to accomplish reconciliation (since He had to become a man in order to die for our sins).

(5) But [in fact] He was made subject to torment on account of our transgressions, and He was crushed because of our collective guilt (lit., “guilts”). *The punishment [required] for making peace [with God] on our behalf* [fell] upon Him. Because of His wounding, we have been healed.
Isaiah 53:5

(14) Therefore since these children have a common heritage of flesh and blood, [Christ] too partook of these same [common elements] in a very similar fashion (i.e., not identical only in that He was virgin born and so without sin), in order that through His death He might put an end to the one possessing the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and might *reconcile* [to Himself] those who were subject to being slaves their whole lives long by their fear of death.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Jesus is thus the Mediator between God and mankind, for He alone is qualified to be so. He is not only true God and always has been, but is since the incarnation a true human being as well. As such, He is able to represent both parties and effect reconciliation. He offers this reconciliation to us, and we who have accepted it proclaim His offer to the world (2Cor.5:18-20), but the offer is only possible because of the fact that the aggrieved party, God, has been fully and completely conciliated by the ransom Jesus Himself paid to affect our return to the Father, namely, by bearing our sins in His body on the cross, and by paying the full penalty for them in dying in our place.

[God] who wants all men to be saved and come to accept the truth. For as God is One, so there is [only] One *Mediator* between God and Man, Christ Jesus in His humanity, who *gave Himself as a ransom* for all [mankind] . . .

1st Timothy 2:4-6a

This is how we enter into to the new agreement of restored and eternal fellowship with God, the New Covenant “in My blood” (Lk.22:20; 1Cor.11:25), as our Lord said, namely, by being reconciled to the Father through faith on the basis of the death of Jesus in our place.

(11) But Christ has already arrived [in heaven] as High Priest of the good things to come, [having passed] through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, that is, the one which is not of this creation. (12) Nor was it through the blood of goats and bullocks, but through His own blood (i.e., His spiritual death) that He entered once and for all into the holy of holies, having wrought eternal redemption. (13) For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer sprinkled upon the unclean render a person holy in respect to bodily cleansing, (14) how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself without defect to God through the eternal Spirit, cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we may serve the living God? (15) And it is for this reason that He is the *Mediator of a New Covenant*, so that those who have been called might receive their eternal inheritance on the basis of the death He suffered to redeem us from the transgressions [committed] under the first Covenant.

Hebrews 9:11-15 (cf. Heb.12:24)

10. Summary of the Work of Christ in Effecting Salvation: Mankind was helpless and hopeless, and facing eternal condemnation when “the goodness and benevolence of our God our Savior appeared [in the flesh]” (Tit.3:4), namely, Jesus, the “grace of God” personified, who has brought “salvation . . . to all mankind” (Tit.2:11; cf. Heb.9:26; 1Jn.1:2; 3:5). But “while we were yet

sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom.5:8), for you and me and for everyone, dying on the cross for every sin that has ever been committed or ever will be. The work of Jesus Christ in atoning for sin, is called in scripture the “blood of Christ”, a phrase which refers not to our Lord’s literal blood, for He did not in fact bleed to death but gave up His spirit of His own accord once the work of salvation had been accomplished, proclaiming, “It has now been accomplished!” (Jn.19:30), but to His work on the cross in dying for our sins, that is to His spiritual death. For Jesus was judged in our place, condemned in our place, paid the penalty for all of our sins in Calvary’s darkness, bearing them all in His body on the tree. This He did not only for us who have in humility and repentance gratefully accepted in faith His substitutionary death on our behalf, we who now call Him “Lord”, but He died also for those who rejected Him, the atonement being universal for all mankind.

The blood of Christ, Jesus’ spiritual death on the cross in dying for and in paying the penalty for all of the sins of the world, has been proclaimed fully effective in satisfying the righteous demands of the Father’s justice that sin be atoned for (Eph.5:2; cf. Matt.3:17; 17:5; Mk.1:11; Lk.3:22; 2Pet.1:17); we call this aspect of the blood of Christ in salvation **propitiation**.

(25) God made [Christ] a means of atonement (or propitiation; lit., “appeasement”) [achieved] **by His blood** . . .
Romans 3:25a

Having satisfied the demands of divine justice, the blood of Christ, avails to ransom sinful mankind from the bondage of sin, buying us out of our slavery to sin by paying the full price of the penalty for everything we have done; we call this aspect of the blood of Christ in salvation **redemption**.

In whom (i.e., Christ) we possess our **ransoming** [from sin] (i.e., “redemption”) **through His blood**, the forgiveness of our transgressions according to the riches of His grace.
Ephesians 1:7

(18) For you know that it was not with perishable things [like] silver or gold that you were **ransomed** from the futile manner of life passed down to you by your ancestors, (19) but [you were redeemed] with precious blood, like that of a lamb without spot or blemish, [that is, **by the blood**] **of Christ**.
1st Peter 1:18-19

Having been redeemed from sin’s grasp and bought out from under its control, we who walk out of the prison house in faith are washed clean by the blood of Christ, and receive His righteousness in place of our own, so that we are now considered guiltless by the justice of God; we call this aspect of the blood of Christ in salvation **justification**.

How much more [is it not then clearly the case that] we who have been **justified by His blood** shall therefore [certainly] be saved through Him from the wrath [of judgment to come]!

Romans 5:9

As those who have now been washed clean of sin and justified by faith (Rom.3:28; 4:1; 5:1; Gal.2:16; 3:11; 3:24), we are fit to be presented to God, ushered back into the presence of our loving Father by our Mediator, the One who saved us by His blood, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; we call this aspect of the blood of Christ in salvation *reconciliation*.

Because He lay bare His life unto death, and was dealt with as transgressors [are], so that He bore the sin of the many, and *substituted* [Himself] (i.e., made intercession) for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:12b

(19) For it was [God's] good pleasure for the fulfillment [of His plan] to reside entirely in [Christ], (20) and so through Him *to reconcile* everything to Himself, having made peace through Him, *through the blood of His cross*, whether things on earth, or things in heaven.

Colossians 1:19-20

For Jesus is our *High Priest*, God's *propitiation* and means of atonement for all mankind through His blood, having died that all might have eternal life.

For this reason He had to be like His brothers in every way, in order to become a merciful and faithful *High Priest* in the things relating to God in order *to propitiate* the sins of the people (i.e., through the sacrifice of Himself).

Hebrews 2:17

Jesus is our *Redeemer*, having purchased by His blood the release from sin and *redemption* of all who are willing to receive it.

“The *Redeemer* will come to Zion, to those in Jacob *who repent of their sins*,” declares the Lord.

Isaiah 59:20 NIV

And they sang a new song, saying, “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain and have *purchased with your blood* for our God [men] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made them into a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will rule upon the earth!”

Revelation 5:9-10 (cf. Re.14:3-4)

Jesus is our *Savior*, having delivered us from condemnation through the *justification* which is in His blood.

My righteous Servant will *provide righteousness* for the great [of heart] (i.e., believers) through the[ir] acknowledgment of Him, and He Himself will *carry their guilt* (lit., “guilts”).

Isaiah 53:11b

How much more [is it not then clearly the case that] we who have been *justified by His blood* shall therefore [certainly] be saved through Him from the wrath [of judgment to come]!

Romans 5:9

And Jesus is our *Mediator*, the One who has *reconciled* us to God and made all with faith in Him sons and daughters of God most high, in anticipation of the eternal inheritance and resurrection that is our hope.

And it is for this reason that He is the *Mediator* of a New Covenant, so that those who have been called might receive their eternal inheritance *on the basis of the death He suffered* to redeem us from the transgressions [committed] under the first Covenant.

Hebrews 9:11-15 (cf. Heb.12:24)

Our God is a God of intrinsic goodness which overflows in love.

We see this love manifest in His great grace which has effected redemption for us.

Our God is a God of intrinsic holiness which overflows in justice.

We see this justice manifest in His great mercy which has effected justification for us.

Our God is a God of intrinsic truth which overflows in life.

We see this life manifest in His great peace which has effected reconciliation for us.

For our God has washed away our sins in the blood of Christ, having been propitiated in every aspect of His character by the death of His one and only dear Son on our behalf.

Therefore instead of slavery, we have redemption, and are free to follow Him in faith.

Instead of condemnation, we have justification, and are washed clean by His blood.

And instead of alienation, we have reconciliation, and have become the sons of God.

Praise be to Lord Jesus Christ who loved us so much He died to give us this eternal life!

Conclusion: Despite the length of this study, there is so much more that could be said, for, indeed, Jesus is Himself the Word of Truth (Jn.1:1-5; 1:14; 1Jn.1:1-3; Rev.19:13), and therefore all the truth of the Bible is intricately and inextricably connected to Him.

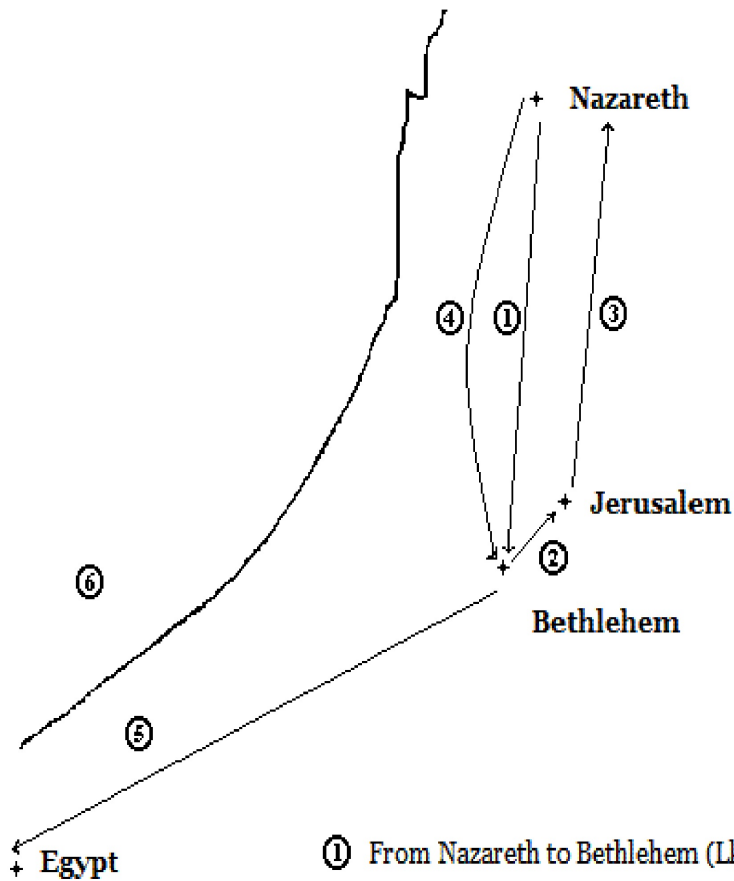
Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.
John 21:25 NIV

Beyond our “so great salvation” which He, our High Priest, Redeemer, Savior and Mediator has provided (Heb.2:3), He is our Maker and our Model, our Guide and our Friend, our Lord and our God. He is our everything.¹²⁷ He is the One we love beyond all others. Because He first loved us, and gave Himself up to death on our behalf.

For God who said, “Let light shine forth from the darkness!”, is He who has shone forth [His light] into our hearts to illuminate our knowledge of God’s glory in the Person of Jesus Christ.
2nd Corinthians 4:6

¹²⁷ The great benefits of this salvation and its mechanics are treated in the following installment of this series, part 4B: “Soteriology: the Biblical Study of Salvation”.

The Early Travels of Jesus, Joseph, and Mary



① From Nazareth to Bethlehem (Lk.2:4-20)

② From Bethlehem to Jerusalem (Lk.2:21-38)

③ From Jerusalem to Nazareth (Lk.2:39)

④ From Nazareth back to Bethlehem (deduced from Matt.2:1-12)

⑤ From Bethlehem to Egypt (Matt.2:13)

⑥ From Egypt to Nazareth (Matt.2:19-23)