GOD'S PLAN OF THE AGES

Joseph Herrin

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By Joseph Herrin

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Foreword

A word of explanation is necessary at the start of this book. In this work you will find this writer using names in reference to God the Father and God the Son that are more faithful to their Hebrew original than the names and titles generally in use by the church today. The name Yah, or Yahweh, will be found in reference to God the Father, and the name Yahshua will be utilized when speaking of the Son.

This usage is not intended to be divisive, nor does it serve as a renunciation of the usage of titles such as Lord or God. Neither is it a condemnation of those who choose to call the Son of God Jesus. My intent as a teacher of the Bible is simply to illumine and instruct. There is great meaning in the Hebrew names of the Father and the Son, and these names are directly related to one another, as well as bearing many significant relationships to other historic figures from the Bible, some of whom serves as types and shadows of the Son of God.

For example, Joshua, the Israelite leader who led the people of God across the Jordan and into battle to take possession of the land of Canaan bears the same name as the Messiah. They both were called Yahshua. The Son of God also began His ministry at the Jordan River as He was baptized by John. Both men labored to establish a kingdom dedicated to Yahweh, the first external and natural, the latter internal and spiritual.

Yah is the name used in reference to the Father on forty-nine separate occasions in the Old Testament. Most Christians have utilized this name of God without knowing that they were doing so. Whenever the word hallelujah is uttered, the speaker is literally exclaiming "Praise Yah," for this is the meaning of the Hebrew word from which it is derived. The longer name Yahweh is found an additional 6,828 times.

The name of the Son is likewise significant, for Yahshua is understood to mean "Yah's Salvation." The Gospel writer indicates that this is the meaning of the name given to the Savior at His birth.

> Matthew 1:21
> "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Yahshua, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

It has been the practice of this writer for many years to use these names, which more clearly represent their Hebrew originals. It is my hope that their employment in this book might aid the reader by bringing forth light on relationships that are obscured, as well as promoting an increased intimacy with God the Father by calling Him by His memorial name, instead of a title which men have substituted.

The Need for Revision

My heavenly Father first directed me to begin a ministry of writing in 1999. In 2000 I published online my first book, *The Remnant Bride*. In 2001 I followed this with the foundational truths contained in the book *Sabbath*. The following year, 2002,ended up being the most productive time I had yet experienced in writing as I completed four separate books. The books, in the order they appeared, were *Sarah's Children*, *The Road from Babylon to Zion*, *Laying Down the Law*, and *God's Plan of the Ages*.

Ten years have passed since that busy season of writing, and eight more books have been completed. Recently, I have found it needful to go back and revise some of those early writings. The reason for the revision is not due to any error contained in what was previously set forth. Rather, the years have given me much opportunity to contemplate the subjects of these books further. The Holy Spirit has added much more to my understanding of Yahweh's kingdom and His work among His creation. I have found that the explanations I would now give to certain important doctrines is much more robust. There are additional, and better, arguments to be set forth. I have found many ways to convey truth to the saints that work better than those early attempts.

Recently I revised the book *Laying Down the Law*. I did not change a single conclusion from the earlier version of the book, though I ended up completely re-writing it. The end result is a book nearly twice the original length, and with an approach to explaining the role and duration of the law that I was incapable of setting forth ten years ago. In a similar manner I now intend to revise this present book, *God's Plan of the Ages*.

In the intervening years since I first wrote on this topic, I have considered at great length the subject of this book, as well as many corollary teachings. Yahweh has opened my eyes to see many more truths. My understanding is much deeper and broader, as well as more solid, than it was a decade earlier. As I have corresponded with the saints, taught online through my websites, and spoken in many locations across this nation, I have found better ways to express certain truths. I am persuaded that those who read this book will benefit from this experience as it is incorporated into this work of revision.

Back in 2002 the understanding of certain truths addressed in this book were fairly new to me. I incorporated the quotations from other men who had considered the same subject for a greater period of time. J. Preston Eby's writing series *The Savior of the World* was quoted extensively in my earlier book. Although I believe it is good and proper to acknowledge those whom our Father has used to bring light and truth to us, in setting forth teachings to the body of Christ I believe it is preferable to write things in my own words. I have felt from the time that *God's Plan of the Ages* was first made available on the Internet that a day would come when I would revise it, replacing the many copied passages from Mr. Eby's writings with my own explanations. That time is now at hand.

A Controversial Topic

I acknowledge that those things set forth in this writing are considered controversial by many Christians today. What passes for orthodox teaching among the churches of this hour is very different from that orthodox teaching of Christ and His apostles. Both Christ and His apostles foretold of the great error that would permeate

the majority view of the church in the last days. Let us look at a few scriptures that reveal the understanding that the days preceding Yahshua's return would be days of profound deception and error.

> II Timothy 3:1-7
> But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Note very carefully here that Paul identifies the day he is speaking of to Timothy."But realize this, *in the last days* difficult times will come." How many ministers today are proclaiming that we live in the last days? It seems that many recognize that the hour is late, but they have failed to discern what the Bible foretells the state of Christianity to be at this late hour. Paul begins this passage by saying, "*in the last days* difficult times will come," and he concludes by saying that people would be"always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." What Paul is speaking of is not the exception, but rather the overriding condition of the majority of Christians in the last days.

Multitudes today are attending regularly to various forms of teaching, but they are not arriving at the knowledge of the truth. Timothy was charged by Paul to preach the word. Things were already difficult in the days Paul wrote to Timothy. Consider then the difficulty of any minister who finds himself proclaiming truth to those in the last days. Indeed, their task will be formidable. Paul is still maintaining the same train of thought when he speaks the following words.

> II Timothy 4:1-4
> I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

When should one expect this time to come when men will not endure sound doctrine? Paul already has informed us that he is speaking of the last days, the days in which we now live. If men are not heeding sound doctrine, what are they listening to? They are listening to great accumulations of teachers that are speaking the things their wayward hearts want to hear. They are turning aside unto myths and fables. There is virtually no area of truth that has remained unaffected due to the difficulty of the days we live.

In the book of II Thessalonians, Paul described the dire state of these days with the word "apostasy."

II Thessalonians 2:1-3
Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Yahshua the Messiah, and our gathering together to Him, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first...

Once more Paul is writing about the days that precede the return of Yahshua. He is writing of the days we live in. Paul states that Yahshua will not return unless the *apostasy* occurs first. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* defines apostasy in the following manner.

646 apostasia (ap-os-tas-ee'-ah);
feminine of the same as 647; *defection from truth*

As one looks further into the meaning of this Greek word, it is seen that it shares a similar root with the Greek word meaning divorce. The apostasy of which Paul speaks is literally a divorcement from truth. Taken in relationship with Paul's other statements we can discern that the last days will be a time when those who claim to be followers of Yahshua will divorce themselves from truth, and they will in turn be wed to myths and fables. They will figuratively heap up for themselves teachers that will proclaim error and falsehood unto them.

This is the perilous circumstance that we find ourselves in today. It is not the masses that are proclaiming truth, but the remnant. Truth is not widely preached and received, rather it is largely rejected, having been replaced with falsehood. How did this circumstance come about? Again the apostle Paul informs us of the reason.

II Thessalonians 2:10-12
Because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved... for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Because men have preferred lies over truth, the Father has sent a deluding influence upon them. This passage, and the others we have looked at, are not talking about the world, but those who claim to be followers of God. Those who read this book, and other writings that are proclaiming truth in this hour, must realize that what is written here is out of synch with the masses of Christendom because the masses of Christendom are themselves out of synch with God.

Yahshua said He was the truth, yet the truth is not loved in the last days before Yahshua's return. As a result the Father has sent delusion upon mankind so that they might believe what is false, which is what they prefer.

In the Gospels we find Christ uttering the following lamentation.

Luke 18:8
"However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Yahshua is speaking in reference to His second coming. At His first appearing there was a whole nation of people who claimed to be followers of His Father. There was a well used religious system centered around the Temple and the synagogues. People were studying the scriptures continuously, and they claimed to be waiting for the appearing of Messiah.

Do we not have a similar scenario today? There is a body of people, huge in number that claim to be followers of Yahshua (Jesus). There is a religious system that is utilized regularly. In place of synagogues there are church buildings on every street corner and at every crossroads. This great body of believers also claims to be awaiting the return of their Messiah.

With all of this teaching and religious structure in place, those who claimed to be waiting for Messiah did not recognize the day of their visitation when He appeared 2,000 years ago. Yahshua was despised and rejected. Certainly the Jews and their leaders would never have admitted to having a wrong understanding of Messiah and what His appearing would be like, anymore than would those in Christianity today. Yet Yahshua asks whether He will find faith on the Earth when He returns.

Incredibly, Yahshua describes the last days prior to His return, unto His disciples in the following manner.

> Matthew 24:10-13"And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will misled many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved."

Let us consider the sum of all of these testimonies that speak of the last days of the church. Taken altogether we have the following witness.

Many will fall away; many will be misled; most people's love will grow cold; men will be lovers of self, lovers of money; men will not endure sound doctrine; men will turn aside to myths and fables; Yahshua will in no way return unless the apostasy occurs first; will He find faith on the Earth?

Understanding the condition of the church prophesied for the hour preceding the return of Christ should sober any sincere follower of Yahshua. I urge the reader to keep these things in mind as you proceed to read the pages of this book.

Great deception has fallen upon the church in this hour. It was foretold over and over that this would be the situation on the Earth prior to Yahshua's return. Do not be surprised that so much that is written here is in contradiction to what is being preached in thousands of pulpits throughout the world today. One should expect no less when the scriptures are properly discerned and the descriptions of the days we live in are rightly perceived.

This book covers some extremely important subjects. I would not feel that my writing was complete apart from setting forth the truths contained herein. It is my earnest expectation that this present revision of this writing will help introduce a remnant of God's people to a vision of Yahweh's plan of the ages that is hidden to the masses. May you be blessed with peace and understanding as you read.

Then Comes the End

It may seem odd to begin a book with a chapter that focuses on the end, but there is a good purpose in doing so. When Yahweh set forth to form the creation He had the end and culmination of all His works in mind. He had determined from the beginning of the creation what the conclusion of all things would be. What Yahweh planned will be fulfilled. The end of Yahweh's works contain no loose ends. Nothing that has been conceived in God's mind will remain partially fulfilled.

It is important to grasp this aspect of Yahweh's plan of the ages, for it differs substantially from the experience of man. When men set forth to accomplish some goal they often fall short of seeing the fulfillment of everything they had envisioned. Man learns to make peace with partial successes and partial failures. A man may be satisfied to have accomplished many of the things he set forth to do, conceding that he gave a good effort and progressed far along the path he had chosen. Man is finite both in wisdom and power. Man does not control all circumstances, nor rule in absolute sovereignty over the creation. Therefore, it is unrealistic for men to anticipate that they will be able to fulfill every detail of the goals, dreams, and visions that originate in the Adamic soul.

In contrast, Yahweh is all powerful. He possesses all wisdom. He knows all things. Yahweh sees the end from the beginning. There is no power in existence that can hinder Him in the fulfillment of the things He has planned. All things have come from God, and all things lie in His power. When Yahweh establishes a plan, He is assured that it will be absolutely, completely, and perfectly fulfilled at the precise moment that He has determined.

Isaiah 46:9-11
"I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it."

The church has embraced many false doctrines about the ages to come. These doctrines are riddled with error that has arisen by failing to reckon on Yahweh's determinate will to bring a full, complete and perfect end to the entire creation, and by not considering that He possesses all power and wisdom to accomplish what He has planned.

The church teaches that the creation will continue on into eternity with rebellion, judgment, and torment. The church teaches that the vast majority of the men who have ever lived, and one third of the angels, will never be reconciled to God, but will continue on for eternity without end in separation and unending punishment. Such concepts are unworthy of the One who possesses all power to subject the entire creation to Himself.

Philippians 3:20-21
For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Yahshua Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with

the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

If Christ were to confront the false doctrines relating to the ages to come and to eternity, doctrines that leave a great portion of the creation in a state of estrangement to His Father, He would surely reply as He did to those who reckoned errantly in the days of His earthly ministry.

Matthew 22:29
But Yahshua answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God."

Even the righteous who have some knowledge and experience of God often fail to reckon accurately concerning those things Yahweh has planned and will surely accomplish.

Genesis 18:13-14
And Yahweh said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?' Is anything too difficult for Yahweh?"

The church's beliefs and doctrines concerning the coming ages are the product of "not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God." Christ has been given ALL authority and power. Yahweh has determined to reconcile ALL THINGS to Himself. His work will not be completed until His desires have been fully and perfectly accomplished. In a myriad of places throughout the Scriptures, the Creator has declared His intent to bring the entire creation back into a place of peace with Himself. The church has failed in her understanding of Yahweh's determined purpose to restore all things to a perfect state of unity. The apostle Paul understood the plan of God, and he declared it openly to the saints.

I Corinthians 15:24-28
Then comes the end, when He (Christ) delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Is the apostle not speaking about "the end" of Yahweh's work among the creation in these verses? Does the apostle declare that all things will end with billions of men and angels in the bonds of eternal torment? Does the apostle declare that the creation will continue on eternally without a reconciliation of all things to the Father? Absolutely not! Paul understood both the Scriptures and the power of God. He proclaimed the truth of Yahweh's plan of the ages. Paul tells us exactly what the end of all things will encompass.

Christ must reign, but not eternally! Does this statement offend? Christ must reign UNTIL He has accomplished all things which the Father has determined must be

brought to completion under the rule of His Son. What has the Father determined? He has declared that all enemies must be vanquished. All rebellion must come to an end. Every creature on earth and in heaven must be reconciled back to the Father. All creation must be summed up in the Son of God, coming under a perfect submission to Yahshua. The ONLY being left out of this is the Father. The Son is in a state of perfect submission to the Father. Once all things are brought under submission to Christ, then all things subjected to the Son will also be under subjection to the Father. Yahweh will then be "all in all."

This declaration of the perfect reconciliation of the entire creation to Yahweh is not found in only in this one passage. This is not an obscure and isolated Biblical doctrine. The plan of God to subdue all things on earth and in heaven to Himself is widely declared throughout both the Old Testament and the New. The prophet Isaiah wrote the following:

> Isaiah 45:22-24
> "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance. They shall say, 'Surely in Yahweh I have righteousness and strength.' To Him men shall come, and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him."

There is no greater assurance offered anywhere in Scriptures than when Yahweh swears something by Himself. What He declares, must be accomplished. The will of God cannot be thwarted, hindered, or delayed. Yahweh has testified that He will bring every enemy into a perfect allegiance to Himself. This is not a mere forced obeisance. It is not a coerced confession that occurs while rebellion and enmity still exists in the heart.

Look at what Isaiah testifies. "All shall be ashamed who were incensed" at God. Shame reveals that a change of heart has occurred. Rebellion has ended. Regret, and repentance have arisen. Those who were formerly enemies, reviling the character and power of Yahweh, are now freely testifying, "Surely in Yahweh I HAVE righteousness and strength."

The apostle Paul, writing to the saints in Philippi, declares again the understanding of the entire creation yielding in worshipful subservience to Christ. Paul taught much on the end of all things. He proclaimed openly that the end would not come UNTIL all things had first been reconciled back to the Father through the Son.

> Colossians 1:19-20
> For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile ALL things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say whether things on EARTH or things in HEAVEN.

The church, not understanding the Scriptures or the power of God, have adopted many spurious doctrines. God is effectually depicted either as powerless to reconcile all things to Himself, or unwilling to do so. Both thoughts are unworthy of Yahweh. Satan is the architect of these lies, and the church has readily believed them. Satan ever seeks to cast Yahweh and His Son in an unflattering light. He would have God appear as exceedingly harsh, being too difficult to deal with. Satan has convinced myriads of

Christians that God will cast men and angels into a fiery lake whose torments are exceptional in their intensity and duration. Satan has persuaded the church that this torment is eternal, never to come to an end.

I could argue against such false doctrines based upon the revelation of the nature of God, His love, mercy, and propensity to forgive. Yet, there would be those who would accuse me of sentimentalism, and of forming doctrines based upon feelings. I have therefore chosen to avoid such arguments in favor of presenting the consistent testimony of Scripture. Let the word of God speak. Let us rightly divide the word of truth.

What have we read thus far? It is the Father's good will and pleasure to reconcile ALL THINGS in heaven and on earth to Himself through Christ, having made peace through the blood of His cross. The Father has given His Son all authority and power. After His resurrection from the grave Christ appeared to His disciples. Matthew recorded what He said.

Matthew 28:18
Yahshua came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

David wrote prophetically of the power to be entrusted to Christ.

Psalms 110:1-2
Yahweh says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." Yahweh will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of Your enemies."

Isaiah also prophesied of the coming Messiah.

Isaiah 9:6-7
For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace...

What truth is contained in the words, "There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace"? Do we not find in these words the promise that Christ will reign until everything in creation is brought into full submission to His rule? Is it not promised that peace will increase until in the end all things are reconciled to God and there exists no more rebellion? Yes! This is what is declared.

Of the power and authority of Christ, the apostle Paul writes with adulation and praise.

Colossians 1:16-18
For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the

firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

In the very next sentences the apostle declares what the rule of Christ will accomplish.

Colossians 1:19-20
For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Christ is given ruling authority for the purpose of bringing peace to the entire creation. Yahshua is called "the Prince of Peace." He has been given the power to subject all things to Himself. He will rule until He accomplishes the purposes of the Father. The end will come only when the Father is "all in all." Every former enemy will be ashamed. They will confess that they have found in God both righteousness and strength.

Christ has the power to reconcile ALL THINGS to Himself. Will He not employ this power to its full extent? Most certainly He will. Christ "must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." What then of the church's doctrine that the enemies of God will be put into a fiery lake of eternal torment? Such doctrines are a product of not understanding the Scriptures, nor the power of God.

In the book of Revelation we read that "Death and Hell (Hades) are cast into the lake of fire." Christians have been taught that the duration of the souls of men and angels in the lake of fire is eternal. This is not what the Scriptures teach. The lake of fire is synonymous with "the second death."

Revelation 20:14
Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

The apostle Paul has written that death must come to an end before Yahweh's plan of the ages has been concluded. Let us look at Paul's words once more, highlighting the pertinent section.

I Corinthians 15:25-28
For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. *The last enemy that will be destroyed is death*. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Death, even the lake of fire which is "the second death," cannot continue on eternally. The work of death among the creation will be brought to an end when all things are reconciled back to the Father. The lake of fire, death itself, exists to serve a purpose in the fulfillment of Yahweh's plan. They are to bring an end to sin and rebellion. When all things are subjected to the Father then death will be no more. The wages of sin is death. Where there is no longer any sin there is no longer any death.

Isaiah 25:8
He will swallow up death for all time, and Yahweh God will wipe tears away from all faces...

One of the greatest declarations found in the Bible is that mercy ultimately triumphs over judgment.

James 2:13
For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

If Yahweh requires His sons and daughters to show mercy and demonstrate forgiveness to their enemies, will He not also do the same? Yahweh's wrath endures for a moment.

Micah 7:18
Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? *He does not retain His anger forever*, because He delights in unchanging love.

The church in teaching a doctrine of eternal torment is doing the work of Satan by declaring God to be angry forever. The testimony of Scripture is that Yahweh "does not retain His anger forever." Yahweh does not delight in endless punishment. He seeks the reconciliation of His creation.

Ezekiel 33:11
"Say to them, 'As I live!' declares Yahweh God, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways!'"

Yahweh is abundantly rich in mercy. He will not hold the sinner guiltless, but neither will His wrath endure forever.

Ephesians 2:4-5
But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...

The grace and mercy of God will reign supreme, accomplishing reconciliation of the entire creation before the time of the end. The truth of Yahweh's merciful reconciliation of the entire creation back to Himself is offensive to a great many people. Is God unjust to forgive all His enemies? You and I were at one time numbered among the enemies of God. He showed mercy and forgiveness to us. Will we account it an evil thing for God to show mercy and forgiveness to all before the conclusion of His plan of the ages? We should rejoice that Yahweh is merciful. Apart from His mercy we would all be consumed.

Isaiah 54:7-8
"For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you," Says Yahweh your Redeemer.

We have not looked at all of the testimonies found in the Scriptures that speak of the work of Christ to reconcile all things back to His Father. The Bible is pregnant with the message of the plan and purpose of God. To the church in Ephesus, the apostle Paul writes:

Ephesians 1:9-10
He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to a stewardship suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth in Him.

This present chapter is seeking to convey one foundational truth. It is a point we cannot neglect. There is an end to the work of Christ. In stating that there is an end, I mean to convey that there is both a goal and a conclusion to Christ's work. He has come to reconcile all things to God the Father. The rule of Christ is granted to Him UNTIL He accomplishes the reconciliation of all things to the Father. "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death (including the second death, the lake of fire)." When Yahshua has accomplished the goal of His reign, then will come the end of the ages.

There are ages yet to come. We do not see the reconciliation of all things in this present age. This book will look at the ages that preceded this present time, as well as those that follow. We will examine the role and duration of the lake of fire even as we examined the role and duration of the Law in the previous book *Laying Down the Law*.

I entreat those who have read this far to remain patient in examining this subject. Every question and objection cannot be answered in a single chapter. The author is laboring to present the matter in a way that will lead to understanding. Precept is laid upon precept. Those who remain patient will be rewarded. I exhort you to test all that is written. Examine the many Scriptures cited. Keep your Bible and your heart open that you might discover truth.

The Cycle of Creation

The wise king Solomon began his great book of wisdom by speaking of the circularity of creation.

Ecclesiastes 1:5-7
The sun rises and the sun sets; And hastening to its place it rises there again. Blowing toward the south, then turning toward the north, the wind continues swirling along; And on its circular courses the wind returns. All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again.

Solomon referred to the circuit of the Sun, the courses of the wind, and the cycle of water on the earth. These are things the wise man contemplated as he sought to understand life, and his place in the creation. Solomon perceived that the creation functions in cycles.

I want to make mention of the grandest of all cycles in the creation. All things originated in God, and when the creation has run its course, all things must return unto God. You and I are part of the creation. We are bound by this cycle. Man became a living soul when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. One day ,at the end of the ages, God will gather His breath back to Himself.

Job 34:14-15
If He should determine to do so, if He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.

When Yahweh conceived the creation He set limits to its endurance. Yahweh created a plan that encompasses many ages, concluding in one final age that is at times referred to as "the age of the ages."

Daniel 7:18
And receive the kingdom do the saints of the Most High, and they strengthen the kingdom unto the age, even unto the age of the ages.
(Young's Literal Translation)

Yahweh framed the creation with a master plan where each age was determined. I have referred to this as "God's plan of the ages." Following are two translations of a passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians that bring forth a literal rendering of the original Greek.

Ephesians 3:8-11
To me the far inferior of all holy ones; was given the favor this, among the nations to announce glad tidings the unsearchable wealth of the Anointed, and to enlighten all, what the administration of the secret of that having been hidden from the AGES in the God in that the all things having created; so that might be made known now to the governments and to the authorities in the heavenlies, through the congregation, the manifold wisdom of the God; *According to a plan of the ages*, which He formed for the

Anointed Jesus our Lord.
(Diaglott)

Ephesians 3:8-11
Unto me—the less than least of all saints, was given this favour, unto the nations, to announce the glad-message of the untraceable riches of the Christ, and to bring to light—what is the administration of the sacred secret which had been hidden away from the AGES in God, who did all things create: In order that now, unto the principalities and the authorities in the heavenlies, might be made known, through means of the assembly, the manifold wisdom of God,— *According to a plan of the ages* which He made in the anointed Jesus our Lord.
(Rotherham's Emphasized Bible)

The present creation was never intended to exist for eternity. The creation is marked by finite bounds. This truth is contained in a passage that we examined in the preceding chapter. The apostle Paul wrote of the end of the reign of sonship. A time must come when all things must be summed up into Christ in order that all things might return unto the Father.

I Corinthians 15:25-28
For *He must reign till* He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says"all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. *Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*

The entire creation is headed toward a time when all must return unto the Father. Some Christians have received errant notions concerning the Son of God. They do not recognize that He is also part of the creation. Although He holds a preeminent position, being the firstborn, and the instrument through which Yahweh created all other things, Yahshua is Himself a created being.

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

In the book of Proverbs Solomon writes of Wisdom as if it were a person. The description of Wisdom is the description of the firstborn Son of God.

Proverbs 8:24-30
When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills I was brought forth; While He had not yet made the earth and the fields, nor the first dust of the world. When He established the heavens, I was there, when He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, when He made firm the skies above, when the springs of the deep became fixed, when He set for the sea its boundary so that the water would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth; Then I was beside Him, as a master workman...

The apostle Paul describes Christ as "the wisdom of God."

I Corinthians 1:23-24
But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

What Solomon speaks metaphorically of Wisdom is true of Christ. Christ was present with the Father at the beginning of the creation. Christ was the first creation of God. Yahshua is the embodiment of the Wisdom of God. He was "beside Him, as a master workman" when Yahweh created all things.

Colossians 1:15-16
He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Christ is the firstborn of all creation. He was the first to arise out of God, and we find that in Yahweh's plan of the ages that all things must return back to Christ. Even as through Yahshua all things were created, including the angels and mankind, so must all things become subject once more to the Son. All things must be summed up in the Son. Then the Son may return, along with all created things, to the Father from whom all things came.

Ephesians 1:9-10
He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to a stewardship suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth in Him.

There are mysteries revealed in the things of which Paul writes. Paul declared that he had been chosen to be a steward of the mysteries of God. Paul had much to say about Yahweh's mysteries, but the church has remained largely babes, able to drink only milk. The body of Christ has remained immature, unable to eat solid food, seldom dining on the meat of the mysteries of God.

Hebrews 5:12-6:3
For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and age lasting (aeonian) judgment. And this we will do, if God permits.

Those things Paul names as elementary teachings are what the church considers higher learning today. The church has seldom reached beyond elementary things to delve into the mysteries of God. Yet, the Father has entrusted the mysteries of His kingdom and His creation unto His people. Yahweh has set a table for the mature in Christ to feed upon. Paul wrote of his calling in the following manner:

> I Corinthians 4:1
> Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and *stewards of the mysteries of God*.

The reason that many have been offended at the message of this book is that it contains meat for the mature. Some who are accustomed only to milk have balked at what is set before them. They have thought the message here to be too weighty, too difficult, and have wanted only to focus upon that which is simple. Those who will receive only simple thoughts and concepts must remain simple-minded. We are called to attain to the fulness of the stature that belongs to Christ (Ephesians 4:13).Christ is the embodiment of the Wisdom of God the Father.

Let us take a look at the very beginning of the cycle of creation that we might understand what its end must be. Some years back I was meditating upon the doctrine of the Trinity. I wanted to understand the nature and relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yahweh, as He often does, brought understanding through means of a parable.

As I was sitting before the Father He asked me, "If you want to see the soul of a man, how would you view it?" I knew the soul to be invisible. It will not show up on an x-ray, or a CAT scan or MRI. A person cannot take a picture of the soul of man. Nonetheless, the soul can be seen. Yahshua said,

> Luke 6:45
> "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."

The heart is a metaphor of the soul. A man's soul can be seen in His words. Do you want to know if a soul is evil, listen to the words that come from a man's mouth. One can discern if a man is lustful by listening to his words. If the man is ruled by anger in his soul, his words will reveal it. Rebellion, covetousness, jealousy, pride, envy, and every evil characteristic of the soul of a man is exhibited in a man's speech.

The righteous man is also known by his words. You can discern whether a man is pure in heart, whether he is loving, merciful, patient, longsuffering, humble, and selfless by observing his conversation. Surely a man's soul is revealed through his words.

As the Father directed me to contemplate these things, He revealed to me the relationship of the Spirit and the Son to Himself through the parable of speech. Every created thing was crafted with masterful design to show forth hidden mysteries of the kingdom of God. Yahweh has revealed the Trinity through the miracle of speech.

Every word begins with a thought in the mind of man. The thought is made visible as a man exhales air from his lungs and shapes identifiable sounds as the air passes over the vocal chords. These sounds exit the man as words, and the words reveal the hidden

things inside the soul of man.

Yahweh the Father is Spirit. No one has seen the Father at any time. The apostle John shared the following words of inspiration with the saints.

> John 1:18
> No man has ever seen God at any time; the only unique Son, or the only begotten God, Who is in the bosom [in the intimate presence] of the Father, He has declared Him [He has revealed Him and brought Him out where He can be seen; He has interpreted Him and He has made Him known].
> (Amplified Bible)

When God wanted to form the creation it was necessary to make Himself known to the creation. Yet a physical creation cannot see that which exists in Spirit alone. Yahweh had to do something to reveal Himself even as a man must do something to make the thoughts of his mind known to others. Yahweh formed a Word.

> John 1:14
> And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Yahweh exhaled His Spirit and formed a Word. It was a perfect Word that fully revealed Himself. This Word became flesh so that mankind could perceive it. The Word is the Son of God. The Son has perfectly declared, manifested, and made known the Father.

> John 14:9
> Yahshua said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father..."

When the Father wanted to reveal Himself to creation He formed the Word. As the Father showed this to me He showed me the process by which a word is formed. We utter forth speech as we breathe out. Yahweh designed speech to be accomplished in this manner. Speech is accompanied by the exhalation of man's breath.

Throughout the Bible the word for Spirit is always related to the word for breath, air, or wind. In the Old Testament the word is "ruach." The first occurrence is found in the second verse of the Bible.

> Genesis 1:2
> The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the *Spirit* [ruach] of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

This same word is used in the following verses.

> Genesis 7:22
> All in whose nostrils was the *breath* [ruach] of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

> Genesis 8:1

And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a *wind* [ruach] to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged...

When man breathes out his exhalation is breath. When Yahweh breathes out, His exhalation is Spirit. Even as man's breath is used to form words, so was the exhalation of the Spirit of God used to form Christ, "the living Word."

Luke 1:35
The angel answered and said to (Mary), "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."

The Spirit was sent forth from the Father to form His Word. This Word existed from the beginning of the creation. The very first exhalation of the Father formed the Son of God. Yahshua is before all things, yet He is a creation of the Father. The Father is Spirit, and He is the eternal One. Yahweh exists before the creation, and supersedes the creation. Out of God all things have come, and back to God all things must return.

People of God, what the Bible testifies to occur at the end of the ages is not the annihilation of mankind, of Christ, or of the creation. One cannot annihilate that which came forth from the Father. When Yahweh has accomplished all things He has planned for this present creation, then His Spirit, exhaled from His being for the creation of all things, beginning with the Word, must return to Him.

One day as I reflected upon what this must mean the Father gave me an image of avast ocean. The ocean was limitless. Out of this infinite sea were taken droplets of water. For a time these droplets of water existed separate from the sea. They could be identified individually, even as raindrops that fall from the sky.

God showed me that mankind is like unto these drops of water. We came from Yahweh, and for a time we can be identified as individuals. At the end of the ages all must return to the Father. It will be like unto drops of water being returned to the ocean. The drops of water do not cease to exist. Rather, they become one with the ocean. Once returned to the sea it is no longer possible to separate them. The drops of water have become one with that source from which they first originated. They are present, but no one can any longer say, "Here is this individual droplet." All has become merged into one entity.

To become one with the Father is not tragedy. To be lost in God is not the loss of man. Rather, it is the fulfillment of that which is most glorious, highest and good. It is the fulfillment of perfect unity with Yahweh. It is this unity for which Christ prayed in His high priestly prayer.

John 17:20-23
"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, *that they also may be in Us*, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, *that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity*, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."

The end of the ages will be the perfection of unity. When we are no longer separable from the Father then our union will be perfect. John the Baptist declared the essential work that must be brought to fruition among the creation before the end can come.

John 3:30
"He must increase, but I must decrease."

The work of this present creation is to see Christ formed in every one of the sons of God.

Galatians 4:19
My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you...

Romans 8:29
For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren...

God is at work in us to form a perfect revelation of Himself, even as He has revealed Himself perfectly in His firstborn Son.

Ephesians 4:13
Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Yahweh will not rest; His work will not be complete, until everything in creation resembles the firstborn Son, who is the perfect expression of the Father. There can be nothing left of sin in the world. All lust, envy, malice, pride, self-seeking, covetousness and every other evil thing must be expunged from the creation. All that remains must be holy and righteous and true. Christ will reign until He subdues the entire creation, bringing all into conformity to the Father.

In the book of Ephesians the apostle Paul describes the gathering of all things into Christ.

Ephesians 1:9-10
He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to a stewardship suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth in Him.

When the Romans performed addition, they added up individual amounts and wrote the sum at the top of the list of numbers. This is the opposite of the manner in which we do things today, for we always write the sum at the bottom of a list of numbers. It was the Roman practice of putting the total at the top that led to the expression "to sum up."

It is fitting to describe the work of Christ in subjecting all things to Himself as a summing up. One day Christ will stand as the Sum of all creation. Everything will be

brought into subjection to Him. Everything will be beneath Him. There will be nothing left in creation that is not fully contained in Him.

Since Yahshua is light, there will be no darkness left in the creation. Because Christ is righteous and holy, there will exist no more sin. Christ is humble, therefore no pride can remain to be summed up in Him. Everything that remains must be a pure representation of some part of the whole. Only then can everything be brought back into the Father so that He is "all in all."

To many such thoughts appear difficult, and may be perceived as mysteries that are too deep to plumb. However, it must be established that God will one day reconcile the entire creation back to Himself. Seeing this truth will reveal the error of those doctrines that declare sin, rebellion, and torment to be eternal. Neither sin, nor judgment; neither rebellion, nor death, can continue on in perpetuity. Christ must reign UNTIL He has subjected all things to Himself.

The day will come when the last enemy will be destroyed. Peace will reign absolute, and the rule of Christ will be uncontested. Every created being will declare, "Surely in Yahweh I have righteousness and strength." Yahweh has sworn by His own self that this will be the end of all things. Nothing can stay His hand.

When all things in heaven and on earth have been reconciled to the Father through the Son, then the cycle of creation will be complete. That which came forth from the Father can then return to the Father. The breath of Yahweh will return to that source from which it came. As an ocean encompassing a myriad of droplets in its vast and limitless expanse, Yahweh will be all in all.

An Orderly Reconciliation

One of the greatest stumbling blocks keeping Christians from embracing the testimony found in the Scriptures that Yahweh will reconcile all things to Himself through His Son is that we do not see all things reconciled at this time. The concept resident in the minds of many Christians is that only a few will be saved, while the majority of men from all ages will eternally remain separated from God.

If you have patiently considered the preceding chapters, you will have discovered that the Scriptures declare that Yahweh will reconcile "all things" to Himself through His Son. "Christ must reign until" He has accomplished the task of subjecting all things to the Father. Both experience, and the testimony of the Bible reveals to us that this reconciliation is not fully accomplished in this present age.

> Hebrews 2:6-9
> But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

Paul specifically speaks of Yahweh subjecting all things to man, "or the son of man." One of the most common ways in which Yahshua referred to Himself was with the expression, "the Son of Man."

> Matthew 8:20
> Yahshua said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

> Matthew 13:37
> And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man..."

> Matthew 13:41
> "The Son of Man will send forth His angels..."

> John 8:28
> So Yahshua said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative..."

Eighty-four times in the gospel books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John we find Christ referring to Himself as "the Son of Man." It is possible to understand Paul's words in Hebrews chapter 2 to be declaring that Yahweh will subject all things under man, and there is truth in such a conclusion. However, to keep things simple I would suggest that we view Paul's words as a declaration that God will subject all things under the feet of Christ, "the Son of Man." I would specifically call your attention to the following two statements.

For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him.

But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

Here is one more testimony of Yahweh's intent to bring everything in the creation under subjection to His Son. As mentioned previously, this will not be a mere forced subjection where God's enemies still hate Him and hold enmity in their hearts toward the Creator. Rather, it will be a complete reconciliation. Every enemy will be ashamed that he was ever incensed against God. Everyone who ever opposed God will testify, "Surely in Yahweh I HAVE righteousness and strength."

This leads into the second statement. "*But now we do not yet see all things put under him*." The apostle Paul was a steward of the mysteries of God. He understood that the day would come when all creation would be reconciled to the Father. That time is not yet at hand. There are ages to come before the "age of the ages" is reached and the reign of Christ has accomplished its ultimate objective.

The church has erred in not understanding the Scriptures, nor the power of God. The church teaches that a man's condition when he dies a natural death will be his condition for eternity. If a man died without having been reconciled to God through Christ, it is assumed that the man must remain eternally separate from the Father. This is an exceptionally harsh conclusion considering that many have lived their entire lives without ever having heard the gospel message.

The apostle Peter shares an extraordinary truth that has mystified many in the church. Peter writes that after Christ was crucified He went and proclaimed the gospel message to men who had died in earlier ages. It is specifically mentioned that Christ preached to those who died in the days of Noah.

I Peter 3:18-4:6
For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water... For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.

There is much to reflect upon in these words of Peter. Let us patiently consider what he has written. First, Peter declares that Christ died "once for all." Who does the word "all" include? In the next clause Peter tells us that "all" is synonymous with "the unjust." All men born of Adam are sinners from birth. Only Christ is just.

Romans 5:18-19
So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

Before passing on from these words in Romans, note both what has been accomplished, and what remains to be done. Through Christ's death, burial and resurrection "there resulted justification of life to ALL MEN." Who are included in the words "all men"? The same group described in the preceding clause, "through one transgression there resulted condemnation to ALL MEN." Christ died to reconcile ALL MEN to the Father. This reconciliation is already accomplished in the sense that Christ's sacrifice has been made for all men. Yet, the reconciliation also remains to be completed as we do not yet see "all things put under His feet."

Observe how Paul ends the passage above, "even so through the obedience of the One the many WILL BE MADE righteous." This speaks of a future fulfillment. Why it should be offensive to some Christians to hear that Christ will eventually reconcile all men to the Father is hard to comprehend. Many Christians are like the elder brother to the prodigal son. Rather than rejoicing that the lost has been found, and the dead has been brought back to life, there is anger that the Father should treat the offender with such love and mercy.

Returning to Peter's words we find that Christ "died for sins, once for all." The reason is "so that He might bring us to God." This is reconciliation. Peter then tells the church that Christ went and "preached even to those who are dead." Peter is not speaking merely of those who are spiritually dead. He is speaking of those who physically perished in past ages. Peter specifically mentions Christ preaching to "the spirits now kept in prison, who were once disobedient." Peter says Christ preached to those who perished "in the days of Noah."

What is remarkable about this passage is that it reveals that Christ's work of reconciliation goes beyond the grave. Though men may die in disobedience, estranged from the Father, Christ will reach out to them beyond the grave. Yahshua's work will not be complete until He has reconciled all things back to the Father.

When we understand the Scriptures aright, we discover that the reconciliation of all things will happen in stages. There is a definite order to the redemptive work of Christ. At this time we find that a firstfruits group of men are being reconciled to the Father. This firstfruits company are identifiable as disciples of Christ. These are ones who are accepting Christ's invitation to "Come, take up your cross, and follow Me."

James, the brother of Christ and an elder of the early church, used the term "firstfruits" when speaking of Christ's disciples.

James 1:18
In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.

Firstfruits are exactly what the name implies. They are not all the fruit. They are the first fruit. They are the first to come to maturity, the first to be harvested. In this age we are seeing some who are firstfruits being reconciled to God the Father through Christ. Eventually all men will be made alive in Christ, but there is a determined order for this restoration.

I Corinthians 15:22-28
For as in Adam all die, so also in the Christ all will be made alive. *But each in his own order*: Anointed first fruits, after that those who are the Christ's at His coming, then

comes the end (the remainder), when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For he has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

We have observed in the preceding chapters that there will come an end to the reign of Christ. Paul says this is when Christ "hands over the kingdom to the God and Father... For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." Christ's reign will have accomplished its purpose when there are no more enemies of God anywhere in the creation. "All things" will be "put in subjection" to Christ, and Christ will in turn be subjected to the Father.

In this book I have challenged the saints to test every Scripture being cited to see whether I have wrested an interpretation that is out of context, or have erred in what is shared. Hopefully, you are doing this. If you are, then you will note that the passage I cited above is rendered differently in the popular English translations of today. The difference is significant, and it leads to a distinctly different conclusion.

It is the responsibility of the saints to "examine all things carefully." This examination of all things includes testing the Scriptures which have had handed to us by others to see if they have been translated accurately. The apostle Paul gave the following commandment to Timothy, and it is applicable to all who would arrive at the knowledge of the truth.

II Timothy 2:15
Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The subject of this book is one in which a man will most certainly be led astray apart from manifesting due diligence in applying himself to the study of the word of God. In the series "*Divorced From Truth*" I shared the following:

It requires patient study to rightly divide the word of God. I know Christian men who have spent hundreds, and even thousands of dollars, upon some hobby. Men who are hunting, fishing, automobile, stereo, ham radio, sports, and bicycling enthusiasts have often spent a great deal of money, devoted great amounts of time, and educated themselves to become both knowledgeable and skillful in the area of their interest. Yet these same men will often argue that they are unable to manifest the same attention to the study of Scriptures.

People of God, we will pursue that which is important to us. Our actions reveal what is in our hearts. If a man will buy a fishing boat costing thousands of dollars, a truck to pull it with, equip it with rods and reels and bait and tackle, and spend the money for licenses and fuel; if he will read the fishing magazines, and study where the fish are, when they are feeding, what they are biting; if he will find others with similar interests and spend hours conversing with them, learning new things, and increasing his

knowledge and skill, but will not apply the same devotion to study of the Bible, it is not because he is incapable, or does not have the time or the skills necessary. It is because he does not have the desire.
Christ did not go down to the local seminary, or university to choose His disciples, men who would later become the apostles of the church. He chose fishermen, a tax collector, a political zealot, and other common men. These men traded a passion for other things for a passion for knowing God. This led them to apply themselves with great devotion to new interests. We read of these men:

Acts 6:4
But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

These men did not reason that they lacked the ability to study the word of God in order to teach it accurately. They did not say, "I am a fisherman, not a Bible scholar." They became Bible scholars, devoting themselves to its study and teaching, relying upon the Spirit of Christ to instruct them as they did so, and they were able to lay a foundation upon which the church of God could be firmly established. There is no less need in this hour for men and women to manifest this same devotion to Christ and His word.
[End excerpt]

Paul was not among Christ's original twelve apostles, and he is unusual in that he was a scholar of the Scriptures when Christ called him. Paul was raised according to the strictest sect of his people, the Pharisees. He was educated in the school of Gamaliel, a man renowned for Bible learning in his day. Paul did not rest on his laurels, however. After coming to Christ he continued until his last days poring over the Scriptures, studying them to gain understanding and knowledge of the things of God. The last letter written by Paul in the Bible, recorded shortly before his death, was II Timothy. In that letter Paul gave Timothy the following instruction:

II Timothy 4:13
When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.

Paul requested that Timothy bring him his books and parchments. Paul remained a student of the Scriptures all his life. We are the benefactors of his diligent and faithful study. We are also called to imitate his life. We must also "study" to show ourselves "approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Let us then examine carefully this passage from I Corinthians chapter 15. Following are verses 22-24 from the King James Bible.

I Corinthians 15:22-24
For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.
(KJV)

Note that this translation, and many others who have followed the KJV, lists *Christ* as the firstfruits. This is apparently followed by a resurrection of Christians "they that are Christ's at his coming," and then we have the end. With such a rendering, it is no wonder that many Christians have concluded that there will be only one resurrection, and that none will be resurrected to live before God apart from those who are known as Christians in this age.

Translators are men and women just like you and I. Some do not even have the Spirit of Christ (I could share appalling stories of men and women working on modern translations that are homosexuals, feminists, and strangers to the Spirit of Christ.) These men and women introduce many errors into the translations. This is partially due to the translators' lack of understanding of the concepts found within the Scriptures. Some errors are also introduced because a publisher, king, denomination, or some other guiding body, has given them instruction to not deviate from what is considered orthodox and acceptable doctrine.

The history of Bible translation has some shining moments, but it also is attended by much darkness. The result is that there are no inerrant Bible translations today. The saint must study, and invite the Spirit of Christ to guide him or her, if they are to arrive at truth.

The apostle Paul understood, and taught, that there would be three resurrections of mankind. There will be three separate harvests of the fruit of the earth (man's flesh was formed of the dust of the earth), before the work of reconciling all things back to the Father has been completed. These three resurrections correspond perfectly to the three feasts Yahweh instituted in the Old Testament.

Each feast occurred at a time of harvest, and all men were to appear before Yahweh at the place He designated. This appearing before Yahweh three times every year served as a symbol of the three resurrections of mankind. (This will be addressed more fully later.)

The first resurrection corresponds to the first feast which is Passover. During Passover the Israelites were instructed by Yahweh to bring the firstfruits of the barley harvest before Him. In fact, Passover is broken down into three separate parts, one of which is called "the Feast of Firstfruits."

> Leviticus 23:9-13
> And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh... Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to Yahweh, for a sweet aroma...'"

Note two things in these instructions. First, the firstfruits were to be brought before Yahweh. Second, the grain of the offering was to be mixed with oil. Oil is for anointing. This was the "anointed firstfruits."The translators of the KJV, and many other popular Bibles, have not understood the connection between the three resurrections and the Feasts of Yahweh. The result has been a distortion of the translation.

In the New Testament, the Greek word rendered as "anointed" and the Greek word rendered as "Christ" are one and the same. Christ means "anointed." When the translators interpret a passage they must determine whether the Greek word "christos"

should be translated as "anointed" or translated as "Christ."

Following is a graphic of this passage which shows the Interlinear Bible. The Greek, and the English translation, appear side by side.

1 Corinthians 15:23 (Nestle numbers)

22	as	For	in		Adam	all		die,	so
	5618	1063	1722	3588	76	3956		599	3779
	Hoósper	gár	en	toó	Adám	pántes		apothneéskousin	hoútoos

even	in		Christ	all	shall be made alive.			
2532	1722	3588	5547	3956	2227			
kaí	en	toó	Christoó	pántes	zooopoieetheésontai			

23	every man	But	in		his own	order:	the	firstfruits;		
	1538	1161	1722	3588	2398	5001	9999	536		
	Hékastos	dé	en	toó	idíoo	tágmati		Aparcheé		
	Christ	afterward	they	that	are	Christ's	at		coming.	
	5547	1899	3588	3588	9999	5547	1722	3588	3952	
	Christós	épeita	hoi	toú		Christoú	en	teé	parousía	
	his									
	846									
	autoú									

In three of the boxes that I have drawn, we find the Greek word *christos*, which is Strong's number 5547. Whenever Paul intended the word christos to mean "Christ" he preceded it with the definite article *toon* (Strong's 3588). The Greek toon is equivalent to our English word *the*. When Paul was speaking of the Son of God, he would write "toon christos" (the Christ.) When he was speaking of anointing, Paul would write “christos.” There would be no preceding definite article.

Looking at the graphic above, we find that in verse 22 Paul wrote, "in the Christ all shall be made alive." In the last box above we find that Paul used the definite article again. He was once more referring to "the Christ." Yet, in the second usage of the word christos above, there is no definite article. The words *aparchee christos* should have been translated as "firstfruits anointed," or in more fluent English grammar, *anointed firstfruits*. (You may note the word "the" preceding *aparchee christos* with the number 9999 below it. The number 9999 indicates that this word is not in the original manuscript. It is a word that has been added in the English translation, but it has no corresponding word in the Greek.)

Compare now the KJV translation, with the corrected, more accurate translation of this passage.

> I Corinthians 15:22-24
> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

(KJV)

I Corinthians 15:22-24
For as in Adam all die, so also in the Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Anointed firstfruits, after that those who are the Christ's at His coming, then comes the end (the remainder), when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

It is worth our time to study this passage patiently, seeking to "rightly divide the word of truth." The context and focus of this passage is the end of the reign of Christ, the end of the ages. If we want to understand these subjects, then we ought to focus on passages that specifically address them.

Paul understood that Christ's work of reconciliation would be accomplished in a precise order. He states, "For as in Adam all die, so also in the Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order." We do not see all men reconciled to God at the same time. At this time, Christ is working to bring the anointed firstfruits to a full and complete reconciliation to God.

The Greek word translated as "order" can provide us some insight. It is the Greek word "tagma." Strong's Dictionary defines it in the following manner:

NT:5001tagma (tag'-mah); from NT:5021; something orderly in arrangement (a troop), i.e.(figuratively) a series or succession:

What Paul is communicating is that Christ's work of reconciling mankind back to the Father will be "something orderly in arrangement." It will be conducted as "a series or succession" of works until all has been brought under subjection to the Father. First we will see the anointed firstfruits reconciled to God. Then we will see those who belong to Christ, but who were not firstfruits. Then comes the end, or the remainder, when those who were enemies of Christ are brought under subjection to Him.

There is an order to the work of Christ. This age is not the end of the reconciling work of Christ. It is merely the beginning. Christ will continue to rule, the saints laboring with Him as ambassadors, entreating all men to be reconciled to God the Father.

Are you sometimes daunted as you perceive the darkness covering the earth, and the gross darkness over the people? Do you perceive that the true disciples of Christ are indeed a "little flock" at this time? The Scriptures entreat us to "not despise the day of small beginnings" (Zechariah 4:10).

There was a day when a small remnant returned from Babylonian captivity to Zion. They were led of the Spirit to rebuild the temple. The task was great and their strength was small. There were many enemies, and the work progressed slowly. Many became discouraged and for a season they laid the work aside, but God sent prophets, and His Spirit to stir them up once more.

The present hour bears great resemblance to that time. A small remnant are heeding the call to depart from Babylon. The work of building up a fit habitation for Yahweh from living stones proceeds slowly. There are many enemies, and our own strength is small. We are in the day of small beginnings.

Do not be discouraged. Do not think that this is all there ever will be. Do not listen

to the voices of ignorance and unbelief that proclaim that the creation will never be restored to the Father, that righteousness will never reign over all. Yahweh has spoken, and He will perform it. What a day it will be when every knee bows before Him, and every tongue confesses that righteousness and strength are found only in Yahweh!

All in All

Yahweh's plan of the ages is truly marvelous. To come into the understanding that God will not conclude His work among mankind, the angels, and all creation until He has fully and perfectly reconciled all things back to Himself through His Son opens the door to profound worship of our Creator. God's love, His mercy, His patience, and His longsuffering are revealed in their glorious depths.

I would revisit an expression that has been cited in the preceding chapters. Grasping the meaning of the apostle Paul's words has led me to deep consideration, not only of the all encompassing scope of Christ's reconciliatory work, but also to the perfection of the work that must be accomplished in each individual life.

I Corinthians 15:28
When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

These three words, "*all in all*,"convey the breadth and length and height and depth of Yahweh's plan. For a time I struggled to comprehend what these words "all in all" meant. It was like a light coming on when I read the passage with one of the words changed. I then perceived, by aid of the contrast, the apostle's meaning.

We have seen that this passage is speaking of the end of the reign of Christ. We are told "Christ must reign until..." In this passage, and others, we have also discerned that it was given to the Son by the Father to accomplish the work of reconciling all things in heaven and earth to the Father. Consider how vastly different Paul's message would be if we changed one word, and we did so in keeping with theorthodox belief of the majority of professing Christians today.

> I Corinthians 15:28
> When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in *some*.

Does not this alteration of the Scripture accord well with the doctrine of the church in this hour of apostasy? By changing this one word we are able to discern, by contrast, what Paul was actually saying. Christ would not reconcile only part of the creation to His Father. He would reconcile ALL the creation to His Father.

> Philippians 2:9-11
> For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Yahshua every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Yahshua Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Paul presents a wonderful harmony whenever he touches upon this subject in his letters. Consider the perfect agreement in Paul's words to the saints in Philippi with his words to the believers in Corinth. Paul states that "every tongue will confess that Yahshua Christ is Lord."He further informs us that this confession will result in glory to God the Father. Yahweh would not be glorified if men or angels confessed that Yahshua

Christ is Lord while harboring rebellion, resentment, and hatred toward the Son of God in their heart. The only way for such a confession to glorify the Father is for it to arise from a sincere heart expressing the truth of what is believed by theindividual. Those who worship God must do so in Spirit and in truth.

The apostle conveys the same message of universal reconciliation of the creation to God through Christ to his Hebrew brethren.

Hebrews 2:8
For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him.

Christ must bring the entire creation into a full and complete subjection to the Father that Yahweh might be "all in all." If it were Yahweh's plan to save only part of the creation, then Paul would certainly have told us that at the end of Christ's reign the Father would be "all in some." To say Yahweh will be "all in all" is to declare that a complete reconciliation will take place. Nothing in the creation will be exempted.

Tragically, the church has come to deny not only that Christ will reconcile "all things" to Himself, they have adopted a very inferior view of the work of Christ in the life of each individual. The mindset I find everywhere throughout the church is that Christ will accomplish only a partial reconciliation in each life. The present conception of Christ's reconciliatory work could be expressed accurately by saying "God will be some in some."

If we say that Yahweh will be "all in all" then we are concluding that He will reconcile everything to Himself. Not only will all creatures be reconciled back to the Father, but there can be no part of any individual that has failed to come under subjection to the life and rule of Christ. Every man must become a wholly yielded vessel. There can be no sin, unrighteousness, of selfishness left in the heart of any person.Everyone must come to be a perfect and mature revelation of Christ. No darkness can remain. All must be light and life and truth.

The church today is content to fall short of such a complete reconciliation. Mankind likes his selfishness. He is satisfied to receive a promise of forgiveness and of heaven when he dies. Coming to a complete conformity to the Son of God is something that rarely enters the mind of Christians. If it does, such a thought is usually discarded as unrealistic, or not truly desirable. After all, the only way to be perfectly conformed to the image of Christ is to embrace the cross and die to self.

Nevertheless, the testimony of Scriptures and of the Holy Spirit is sure. Yahweh will not rest until He has brought every facet of our lives under subjection to the rule of Christ. We are called and destined to attain to the full and perfect character and image of the firstborn Son of God.

Ephesians 4:11-13
And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we ALL attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the FULLNESS of Christ.

Christ must fill all things.

Ephesians 4:10
He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.

You and I are part of the "all things" that Christ must fill. The Son of God will not be content for any man or woman to surrender to Him only part of their life. There can be nothing left of the fallen Adamic nature.

Matthew 16:25-26
"For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Without question, the majority in the church today do not wish to lose their natural lives. They are taught to pursue *Your Best Life Now*. The church is endeavoring to enjoy their good things in this life while eschewing the afflicted path that alone leads to life. The desires and passions of the soul are what guide and direct most Christians. The natural life is protected, and the disciple's cross is spurned. Consequently, Christ does not fill all things in His church. The saints remain immature, not attaining "to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the FULLNESS of Christ."

Paul said that in the last days men would not endure sound doctrine. Those in the church would turn aside to myths and fables and heap up to themselves teachers to tell them the things they want to hear. There is a reason that the church has embraced false doctrines relating to the reconciliation of all things to Christ. There is an appeal in these false doctrines to the carnal desires of the natural man. It is very costly to the natural man to attain a mature conformity to Christ. We learn obedience through the things we suffer, even as did the Son of God.

Hebrews 5:8-9
Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of *aeonian* salvation...

Yahweh has determined that ALL must come to a conformity to Christ. Christ must fill all things. We must decrease that Christ might increase in us. Yet, the natural man is adamantly opposed to decreasing. The natural man seeks to protect his life.What man or woman wants to lay aside their desires, their dreams, their goals, their comfort and pleasures, in order that the will of the Father might be achieved? Christ was the first man to ever walk perfectly in choosing the will of the Father over His own soul's desire.

John 6:38
"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

John 4:34
Yahshua said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to

accomplish His work."

To be filled with the fulness of Christ, we can have no other mind than that which He had. We too must die to our own will and desires that we might fulfill the will of the Father. In essence, we must despise our own soul's desires and will in order to live for the pleasure of another. Christ said no man could be His disciple unless they hate their natural life, unless they hate their own soul.

Luke 14:26
"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate... even his own life (psuche - soul), he cannot be My disciple."

There is only one path that will lead a Christian to that mature image of the Son of God. It is the way of the cross. A man or woman must yield their entire being to be directed by the Spirit of Christ. They must agree to go wherever Christ leads them, and to do whatever He asks of them. Christ has promised ALL who walk this path that there will be suffering, there will be persecution, a man's enemies will be the members of his own household. Christ has said that no man can be His disciple who does not give up all he possesses. We must be emptied that Christ might fill us.

At this time Christ is accomplishing the work of reconciling the creation to His Father. Yahshua has commenced upon an orderly reconciliation. He is beginning with a small number that will be firstfruits unto God and Christ. These ones are embracing the suffering of the cross. They are yielding their lives to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These overcoming saints will be Christ's firstborn, attaining to thefirst resurrection. They will be preeminent among the creation. Only the firstfruits will rule and reign with Christ during the thousand years of His millennial kingdom. These will be participants with Christ in the work of reconciling the world to the Father.

There is a corollary truth to Christ subjecting all things to Himself. Those subjected to Christ must experience a perfect and complete yielding of their will and desires to Yahshua. Similarly, there is a parallel to Christ filling all things in that those who are filled must first be emptied. The more pliant, submissive, and yielding we are to Christ, the sooner we will make progress to maturity. Firstfruits are those who mature quickest. Of necessity they are the ones who die most quickly to the Adamic nature that Christ might be formed in them. If you would be among Christ's firstfruits, you must embrace the cross rather than fleeing from it.

An age and an hour will arrive when Christ has accomplished the work of reconciling all things to the Father. The Father will then be "all in all." Every creature will be restored to fellowship with the Father, and Christ will fill every part of those creatures. The Bible testifies in a multitude of places that Yahweh has chosen to save all men.

I Timothy 2:3-4
This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Christ is the Savior of ALL MEN.

I Timothy 4:10
For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

Christ is especially the Savior of those recognized by God as believers in this age. Those who walk as overcomers now will not suffer loss in the ages to come. *Blessed and holy are those who attain to the first resurrection* (Revelation 20:6). Christ, as the firstborn of the Father, and the first to embrace the suffering of the cross, has received preeminence above the rest of creation.

Philippians 2:8-9
Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name...

Christ will in turn bring forth a firstfruits company of sons who will be preeminent among all those who follow. These ones must also experience "death on a cross." Yahweh will eventually fill "all in all." At this time, however, it is a remnant that are yielding to the cross, being emptied of self that they might be filled with the fulness of Christ. The ages will reveal that the way of reconciling every creature to God the Father will involve suffering. The soul must be crushed.

Mark 14:34
And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch."

None can escape this crushing. Christ is the forerunner. He is our pattern man. He embraced the cross and was judged to be perfect.

Hebrews 2:10
For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things,in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

Christ surrendered to the path of suffering and was judged perfect. Yahweh would have all men to be perfect.

Matthew 5:48
"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

This perfection, arriving at the mature stature that belongs to Christ, comes as wefollow in His steps.

I Peter 2:21
For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leavingyou an example for you to follow in His steps...

Being fully conformed to the image of Christ is what is implied in Paul's statement

that God would be "ALL" in His creation. The Father has determined that this perfection will come to the entirety of His creation. Yahweh will not be "all in some." He will not be "some in some." Nor will He be "some in all." When Christ's reign has accomplished all for which it has been established, Yahweh will be "all in all."

The Merciful Covering

I appreciate the patience of those who are giving attention to this book. I realize that there are many questions in the minds of the saints, and many Scriptures they would like to have explained that appear to contradict those truths being shared. I have chosen to present the message of the reconciliation of the creation back to the Father in a particular order. I would first show forth through a wealth of Biblical sources the intent of Yahweh to restore "all things" to Himself. After this truth has been well established, then the sincere seeker of truth will be better enabled to consider the right interpretation and understanding of the many Scriptures that have been employed by others to declare a contrary doctrine.

For some, what has already been shared is sufficient to convince them that "Christ must reign until" He has "reconciled all things, whether in heaven or on earth, to the Father." Once one sees this truth in Scripture, they are able to conclude that those difficult Scriptures that give an appearance of teaching something contrary cannot in fact be denying what is taught plainly in so many Bible passages. The child of God may rightly conclude that there must exist a full and mature understanding of the Scriptures that removes all contradiction and brings forth a harmony among what has formerly appeared discordant.

The difficulties found in some Scriptures are resolved as Yahweh shines more light into what were previously darkened areas of our understanding. These difficulties will be addressed before the book is concluded. At this time I believe it is beneficial to continue to lay a foundation for understanding that full reconciliation of the creation as we look at some of the types and shadows Yahweh has given to us in His word to show forth this mystery. As it is revealed how thoroughly the reconciliation of all things through Christ is presented in both plain speech and through the shadows contained in Scripture, the saint will hopefully have any lingering doubts dispelled.

When one has been steeped for a long period of time in false doctrines espousing eternal enmity between God and His creation, and unending torments in the lake of fire, the process of being cleansed and delivered from that which has held our minds captive must necessarily be very thorough and patient.

When the Father first revealed to me the truth of the universality of Christ's redemptive work I entreated Him to show me in His word some verifying testimony that I had not heard proclaimed by another man. I wanted to be "taught by God." I asked Him for that wisdom that James enjoins the Christian to request from our Father.

> James 1:5
> But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

My heavenly Father was pleased to answer my petition, and at once led me to consider what is shown forth in type through an experience of our first forefather. After Adam fell into sin, and his nakedness was made manifest, it became evident that a covering was needed to hide mankind's shame.

> Genesis 3:7-11, 21
> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and

they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God among the trees of the garden. Then Yahweh God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked?..." Also for Adam and hiswife Yahweh God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

To comprehend what is revealed through the act of Yahweh clothing Adam and his wife it is necessary to understand the "seed principle." At the time of Adam's transgression he did not yet have any offspring. The entire human race was "*in Adam*" in the form of his seed. In Yahweh's eyes there is no distinction between a man and his seed. They are viewed as one. The actions of Adam are truly the actions of all those who descended from him. What transpired in Adam's life has borne consequences in the lives of all men as surely as if the actions were their own.

Romans 5:18-19
So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

These words of the apostle Paul reveal the great importance of the seed principle. Some may balk at the justice of God in attributing the sin of Adam to those who were yet unborn. Yet, who would say God is unjust, or unmerciful, by imputing the righteousness of Christ to mankind? The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us by the same principle as the sin of Adam. Those born of Christ are His seed.

I Peter 1:23
For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring Word of God.

By virtue of our being "in Christ" as His seed, everything Christ did is applied to our account. By virtue of being "in Christ" His righteousness becomes our righteousness, His death becomes our death, His resurrection, our resurrection.

Romans 6:5-8
For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin... Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him...

How have we become united with Christ? By faith we believe what God has testified, that we were "in Christ" when He fulfilled the righteousness of God, when He died and rose again.

II Corinthians 5:17
Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature...

I Corinthians 1:30
But by His doing you are in Christ Yahshua, who became to us wisdom from God,and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption...

This principle of God attributing to the seed, the actions of the forefathers, is observed very plainly in a passage from Paul's letter to the Hebrews.

Hebrews 7:9-10
And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

Abraham paid tithes to Mechizedek when he returned from rescuing Lot from the three kings who had invaded Sodom and taken Lot captive. Paul states that Levi also paid tithes to Melchizedek, although Levi had not yet been born. Levi was three generations removed from Abraham, being the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham. What Abraham did was imputed to Levi, for Levi was "in the loins of his father." In the same way, all mankind was "in Adam" when Adam sinned. We were all "in Adam" when sin brought forth death.

I Corinthians 15:22
For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

Although we were only a seed, we were surely as much a part of Adam as an acorn is a part of the oak tree from which it falls. We cannot argue that if we had been presented with the same temptation in the Garden that we would have chosen differently. We were in the Garden. We were "in Adam." As his seed we were in perfect agreement with this first man, this root from which we all have descended. When Adam chose to disobey Yahweh, we were there with him also choosing disobedience. When Adam submitted to the beast for obedience, we were present with him.

A marvelous thing is revealed when we consider that we were also "in Adam" when Yahweh covered him with a garment made from skins. Not only were all Christians "in Adam," but all of mankind was "in Adam." When Yahweh made a covering for Adam and his wife, He did not just do so for Adam (whose name means ‘man'), but He did so for all those who were in Adam's loins.

We do not know the shape of the garment Yahweh fashioned for Adam, but we can conclude that it most certainly covered Adam's loins. A man is considered naked when his loins are uncovered. It is in the loins that the seed of man resides.Therefore, when Yahweh provided a covering for Adam, He also covered Adam's seed. This garment of skin serves as a parable of that covering God would later provide for the salvation of all mankind, which is His Son Yahshua.

Galatians 3:27
For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

We are told that Yahweh made garments for Adam and his wife from the skins of animals. Though we are not told what kind of animal it was, I would not be surprised to learn that the garments were made from sheepskins, or goatskins. This covering that God provided points to the sacrifice that would one day fully cover the sinful flesh of man and remove mankind's nakedness before God. To make these garments blood had to be shed. This points to the sacrifice of His Son.

What is present, but often missed in this account, is that in providing a covering for Adam (man), God provided a covering for all those who would be born of man. No one was left out in this act of mercy. All mankind was covered in Adam, and one day all men will be covered in Christ, for He must reign until He fills all things.

This leads to a second type also found in the Old Testament that relates to this covering Yahweh provided for Adam. This second type observed is the mercy seat that covered the Ark of the Covenant. The translators of our Bibles have chosen to call the lid atop the ark of the covenant a Mercy "Seat," possibly because the glory of God rested upon it. The term "seat" is misleading, however, for it was not designed as a throne, or chair. The Hebrew word the translators rendered as "seat" is "kaporet" which is literally translated as "covering." The Mercy Seat literally acted as a lid, or covering for the Ark. Mercy Seat is more literally and accurately translated as "merciful covering."

Every minute detail of the Tabernacle and its furnishings carried great symbolic meaning. The ark of the covenant represents mankind, Yahweh's chosen dwelling place. In the ark was placed the tablets of the Law. This is a parable of God placing His law in the heart of man. The ark, just like mankind, required a covering. The Ark, typifying mankind, was not complete without the mercy covering being placed upon it. This mercy covering is Christ, who gave His blood as a ransom for mankind.

John 12:32
"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

Christ could not be our covering apart from shedding His blood, even as Yahweh could not make garments of skins for Adam and Eve apart from slaying an animal. Yahweh gave instructions for the High Priest of Israel to place blood upon, and in front of, the Ark.

Leviticus 16:15
Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat (merciful covering) and in front of the mercy seat (merciful covering).

This sprinkling of blood on the lid of the Ark served as a shadow of Christ sprinkling His own blood in the Most Holy Place in heaven after His crucifixion.

Hebrews 9:11-12
But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

The blood of Christ is sprinkled on mankind that man might have the shame of his sin, even his nakedness, covered.

I Peter 1:1-2
To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Yahshua Christ and be sprinkled with His blood...

Observe the parallel between these two shadows from the Old Testament. After Adam sinned, God provided a covering for the man. This covering was made of animal skins, requiring the substitutionary death of an animal and the shedding of blood. In the Law, Yahweh instructed the High Priest, once a year on the Day of Atonement, to slay an animal and sprinkle its blood on the covering of the Ark of the Covenant. This blood was placed on the "Mercy" Seat, or covering, signifying that an act of mercy was taking place.

When God placed the covering upon Adam, He was symbolically covering all mankind, for all men were contained in the loins of Adam as his seed. Some may argue that such a type and shadow is inconclusive, for shadows are subject to interpretation, and this is true. The matter does not rest upon shadows alone, however, for the apostle John tells us in plain speech that God has provided a "merciful covering" for all men, not merely for those who are Christians in this present age. In the following passage John declares that Christ's atonement was not only for the church, but for the whole world.

I John 2:1-2
My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Christ Yahshua the righteous; and *He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world*.

Many people stumble over the word "propitiation" in this verse, for it is not a word that we commonly use today. The word rendered as propitiation is the Greek "hilasmos" and is Strong's NT 2434. *Strong's Concordance* defines the word as "atonement, an expiator." An expiator is one who makes atonement for another. An expiator is one who "makes good."

The word for "Mercy Seat" in the New Testament is a form of the Greek word "hilasmos." This is Strong's NT 2435, "hilasterion," meaning "an atoning victim, or (specially) the lid of the Ark" (*Strong's Concordance*). We find this word used in the following verse.

Hebrews 9:5
And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the *Mercy Seat*; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

Christ is declared to be the "hilasmos," propitiation, or expiator of man's sins. He is the one who "makes good" that which was not good.

II Corinthians 5:21

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Christ has become the "hilasterion," atoning victim, or lid of the Ark. He is literally "the Merciful Covering" for mankind. What we see in type through Yahweh clothing Adam, and all who are in Adam, and through the blood sprinkled on the Merciful Covering of the Ark, we find stated in plain speech by John. He Himself is the *propitiation* (merciful covering) for our sins; *and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world*.

We see then that as far back as the Garden of Eden, immediately after the first transgression, Yahweh symbolically revealed that a merciful covering would one day be provided for all of mankind. We do not yet see all things reconciled to God, or all things subjected to Christ. The sacrifice has been made. The blood of Christ has been shed, yet we will not see all things summed up in Christ until the ages established by Yahweh have run their course and the reign of Christ has accomplished its goal of a complete restitution of all creation to the Father.

The word of God remains sure. What Yahweh has sworn by Himself, He will accomplish. All mankind will be saved, each in his own order.

Romans 11:32-33
For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Hallelujah!

Crossing the Jordan

Most Christians have a very fuzzy understanding of the resurrections of man. Many believers imagine that there will be only one resurrection of the dead. The types and shadows of the Old Testament that Yahweh ordained to show forth truth pertaining to the resurrections are largely neglected by the church today. It is the rare minister who spends time instructing the body about these things, demonstrating to them what the shadows of an earlier epoch are pointing to.

Yahweh has revealed in the Old Testament, through types and shadows, that there will be three resurrections, three ingatherings of men from the earth. As different groups are brought to maturity, they will be gathered to God, each in his own order. The three resurrections are not only revealed through types in the Old Testament, they are shown forth in plain speech in the New Testament. The following Scripture reveals that there will be more than one resurrection.

> Revelation 20:6
> Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power...

There will be a total of three resurrections. Yahweh does all things with great order and design. The number three is a very significant in the Scriptures. E.W. Bullinger, in his book *Number in Scripture*, shares the following about the importance of the number three.

> **THREE**
> In this number we have quite a new set of phenomena. We come to the first geometrical figure. Two straight lines cannot possibly enclose any space, or form a plane figure; neither can two plane surfaces form a solid. Three lines are necessary to form a plane figure; and three dimensions of length, breadth, and height, are necessary to form a solid. Hence three is the symbol of the cube - the simplest form of solid figure. As two is the symbol of the square, or plane contents (x2), so three is the symbol of the cube, or solid contents (x3).
> *Three, therefore, stands for that which is solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire. All things that are specially complete are stamped with this number three.*
>
> God's attributes are three: omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence.
>
> There are three great divisions completing time - past, present, and future.
>
> Three persons, in grammar, express and include all the relationships of mankind.
>
> Thought, word, and deed, complete the sum of human capability...
>
> Three kingdoms embrace our ideas of matter - mineral, vegetable, and animal.
>
> When we turn to the Scriptures, this completion becomes Divine, and marks Divine completeness or perfection. Three is the first of four perfect numbers.

*Three denotes divine perfection;
*Seven denotes spiritual perfection;
*Ten denotes ordinal perfection; and
*Twelve denotes governmental perfection.

Hence the number three points us to what is real, essential, perfect,substantial, complete, and Divine.
[End Excerpt]

If there were only one resurrection, it would lack the marks of being "perfect, substantial, complete, and Divine." To bring the creation to a perfect and complete state Yahweh has determined that there must be three resurrections. We need go no further than the first chapter of the Bible to see resurrection depicted, and to find it related to the number three. As Yahweh moved to re-create the earth, the narrative of Genesis tells us that on the third day God caused the earth to arise out from under the waters. Prior to this the waters covered all things.

> Genesis 1:9-13
> Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good... And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

On the third day we see the first pattern for resurrection. The land arising out of the water stands as a symbol of man arising out of death. Man's flesh was formed of the dust of the earth, and throughout Scriptures we see man passing through, or arising from waters, serving as a sign of death and resurrection. Baptism serves as a figure of the same.

> Romans 6:3-5
> Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Yahshua have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection...

Baptism serves as a parable of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and of those who become one with Christ. As we are put beneath the waters, we symbolically die to our old Adamic life that is enslaved to sin. As we are brought up out of the water, we are resurrected to newness of life in Christ. This resurrection was foreshadowed as early as the first chapter of Genesis as the earth from which man's flesh would be formed arose from its watery tomb. This happened on the third day, even as Christ rose from the grave on the third day. The number three is inseparably linked to resurrection.

(The three resurrections of man will be addressed more specifically later. At this time I will take a more general view of resurrection while bringing out certain truths.)

As we look at the types and shadows of the Old Testament we can determine when

the first resurrection must occur. The types of the Old Testament also affirm the truth that all men will eventually be saved. A common type that Yahweh has given to us to show forth resurrection is the harvesting of a crop. Christ employed a harvest allegory in one of His parables to reveal the resurrection at the end of the age.

> Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
> Yahshua presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn…'" Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the Sun the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."

In the book of Revelation, John also is shown images of angels reaping the earth, symbolizing the gathering to God of mankind.

> Revelation 14:14-16
> Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

What is there on the earth that God desires to reap? Yahweh is not raising barley, or wheat, or grapes. He is raising up sons who will share His image and likeness. Christ compared men to wheat in the parable above. In another place, Christ compared men to fish that are drawn up in a net out of the sea. Yahweh harvests both that which is on the land and in the sea. (One sense in which this is to be understood is that God will save both the living - those on the land; and the dead - those in the sea. Compare to Revelation 20:13) These illustrations are employed by Christ as symbols of both salvation and resurrection.

There is a very significant event in the Old Testament that combines the image of passing through water, and the imagery of harvest, into the same account. The event also marks an extremely important moment in the history of God's chosen people. We can accurately infer that it was intended as a parallel to equally important events in the kingdom of God.

After Israel spent forty years in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses, Yahweh raised up a new leader. Moses died and was buried without ever having set foot in the land of promise. Joshua was Yahweh's chosen leader to guide the people of Israel across the Jordan and into the land of their inheritance. The choice of Joshua was one of great design. This man bore the same name as the Messiah who would one day come and lead God's people into their spiritual inheritance in God.

Joshua's first act as leader of God's people was to prepare them to cross over into their inheritance. This action parallels the work of Christ Who has come to prepare men to enter into their inheritance in the kingdom of God. In order for men and women to be readied to receive a spiritual inheritance they must be consecrated unto God. They must be separated from the world and its defilements. They must be set apart as holy unto Yahweh. This work of consecration by the Savior of mankind is foreshadowed through Joshua as he prepared the people of God to enter into their inheritance in the land of Canaan.

Joshua 3:5
Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow Yahweh will do wonders among you."

I trust you are familiar, at least in a general sense, with the story of the crossing of the Jordan. Israel approached the Jordan, and it was at flood stage, an annual occurrence. The Jordan stood as a great obstacle in their way. It had to be crossed in order to arrive at the land flowing with milk and honey that God had promised to them. Similarly, God has set an inheritance before the disciples of Christ.

Ephesians 1:18
I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...

Colossians 3:23-24
Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance.

The natural inheritance of Israel was awesome. The land they were to inherit was exceedingly fruitful. A single cluster of grapes had to be borne on the shoulders of two men. The land was full of orchards and cultivated fields. There were houses to be possessed that the Israelites would not have to construct themselves. There was fantastic wealth to found among the treasures of the people they would drive out.

Deuteronomy 6:10-12
"Then it shall come about when Yahweh your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities

which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, then watch yourself, that you do not forget Yahweh who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

These things serve as parallels to that inheritance Christ has prepared for the saints. It too is extraordinary. We are to possess dwelling places we did not build ourselves. These dwelling places will be the glorified bodies of the saints that Christ has gone to prepare for us.

II Corinthians 5:1-4
For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, age-abiding in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

It is glorified bodies that Christ was referring to when He told His disciples that He was going ahead of them to prepare a place for them. One thing stands in the way of our receiving these new and glorious habitations, even as the Jordan River stood in the way of Israel. We cannot receive our new bodies until after we have put off the old. Death is the obstacle in our way.

As the Israelites passed through the waters of the Jordan, surrounded on either side, they were symbolically passing through death in order to attain to their inheritance that Joshua (a figure of Yahshua the Messiah) was to give to them. There are many evidences provided in the details of this account that demonstrate that it was intended to serve as a parable of those things the saints must experience to enter into their inheritance in Christ.

The Israelites had been camped before the Jordan River in their tents for three days (three is related to resurrection).

Joshua 3:1-3
Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. At the end of *three days* the officers went through the midst of the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it."

Joshua led the Israelites to the Jordan, and Christ leads us to the disciple's cross. For three days the Israelites camped there, then Joshua told them to prepare themselves "for tomorrow Yahweh will do wonders among you." Can you think of anything more wondrous than to pass through death into life, and to receive the glorious inheritance prepared for the saints?

In the passage above we read of Joshua instructing the Israelites to focus on the Ark of the Covenant. In a previous chapter I mentioned that the Ark is a symbol of mankind. To be more specific, the Ark is a symbol of perfected man. The Ark was made

of wood, but it was completely overlaid with gold, both within and without. This speaks of purity. The Ark contained the tablets of the Law, and this symbolized having the Law (rule) of God engraved upon the heart of man. Christ was the first man to fulfill the types and shadows of the Ark. He was both the Son of Man and the Son of God. He was entirely holy. He ever lived to do the Father's will.

As the Israelites prepared to cross the Jordan they were told to observe the Ark. It would be carried on the shoulders of the priests into the waters of the Jordan before them. In the same way, Christ is our forerunner. He has tasted of death for each one of us, and He is the first to enter into His inheritance. When we see Christ crucified, then we know that the time is near at hand for each of us to depart from our dwelling places and to follow after Him. We too must experience the death of the cross, or we cannot enter into our inheritance.

> Romans 8:16-17
> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

A marvelous testimony is brought forth in this account of the crossing of the Jordan. The details of this event are pregnant with hidden meaning.

> Joshua 3:3-4
> And they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."

Why did the Father command that a distance be kept between the Ark and the next group of people to cross the Jordan? And why did the Father specifically determine that the distance be "about 2,000 cubits"? This is all by marvelous design. Christ must cross ahead of His brothers. Each cubit represents a year. It would be "about 2,000" years from the time that Christ tasted death and entered into glory until the next group to follow after Him would be resurrected into glory. Yahweh could have been very precise, but He has intentionally hidden the hour and the day from mankind. Therefore, He will tell us only that it will be *about 2,000 years* from Christ entering into His inheritance until a firstfruits group of overcoming Christians enters into their inheritance.

There is far more in the description of this crossing for us yet to glean. Consider the following details.

> Joshua 3:14-16
> So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant before the people, and when those who carried the Ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the Ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing

down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off.

I mentioned already that the Israelites had to leave their tents in order to cross the Jordan. This is a strange detail to include in the Scriptures. It should go without saying that the Israelites only journeyed by exiting their tents. A man cannot travel while still staying in his tent. Such a detail appears to be superfluous if one views this account merely on a physical level as history.

This reveals an error of much of the church today. Many read the Old Testament as history, but do not study it to discern the hidden mysteries of this present age and the ages to come. The mention of the Israelites setting out from their tents is not a meaningless detail when one views this event as prophecy. These things were written for our benefit, and our instruction.

I Corinthians 10:11
Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

The events that happened to Israel in the wilderness serve as "types of us."

I Corinthians 10:6
And those things became types of us...
(Young's Literal Translation)

Yahweh is revealing that we must set out from our tents, we must lay aside these earthly bodies, in order to enter into our inheritance. We cannot ascend to glory apart from tasting of death first. We cannot receive new habitations, or dwelling places, aside from first putting off the old.

These things are not to be understood on a natural plane alone. There is spiritual truth in them. We must die to our natural Adamic life if we are to enter into our inheritance in Christ. No man can cross into his inheritance apart from first becoming a partaker in Christ's cross.

Matthew 10:38-39
"And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it."

Paul spoke of the old Adamic life as something that must be put off.

Ephesians 4:20-24
But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Yahshua: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

Even as the Israelites had to "set out from their tents" in order to become possessors of new and glorious dwellings, so too must we put off the old man and put on

Christ. This is how we consecrate ourselves prior to crossing into our inheritance. Our old nature must be crucified that Christ might be revealed in us.

Another detail of the crossing was that it occurred at harvest time. "For the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest..." Harvests, as we have seen, are symbolic of God reaping the earth to gather men unto Himself. Yahweh, with great intent, determined that Israel must cross the Jordan at harvest time for their crossing was to serve as a symbol of resurrection.

In the account of the crossing, our Father has also given us another salient detail. If we see this account merely as history, the detail would mean very little. However, knowing that Yahweh is revealing mysteries through what is recorded for us, we are able to marvel at what is disclosed. We read:

> The waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap,a great distance away *at Adam*, the city that is beside Zarethan...

The waters of death were rolled back all the way to Adam. This detail is a further testimony that Yahweh has provided salvation for all mankind. Adam's name means "man" and he is the first of our race. In Adam was contained the seed of every man who would ever be born (with the exception of Christ who was born of heavenly seed). Yahweh gives us this detail, indeed He caused the waters to flow back to the precise location of this city, to prophesy of His intent to provide life to every man born of Adam.

> I Timothy 4:10
> For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

> John 3:17
> "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

How wonderful is the plan of God! His work will not be complete until He reconciles all men to Himself through Christ. Consecrate yourselves! There is an inheritance to be entered into. We must follow Christ through death as we embrace the cross. Then we can emerge into resurrection life.

Lord of the Living and the Dead

A key doctrine that the saint in Christ must understand and receive in order to grasp Yahweh's plan to restore all creation to Himself is that Christ's work of reconciliation does not stop at the grave. A great many Christians have been taught, or have in some manner concluded, that when a person dies their fate is sealed for eternity. If an individual died separated from God, it is assumed that they must remain forever estranged from God. It is this belief that man has only one shot at being reconciled to God that forms the foundation for the grotesque doctrine of eternal damnation.

The prevailing teaching in the church today is that the majority of men and women from all ages, including the present time, are lost. They will die in their sins, never having come to know Christ as Savior and Lord. Because the majority of mankind did not receive Christ while they were alive on the earth, it is taught that they must be cast into the lake of fire for eternity. Even after billions of years have passed, it is taught that these tormented souls will have no possibility of ever escaping from torment, or being reconciled to the Father.

Such doctrines defame God, painting Him with an image of a severity so extreme that it beggars the imagination. The church teaches that Yahweh's wrath is greater than His love. How could it be otherwise if Yahweh will never relent of tormenting lost souls, even after they have endured punishments and suffering far in excess of the length of their earthly lives? According to the prevailing doctrine of the church, a person could spend a million lifetimes in Hell and not be any closer to being released, for it is taught that there is no opportunity for repentance or reconciliation beyond the grave.

Having been shown by the Spirit of Christ the error of the doctrine of eternal torment, I am bold enough to say that the god most Christians have envisioned in their minds is a cruel tyrant. This cruel tyrant in no way resembles the true and living God. Hell and the lake of fire do exist; There is punishment and suffering awaiting those who sin; Yahweh is to be feared, but He is not going to subject any part of His creation to eternal torments.

If you find such a statement hard to bear due to the persistent proclamation of a message of eternal torment, I encourage you to review again what has been presented thus far in this book. The goal of Christ's reign is to reconcile "all things" to the Father. Christ must reign until He fills all things; until He has subdued every enemy under His feet. This subjection is not merely that of a conquered foe where Christ stands with His foot upon the neck of the rebellious in heart. What the Bible declares is that a full reconciliation must take place, attended by repentance and confession of the righteousness and power of God.

Some in teaching on the subject of the universal reconciliation of all men do err by climbing out of one ditch only to be cast headlong into the ditch on the other side of the road. Some deny that there is any punishment of sinners after this life. Such a conclusion ignores a wealth of Scriptures that declare otherwise. When one considers the whole counsel of the word of God, and have rightly divided it, they will perceive that Yahweh will indeed punish sinners. Many will be cast into the lake of fire. Yet, the wrath of God will come to an end when every man has repented. Yahweh takes no pleasure in punishing the wicked. What He finds pleasure in is a repentant heart.

Ezekiel 18:21-23

"But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die. All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live. Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares Yahweh God, "rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?"

When God judges a people, we see a manifestation of His righteous wrath. However, the wrath of Yahweh is always temporal. He does not remain perpetually angry at anyone.

There are certainly Scriptures that seem to contradict such a conclusion. There are many Scriptures that speak of God cutting men off forever, of never showing them forgiveness, even of blotting out entire nations from the earth. If we were to view these Scriptures in isolation, we could certainly arrive at a doctrine of eternal damnation, or possibly of annihilation. When the entire counsel of the Scriptures is considered, it is revealed that the mercy of God will triumph over judgment in the end.

Following is one passage, if taken out of the larger context in which it is found, would appear to prove the doctrine that says God will reject some men forever. After Moses had delivered the Law of God to the Israelites, he then spoke of the punishment that would accrue to that man who disregards the Law of God by spurning those curses and judgments pronounced by the Law.

Deuteronomy 29:19-21
It shall be when he hears the words of this curse, that he will boast, saying, "I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered land with the dry." Yahweh shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of Yahweh and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and Yahweh will blot out his name from under heaven. Then Yahweh will single him out for adversity from all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the law.

Moses then proceeds to pronounce a similar judgment upon the entire nation of Israel if they should forsake Yahweh and His law.

Deuteronomy 29:22-28
Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which Yahweh has afflicted it, will say, "All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which Yahweh overthrew in His anger and in His wrath." All the nations will say, "Why has Yahweh done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?" Then men will say, "Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they have not known and whom He had not allotted to them. Therefore, the anger of Yahweh burned against that land, to bring upon it every curse which is written in this book; and Yahweh uprooted them from their land in

anger and in fury and in great wrath, and cast them into another land, as it is this day."

These judgments of God have actually been poured out. There were people, and even an entire land, upon whom Yahweh brought the most severe judgment. Yahweh refused to pass over the sins of His people. They did not find forgiveness. They were delivered into the hands of their enemies. They experienced slaughter, famine, pestilence and disease. Their wealth was looted, and those who remained were taken captive into foreign lands.

Yahweh did make the land of Israel a wasteland like unto Sodom and Gomorrah. The people were blotted out as a nation. Their country was taken from them. They were dispersed among the nations. We know, however, that Yahweh's wrath did not burn perpetually against His people. Though He demonstrated that He would not overlook their sins, and He proved willing to punish the evildoer, in time He showed His forsaken people mercy onceagain. The passage continues with the following words:

Deuteronomy 30:1-6
So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where Yahweh your God has banished you, and you return to Yahweh your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, then Yahweh your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you. If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there Yahweh your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. Yahweh your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. Moreover Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

Is this not a marvelous thing? Yahweh in His wrath strikes a people, but in His mercy He restores them to Himself. Yahweh promises that He will take the rebellious people and circumcise their heart. He will remove ungodliness from the heart of man and write His law where there was only rebellion. This is what brings pleasure to Yahweh - restoring the rebel who has come to repentance.

In the passage we just viewed, Yahweh compared His judgments upon Israel to the judgment that befell Sodom. You may ask, "Certainly the judgment of Sodom was final, was it not? There is no room for repentance for those who died when God rained fire and brimstone upon them, is there?" The prophet Ezekiel reveals that Sodom will indeed be restored. Ezekiel, as did Moses, compares Yahweh's judgment upon His people to that of Sodom. Ezekiel affirms that not only will Yahweh put away His wrath toward Judah and Jerusalem, restoring them to Himself, He will do the same for Sodom and for wicked Samaria.

Ezekiel 16:49-55
"Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them

when I saw it. Furthermore, Samaria did not commit half of your sins, for you have multiplied your abominations more than they. Thus you have made your sisters appear righteous by all your abominations which you have committed. Also bear your disgrace in that you have made judgment favorable for your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. Yes, be also ashamed and bear your disgrace, in that you made your sisters appear righteous. Nevertheless, *I will restore their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and along with them your own captivity*, in order that you may bear your humiliation and feel ashamed for all that you have done when you become a consolation to them. *Your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to their former state, and you with your daughters will also return to your former state*."

Is it not an amazing testimony that Yahweh will restore even Sodom? That city in which God could not find five righteous will be shown mercy. Indeed, Christ said that the judgment of Sodom would be less than the judgment of certain cities of Israel, for Sodom did not receive the witness that Israel received.

Matthew 11:23-24
"And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you."

There is a parable in which Christ revealed that the wicked would be punished, butnone would be punished eternally.

Luke 12:42-48
And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."

Although this parable is specifically addressed to believers, it reveals a truth of God's kingdom. Some who are wicked receive few stripes, and some many. There are none who receive unending stripes. If the sin of those who knew to do right is worse than that of those who did not, then how can Yahweh punish disobedient believers for a limited duration, while punishing unbelievers eternally? Did not the believers have more truth and a greater witness while choosing to act wickedly? If these believers "share a

place with the unbelievers" then is it not logical to conclude that there are none who will receive unending stripes?

Sodom is like that servant that did not know his master's will, and he acted wickedly. Israel is that servant that knew the master's will and still chose wickedness. This is why Christ said it would be more tolerable for Sodom than for the cities of Judea in the day of judgment. Those to whom much is given have much required.

Do not Christ's words regarding Sodom reveal that her punishment is not eternal? How could the punishment of Sodom be "more tolerable" than that of Bethsaida if the punishment was endless? Even in the Law of Moses we find that punishments had limits set to them.

> Deuteronomy 25:1-3
> "If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt. He may beat him forty times but no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes."

Yahweh's punishments are meted out. Yahweh's wrath is only for a moment. His love for that which He has created leads always to a renewal of mercy.

> Isaiah 54:4-8
> "Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; And do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; But you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your husband is your Maker, whose name is Yahweh of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called the God of all the earth. For Yahweh has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected," says your God. "For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you," says Yahweh your Redeemer.

The words above were addressed to Israel. Yahweh calls Israel His "firstborn" (Exodus 4:22). As such, Israel serves as a type and shadow of how Yahweh will deal with all the nations. Yahweh chose Israel to be a nation holy unto Him. Israel strayed often, forsaking Yahweh and serving other gods. Israel became filled with murder, adultery, and all forms of corruption. This led to Yahweh forsaking Israel in His wrath, but His wrath lasts for a brief moment. Soon Yahweh's everlasting lovingkindness once more was manifested and He took Israel back to Himself. What Yahweh did for Israel, He will do for all nations.

Two of Israel's greatest enemies were the nations of Egypt and Assyria. Both of these nations incurred the wrath of Yahweh. This wrath will have an end. Even Egypt and Assyria will receive mercy. Yahweh will transform these nations which formerly scorned Him into worshipers of the one true God. They will worship Yahweh alongside Israel.

Isaiah 19:22-25
Yahweh will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to Yahweh, and He will respond to them and will heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom Yahweh of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."

Israel may be Yahweh's firstborn, receiving the inheritance, but Egypt is also God's people, and Assyria is the work of God's hands. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. In the book of Jonah we read of God instructing the prophet to go to Assyria and proclaim judgment against them that they might repent. Yahweh did not want to destroy Nineveh, for He has compassion on all His creation.

Jonah, however, did not share Yahweh's burden to see all nations reconciled to Himself. Jonah wants Nineveh to be destroyed, so he flees from Yahweh. Yahweh prevails over Jonah and the prophet proclaims judgment against Nineveh. The entire city repented. Even the king donned sackcloth and proclaimed a period of fasting and prayer to Yahweh. Yahweh relented of the judgment, but Jonah was displeased. Yahweh spoke to Jonah the following words:

Jonah 4:11
"Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"

Should not God also have compassion on Sodom, on Egypt, on Assyria, and on those who perished in the flood of Noah?

I Peter 3:19-20
He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark...

As Christians, we need to cast off the false doctrine that states that the mercy of God does not pass beyond the grave. Christ's work of reconciling "all things" to the Father will not be thwarted by something as inferior to Him as death. Christ is Lord of both the living and the dead.

Romans 14:9
For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Acts 10:42
And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

(See also II Timothy 4:1, I Peter 4:5)

Yahshua told those Jews gathered together to hear Him that must be heard even by those who had died.

John 5:28
"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which *all* who are in the tombs will hear His voice..."

In this account from John's gospel Christ is speaking of the resurrections to come. He states that some will be resurrected to life, others to judgment. It is this judgment that Christ referenced when He said that some would receive few stripes, and others many. Those who are resurrected to judgment must experience the lake of fire. As we have seen in previous chapters, the lake of fire is also called "the second death." It cannot continue forever, for "the last enemy to be destroyed is death." When the wrath of God has been fully spent; when every enemy has repented and sworn allegiance to Yahweh; when even Egypt, Assyria, and Sodom have become worshipers of Yahweh, then death will be no more.

Christ did not say that "some" who are in the tombs will hear His voice. He said that "all" must hear His voice. Does not such a declaration lead us to marvel? Tragically, many Christians refuse to accept this truth. Christ will reconcile ALL those who have died back to the Father. The waters of death will roll back all the way to Adam. Christ will provide a "merciful covering" for all who were born of Adam.

I Corinthians 15:22-23
For as in Adam *all die*, so also in Christ *all will be made alive*. But each in his own order...

Who are the first to be made alive? It is the firstborn. There is both a natural firstborn, and a spiritual firstborn. The nation of Israel is Yahweh's natural firstborn. They must be the first nation to go through the pattern of death, burial and resurrection. They are the first to know the wrath of God, and will be the first nation to wholly turn to Yahweh in repentance and become worshipers of Yahshua.

Romans 11:26-27
And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

Jeremiah 3:17-19
"At that time they will call Jerusalem 'The Throne of Yahweh,' and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of Yahweh; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance. Then I said, 'How I would set you among My sons and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of the nations!' And I said, 'You shall call Me, My Father, and not turn away from following

Me.'"

What a glorious day it will be when Yahweh restores all Israel to Himself! Israel will then serve Yahweh as priests, leading the nations to repentance and restoration to the God of all creation. Israel has not thus far received this call. Like Jonah, Israel has fled from the call of God upon their lives. They have not desired to see the nations restored to the favor of Yahweh. Israel has manifested the attitude seen in the elder brother to the prodigal son. When the father was rejoicing that his son who had been lost had been restored to him, the elder brother was angry.

Luke 15:25-30
"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'"

The attitude of the elder son is detestable. He is angry because his father is merciful. So too were the Jews incensed at the idea that the nations should be reconciled to God. They wanted to be exclusive. Their hearts were selfish. They did not share the burden that the Father has for the prodigal nations. Contrast the attitude of the elder son with that of the father.

Luke 15:20-24
"So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate."

How remarkable is the love of God! He does not delight in the death of the wicked. He desires repentance and restoration. Reconciliation is what He takes pleasure in. What the natural seed has done in showing scorn at the mercy of Yahweh toward the nations, the church has also done. There are multitudes within the body of Christ who are offended when they hear it declared that the goal of Yahshua's reign is to reconcile all creation back to the Father. This reconciliation includes both the living and the dead.

There is an interesting passage found in Paul's letter to the church in Philippi.

Philippians 2:9-11

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Yahshua every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, *and of those under the earth*, and that every tongue should confess that Yahshua Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Who are those "under the earth"? Is it not the dead? Christ testified plainly that those who were in the grave would hear His voice. The father's words to the elder son in the parable of the prodigal form a parallel to the words Yahweh spoke to Jonah.

Luke 15:32
"But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found."

Jonah 4:11
"Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?"

Yahweh is ever having to defend His mercy to mankind, for man is far less merciful that his Creator. When David was given a choice between falling into the hands of men, or into the hands of God for judgment, he wisely chose God.

II Samuel 24:14
Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Let us now fall into the hand of Yahweh for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man."

David reveals in these words that man is not as merciful as Yahweh. The attitude of the elder brother to the prodigal has ever been present in the hearts of men. Is it any wonder that Christians today fall short of the mercy of God, proclaiming that those under God's wrath must endure eternal torments, never to be reconciled to Him. Nevertheless, the testimony of Scripture is certain. Yahweh will restore all things to Himself through Christ.

When we rightly divide the word of God we find that Yahshua's work of reconciliation does extend beyond the grave. Those in the tombs must hear His voice. Christ descended into Hell and preached to the captives held since the days of Noah. Yahshua is Lord of both the living and the dead.

Did not Christ call Lazarus forth from the grave? So too will He call out to many who have perished and been buried. Those in the grave will hear His voice. Before the reign of Christ is fulfilled all who are "under the earth" will join in confession and worship of God. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Yahshua Christ is Lord; Lord of both the living and the dead.

The *Soul* that Sins Must Die

Death stands between every man and an inheritance in Christ, even as the Jordan River stood between the Israelites and their inheritance in the land of Canaan. We know that every man experiences a physical death of his body. It is not this death that makes a person a disciple of Christ, otherwise all men would be judged now to be Christ's disciples. It is the death of the soul that is referred to when Christ invited men to "Come, take up your cross, and follow Me."

Because this truth has been so little understood, being rejected by the majority of Christians today, it needs to have much emphasis laid upon it. No man will enter into His inheritance in Christ apart from first experiencing death to his soul life. We can either embrace this death to the soul's rule over our lives now by yielding our lives wholly to follow Christ wherever He directs, or we will have our soul life destroyed in the lake of fire in the age to come. The necessity of dying to the life of the soul is revealed plainly in the following words of Christ.

> Luke 14:26-27
> "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate... even his own life (psuche - soul), he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

The Greek word "psuche" is translated as "heart, life, mind and soul" in the KJV Bible. It is a word used to describe that inner life that guides and animates a living being. The soul is influenced by many external forces. Prior to being born of the Spirit, the greatest influence upon the soul is the flesh. The flesh expresses its cravings and desires to the soul. The soul in turn decides what response it will make to this input.

The natural man is completely dominated by his soul. He is daily choosing to fulfill the desires and needs of the body, whether for food, sex, comfort, pleasure, ease, excitement, peace, or a myriad of other passions. The life of Adamic man is dominated by the soul. It is a sensual life, and one devoted to self-gratification.

The life of Christ is different. It is dominated by the Spirit. The focus of the life of Christ is not upon self, but rather upon pleasing the Father.

> John 6:38
> "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

While Christ was in the flesh He lived entirely for the will and pleasure of His Father. He never deviated from this focus. Because Christ was born of woman, He knew the influence of the feminine soul. Being born of the seed of the Father, He also had the influence of the masculine Spirit. This led to conflict within Christ's being to see who would have ascendancy. Would Yahshua walk as a pleasing Son by being directed by the Spirit in all things, or would He capitulate to the passions and desires of the soul?

This struggle was never seen more clearly than when Christ wrestled with drinking from that cup of suffering His Father presented to Him while in the Garden of Gethsemane. This cup contained the suffering of the cross, and death to the flesh.

Matthew 26:38-39
Then He said to them, "*My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death*; remain here and keep watch with Me." And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

Christ's hour of wrestling in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives shows us clearly that struggle that all who would be conformed to Christ must experience. The details of this event also serve as a great parable. It was from the crushed flesh of the olive that the Levites obtained the oil used for anointing, and to light the candlesticks in the Temple. The olive tree serves as a type of Yahweh's people, and the individual olives are a type of individual saints. Our lives must be crushed if the oil of anointing is to be released from within. If we are to be lights in a dark world, we too must experience the crushing of the soul in our own Gethsemane experiences.

That Christ's suffering occurred on the Mount of Olives was chosen by great design by His Father. The word Gethsemane means "olive press." It is where the olives are crushed to obtain the oil from them. Christ was experiencing the crushing of His soul while in Gethsemane. He had to make the decision to deny His soul's desires, and to put the will and pleasure of the Father above all else. It is this death to the soul that is the hallmark of everyone who is a disciple of Christ.

II Corinthians 4:11
For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Yahshua's sake, so that the life of Yahshua also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

As the soul is crushed, the life of Christ is revealed in us. It is appointed to Christ's disciples to be the first among men to follow Yahshua through the waters of death. This was symbolized in the crossing of the Jordan by those priests who were first to walk into the waters of the Jordan as they carried the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders.

Joshua 3:13
"It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the Ark of Yahweh, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap."

As Christians, we are appointed to be priests of God.

I Peter 2:9
But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...

There is much symbolized by the priests as they carried the Ark of the Covenant into the Jordan. The Ark was borne on the shoulders. The shoulders are symbolic of the place where authority and government rests.

Isaiah 9:6
For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and *the government will rest on His shoulders...*

As mentioned previously, the Ark is a symbol of perfected man. Christ is the original, for He is the first of a new type of man. In carrying the Ark upon their shoulders, the priests were providing a type and shadow of those men and women who would one day take Christ as their Head.

There is a parallel observed between the priests of Yahweh carrying the Ark with wooden poles on their shoulders, and the disciple of Christ bearing the cross. Even as the priests entered the waters that signified death, the disciple must be baptized into Christ and take up his cross which is an instrument of death to the soul. Those who are true disciples have yielded the rule of their lives to Christ. They have removed themselves as head, that they might take Christ as Head. This is the meaning of the following words of John.

Revelation 20:4
And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Yahshua and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Revelation is a book that conveys truth through signs. It is a book of parables. Those who would be Christ's disciples must hate their own souls. They must accede to the Lordship of Christ in a very real and practical manner, taking Him as their Head. No man can take Christ as Head while his own head is still ruling. John describes these beheaded ones as coming to life and ruling with Christ during the Millennium. This honor is reserved for the overcomers in Christ. It is for those who attain to the first resurrection, gaining the right of the firstborn of Christ.

Revelation 20:6
Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Because these ones have surrendered to the death of the cross in this age, they will be spared from the second death in the next age. The second death is the lake of fire. Every person must experience death to the natural life in order to enter into resurrection life in Christ. There can be no resurrection apart from a death first taking place. We must die to that natural, Adamic life, ruled by the soul, in order to be resurrected into that new spiritual life found in Christ. This pattern is inviolable.

The Christian is not saved from death, so much as he is saved through death. It is by following Christ, taking up our own cross, and dying to self (that natural soulish life) that we are delivered from the kingdom of darkness and translated into the kingdom of light. It is by virtue of being born again of the Spirit of Christ, becoming a partaker of His divine life, that we find resident within our members the desire, and power, to deny ourselves, and yield our lives wholly to the Father.

Philippians 2:12-13
Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Christians like to speak of salvation as something that Christ obtained for them at the cross. There are Scriptures that support such a conclusion. Once again, however, many Christians have fallen short of "rightly dividing the word of truth." They have not considered the whole counsel of the Scriptures. That which Christ has purchased for men and given to them freely, must be "worked out" in each individual's life. This is what Paul declared when he said "Work out YOUR salvation with fear and trembling."

Christ presents to men both a gate that they must enter by, and a way that they must walk. A man must enter by the gate AND follow Christ down the afflicted path, or they will fail to arrive at life.

Matthew 7:13-14
"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is afflicted (Greek "thlibo") that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Many of the popular English Bibles today translate the Greek word "thlibo" in this passage as "narrow," but that obscures Christ's meaning. This is a different word altogether from that used in the first part of this passage describing a "narrow" gate. The word used there is "stenos." Christ is describing two different things. Christ is the gate, or doorway by which all men must enter if they are to find resurrection life. There is no other name given under heaven by which men must be saved. Neither Mohammed, nor Buddha, not Krishna, nor the other thousands of gods named in this world will deliver men from sin and reconcile them to the Father. The gate is very narrow. Christ alone is the doorway to life.

John 10:7-9
So Yahshua said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved..."

These words of Christ are true, but they do not constitute His entire counsel and testimony. Christ declared that "*the gate* is small," but He also said, "*the way* is afflicted that leads to life, and few there are who find it." The goal is life; resurrection life in Christ. To obtain it all men must enter by the gate and walk the path appointed by God that leads to life. That path is afflicted. It is a path of suffering leading to the termination of the soul's rule over mankind. Man's soul has to be crushed. The cross must be embraced. Suffering must be endured in order for the self-life to lose its grip over man.

The Bible reveals that there are two methods by which the salvation Christ has provided might find its"outworking" in our lives. We can surrender to follow Christ by taking up our cross now, or we will be cast into the lake of fire which will similarly accomplish the work of bringing an end to the rule of the soul.

Matthew 10:28
"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to *destroy* both soul and body in Hell."

The word translated here as "destroy" is not speaking of annihilation. It is not suggesting that men's souls will cease to be. Rather, it is a word denoting the subjugation of the soul in the same way that Christ intended when He said "He who would save his soul must LOSE it."

Matthew 16:25
"For whoever wishes to save his soul will lose (apollumi) it; but whoever loses (apollumi) his soul for My sake will find it."

The very same Greek word, "apollumi" is used in both verses.

Matthew 10:28
"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to *destroy* (apollumi) both soul and body in Hell."

As we look at these two verses side by side, we find that God has provided two methods by which the soul of man might experience "apollumi." The soul can be subjected to the rule of Christ in this age by yielding fully to Christ as Head of one's life, or the soul can be brought to this same place of subjection in Hell.

Please do not pass over what was just stated. It is a very critical matter. The process of "apollumi," diminishing and subjecting the soul to the rule of the Spirit, is thepurpose of Hell and the lake of fire. This fiery purging and transformation in the next age accomplishes the same work as those fiery trials encountered by Christians who voluntarily surrender their lives by taking up their cross and following Christ in this present age.

We see in these words of Christ that Hell is not simply a place of torment for the adversaries of God as the church supposes. It is designed to accomplish that same work as the disciple's cross. It will bring an end to the rule of the soul. The saint can be spared the lake of fire if they will submit to the Headship of Christ now. The saint who rejects the suffering of the cross in this life, will most assuredly have to experience the lake of fire in the age to come.

Revelation 2:11
"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death."

These words are written to "the churches." The second death is the lake of fire. He who overcomes; he who works out his salvation with fear and trembling; he who embraces the cross now in this age; he who does not shrink back from the experiences of suffering Christ will lead him to, will not be hurt by the second death. The overcomers will attain to the first resurrection, and will not be cast into the lake of fire, for their names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. All who are born again of the Spirit of Christ have their names recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, but those who do not walk

as overcomers will have their names removed.

> Revelation 3:5-6
> "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life..., *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*."

This again is Christ's word to *the churches*. What happens to those Christians who walk unworthily of Christ, who do not experience the crushing of their soul life in this age, and who have their names blotted out of the Book of Life?

> Revelation 20:15
> And if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

There is no entrance into that spiritual inheritance in Christ apart from passing through death first. The death of the soul precedes our entrance into the fulness of resurrection life even as the Israelites had to pass through the waters of the Jordan to enter the land flowing with milk and honey.

Yahweh reveals much through parables. The Law is full of arcane regulations in which few Christians today see any purpose or reason. Following is one seldom understood Law of God that bears much on this present subject.

> Leviticus 12:2-5
> "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: 'When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean. On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall remain in the blood of her purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation; and she shall remain in the blood of her purification for sixty-six days.'"

The woman who gave birth was judged to be "unclean" twice as long when she gave birth to a female child as when she gave birth to a male. From a completely natural perspective, such a judgment makes little sense. We must look to the spiritual truths signified in the Law to understand what is actually implied.

The soul of mankind is viewed as feminine. The apostle Paul in several places speaks of the Christian as being born of the "seed" of Christ. It is the female that receives the seed. As natural descendants of Adam, all men are dominated by the feminine soul, until they have Christ formed in them. The feminine soul must receive the seed of Christ in order for Christ to be manifest in our lives. Andrew Jukes, in his excellentbook The Restitution of All Things, writes:

> "For the woman is our nature, which if it receive seed, that is the word of truth, may bring forth a son, that is 'the new man...' But if, instead of bearing this 'new man,' our nature only bear its like, a female child, that is fruits merely natural, then it is unclean

for a double period..."

Those Christians who protect the natural life, who remain soulish, will be judged as unclean in the eyes of Yahweh. Christ said "No man can be My disciple unless he hates... even his own soul." Those who in this life bring forth only the feminine, soulish nature will require a period of cleansing much greater than those who bring forth the masculine image of Christ.

The only way for Christ to be fully formed in any person is for them to yield to be led of God's Spirit. Whether you are male or female by natural birth, you become a "son" of God by submitting to the rule of the Spirit of Christ.

Romans 8:14
For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Those who receive the seed of Christ and yield their lives to the Spirit, subsequently progressing to have "the new man" Christ formed within them, will remain in their uncleanness a shorter time than those who continue to walk after the leading of the feminine soul. The first resurrection is for those who overcome the soul's rule in this age. The next resurrection will not occur until a further thousand years have past(Revelation 20:5). Some remain unclean, ruled by the feminine soul, much longer than others.

There is great reason to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." That salvation which Christ has obtained for us must find its outworking in our lives if we are to be judged as clean before our Father. If we resist this process, refusing to embrace the cross, we will remain unclean for a much longer time. The end of the soul's reign that could have been accomplished in this life by taking up the disciple's cross will need to be completed in the lake of fire. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

The Firstborn

As we continue to lay the foundations for understanding God's plan of the ages, the topic of sonship needs to be examined. Yahweh created man because He desired to have sons. One of the most common titles used to refer to God in the Bible is Father. In approximately 270 instances the Bible uses the word Father when speaking of Yahweh's relationship to man. In hundreds of additional occurrences men and women are called the sons, daughters, children, seed, and offspring of God.

The desire of God to have sons in His image, and after His likeness, was not to be immediately fulfilled upon the creation of Adam. Sin entered the creation and marred the image of man. The Earth would not see a son in the image of God until the appearing of Christ. Of Him, the Father testified:

Matthew 17:5
"This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased..."

Christ is the Firstborn Son of God. He is the express image of His Father.

Hebrews 1:1-6
God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the ages; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He ever say "You are My Son. Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

Christ came into the world to fulfill the desire of Yahweh that He might have sons. Mankind needed a Savior. Man could not attain to sonship in his fallen state. Humanity needed to be set free from its slavery to sin. The righteousness and divine nature which man lacked needed to be imparted to him. The process of restoring fallen man to God was begun in earnest at the appearing of Christ. Christ made a way for many more brethren to stand before Yahweh as sons.

Romans 8:29
For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren...

Hebrews 2:10-16
For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." And

again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

This is the goal of Yahweh's plan of the ages. He will conform man to the image of Christ, and thereby bring many sons to glory. Yet, even as this work of redeeming fallen mankind and bringing forth sons in the image of God began with a single man, so too will we see the spread and fulfillment of this work accomplished in successive and ever larger waves. In the end Christ must fill all things, but in the outworking of this process He must first be formed in a firstfruits group of men and women.

James 1:18
In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of firstfruits among His creatures.

The plan of God is to acquire for Himself a body of firstfruits and then to reconcileall of creation to Himself.

I Corinthians 15:22-23
For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: The anointed firstfruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then the remainder, when He delivers up the kingdom to God the Father.

These firstfruits will be preeminent among their brethren. By being the first to taste of death and suffering through becoming partakers of the cross of Christ, they will obtain a place of honor. They will be known as the firstborn from the dead, the firstborn sons of Christ.

Revelation 14:4
These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. Notice the qualification given here. "These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes."

These are those who have accepted Christ's invitation to "Come, take up your cross, and follow Me." A lamb is a sacrificial animal. A lamb will go meekly and quietly to be slaughtered, not resisting the hand that guides it. So too will this be the attitude and character of those who will be the firstborn of Christ. They will humbly yield their lives to Christ, and present themselves as a living sacrifice. They will surrender to pass through many fiery trials and experiences that serve to reduce the Adamic man that a spiritual creation after the image of Christ might arise. Even as Yahshua embraced the cross, and was perfected through sufferings, these ones too will do the same and serve as a pattern and testimony for their brethren to follow.

These truths are observed in the types and shadows of the Old Testament. The firstborn male that opens the womb was reserved, set apart, as holy unto Yahweh.

Exodus 34:19
The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me...

This preeminence of the firstborn was not merely some archaic custom belonging to a patriarchal society. Yahweh does all things with great purpose and design. The emphasis on the firstborn is a pervasive theme throughout the Old Testament.

Exodus 13:1-2
Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me."

Exodus 13:11-13
"Now when Yahweh brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, you shall devote to Yahweh the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to Yahweh. But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem."

Every detail in the Law of God is significant. It was only firstborn males that were devoted unto Yahweh. We saw the significance of this in the preceding chapter. Man must rule over the feminine soul, taking upon Himself the masculine spiritual character of Christ. Only spiritual men will be counted as the firstborn of God.

Yahweh singles out donkeys as an exception to the law of the firstborn. This is due to what donkeys represent. The donkey is renowned for its stubbornness, whereas the lamb is known to be meek and yielding. It is a true statement that no man will ever qualify as a firstborn son of Yahweh unless he adopts the meek and submissive attitude of a lamb. Those who are stubborn must have their necks broken. Stephen,the first martyr of Christ, reproached the Israelite leaders for their stubborn resistance of God's work in their lives.

Acts 7:51
"You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did."

Both history and the Scriptures reveal that God had to deal with the Jews very harshly due to their stubbornness. A generation would not pass from the time Stephen spoke these words until Jerusalem would be destroyed and tens of thousands of Jews slaughtered. Yet, even among the Jews there was a remnant who humbled themselves, embraced the shame and suffering of Christ's cross, and qualified themselves to be firstborn sons.

The firstborn are considered holy unto God. They become His unique possession. They are accorded honor and glory above all others.

Luke 2:22-23
Now when the days of [Mary's] purification according to the law of Moses were

completed, they brought [Yahshua] to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")...

Colossians 1:18
And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Although the above Scriptures are specifically speaking of Yahshua, there will be many who are the firstborn of Christ who will receive similar distinction and honor.The spiritual substance of the shadow of the firstborn is fulfilled in those who attain to the first resurrection. Both deal with birth order; first the natural, then the spiritual. Regarding those who attain to the first resurrection, we read that they too are considered especially holy unto God, and are blessed by Him.

Revelation 20:6
Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christand will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Only those saints who attain to the first resurrection will be so honored. The apostle Paul spoke of his own earnest yearning to attain to this group.

Philippians 3:10-14
To get to know him, and the power of his resurrection and fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death, - If by any means I may advance to the earlier resurrection, which is from among the dead: Not that I have, already, received, or have, already, reached perfection, but I am pressing on - if I may even lay hold of that for which I have also been laid hold of by Christ Jesus: - Brethren! I, as to myself, reckon that I have, not yet, laid hold; one thing, however, - the things behind, forgetting, and, unto the things before, eagerly reaching out, With the goal in view, I press on for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.
(Rotherham Emphasized Bible)

Paul understood that there is a premier resurrection from the dead. There is a prize to be contended for. The prize is to be numbered among the firstborn of Christ. Paul buffeted his body and kept it under subjection that he might not be disqualified. He ran the race as one who was not without aim, for he knew what awaited those who crossed the finish line first. Paul applied all diligence, all discipline, all focus and determined effort, in the pursuit of attaining to the number of the firstborn from the dead. If you and I have any inkling of what awaits the firstborn we will also be gripped by the pursuit of this high calling.

I Corinthians 9:24-27
Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but

we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such away, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet mybody and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Paul clearly had something in mind here other than the common view held today by a majority of Christians concerning what awaited him in the afterlife, in the resurrection from the dead. Paul discerned that there was a prize for which to strive.

Paul was raised as a Pharisee. He knew the Law and the prophets. Paul discerned the types and shadows of the Old Testament. He discerned that something of a profound nature was foreshadowed in the laws of the firstborn and the laws regarding firstfruits. He wanted to be numbered among that elite company.

The Old Testament reveals the special significance of the firstborn male.

Genesis 49:3
Reuben, you are my first-born; My might and the beginning of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.

Reuben was the firstborn son of Jacob. In what is spoken of him we can discern the role God has chosen for the firstborn. What does it mean to be "preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power"? The word preeminent is defined as "surpassing all others."

Yahweh was showing forth through a natural type a profound truth of the kingdom of God. There will be firstborn sons of God, and there will be latter born sons. The firstborn will be preeminent among all others. Attaining to the number of the firstborn is a goal every Christian should strive towards.

The Bible reveals that receiving the honor and distinction of the firstborn was something that could be lost due to walking unworthily. The honor could be given to a latter born son who distinguished himself. Although Reuben was the firstborn son of Jacob according to natural birth order, the rights and privileges of the firstborn were lost to him and given to Joseph.

Genesis 49:3-4
Reuben, you are my firstborn; My might and the beginning of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. Uncontrolled as water, youshall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it - he went up to my couch.

Reuben had illicit sexual relations with his father's concubine Bilhah.

Genesis 35:22
It came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it.

Note: Yahweh changed Jacob's name to Israel.

Jacob declared that Reuben was "uncontrolled as water." This testimony reveals that he had no self-control. Water flows through the path of least resistance. It cannot restrain itself. It will always sink lower and lower, unless an outside force restrains it.

This is the condition of sinful man. Man will debase himself unless restrained. Reuben could find nothing within himself to restrain his fleshly impulses. Even when he knew that his actions would bring great shame and dishonor to his father, this knowledge did not prove adequate to cause him to rule over his sinful desires.

Certainly there is in this a great parable for Christians today. There are many who are born again of the Spirit of Christ who continue to live carnal (fleshly and sensual) lives. Even though their lack of self-restraint and personal denial are dishonoring to the Father, they do not find within themselves the will to rule over their souls. They are unrestrained. They follow whatever course their soul and sinful flesh presents to them. In so doing, these ones are disqualified as firstborn sons. These ones will not attain to the first resurrection.

In Joseph, the eleventh born son of Jacob, we see another spirit. Joseph loved his father more than his brothers. When Jacob sent his sons out to tend the flocks, we find that Joseph remained at home with his father. There was a special bond and fellowship between them.

> Genesis 37:13
> Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said to him, "I will go."

Joseph was eager to do the will of his father. In like manner, those who will receive the right of the firstborn are eager to do the will of Yahweh. Joseph's brothers were envious of him and treated him shamefully. They sold him as a slave into Egypt. In Egypt Joseph faced temptation akin to that of his elder brother Reuben, yet Joseph's response was very different.

> Genesis 39:7-10
> It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.

Consider the situation in which Joseph found himself. God had given Joseph dreams when he was seventeen years old of being promoted above his brothers. Yet, Joseph found his experiences taking him lower, rather than higher. Joseph's brothers continued living as the free sons of a wealthy father, while Joseph was a slave in a foreign land. Joseph must have been tempted to believe that Yahweh had abandoned him. He might have given into self-pity, reasoning that there was little reason to resist the advances of this Egyptian woman. After all, he must have been very lonely in this foreign land, and here was one manifesting a desire to be with him, even if it was in an illicit manner.

Joseph did not give in to such unworthy thoughts. He remained faithful in his commitment to honor God, and to not defile his master's wife. Had he done so, he too would have been disqualified for the right of the firstborn. By manifesting self-control

Joseph distinguished himself among his brethren. Self-control is at the very heart of that which is needed to qualify as an overcomer in Christ and attain to the first resurrection. The last of the fruit of the Spirit named, which encapsulates all the rest, is self-control.

> Galatians 5:22-25
> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Yahshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

To attain to the first resurrection, a Christian must overcome the sinful passions and desires of the flesh. It is only those who overcome who will be counted worthy of that resurrection. Joseph was elevated to the throne of Egypt. In a similar manner, those who distinguish themselves among their brethren will be granted to sit with Christ on His throne.

> Revelation 3:21-22
> He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

That which Reuben lost due to his lack of self-control, proved to be Joseph's gain. The Scriptures similarly warn believers today to not walk carelessly, and thereby let someone else take the crown that could be theirs.

> Revelation 3:11
> "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown."

Joseph stands as a type of those who will obtain glory and honor above their brothers. He is a shadow of those saints who will receive a double portion and the birthright belonging to the firstborn.

> Genesis 48:21-22
> Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

> I Chronicles 5:1-2
> Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph)...

The struggle for the birthright is seen throughout the Old Testament, for it points to this most profound issue in the kingdom of God. There is an inheritance in Christ to be contended for, and only a remnant will qualify themselves for it. Jacob earnestly

desired both the birthright and the blessing. His twin brother Esau was the firstborn, but he showed little regard for his inheritance. Esau forsook his birthright to satisfy the appetite of his flesh. For a bowl of pottage, Esau gave his birthright to another. Esau stands as a sign, and a warning, to Christians lest they too should forfeit their spiritual inheritance by putting the temporal fulfillment of their natural appetites above the will and pleasure of God.

> Hebrews 12:15-17
> See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God..., that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

The apostle would not give such a warning to the saints unless there were those in the body of Christ who stood to commit a similar transgression. When the saints stand in judgment and see that inheritance that is reserved for the overcomers inChrist, it will be too late. There will be found no place for repentance though it is sought with many tears. The honor of being the firstborn of Christ will have passed beyond their grasp.

There are resurrections other than the first. All men will in their own order be resurrected to life in Christ. Nevertheless, there will be much that distinguishes the firstborn sons of God, and the latter born sons. The apostle Paul discusses the differences that will exist in the resurrection of the dead in the following passagefrom his letter to the church in Corinth.

> I Corinthians 15:35-42
> But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.

We see in this passage that Paul's subject is the resurrection of the dead. He is particularly pointing out that there will be differences of glory among those who are resurrected. Those who attain to the first resurrection will be preeminent among their brethren. They will be like the Sun shining in its strength. It is the Father's desire that His children contend for the prize of attaining to the first resurrection from the dead. In this will He be greatly glorified, that of a free will His sons laid down their lives to attain to that conformity to His own image and likeness that He has desired for them.

The Harvest Allegory

Before Yahweh ever began to form the creation, He had fully worked out the plan of the ages from the beginning to the end. Everything that exists, or will exist; every event that has occurred, and is yet to transpire, was planned before the creation began.

Isaiah 14:24
Yahweh of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand..."

Yahweh will accomplish all His good pleasure. Knowing that Yahweh has perfect and complete power to perform all His desire, and perceiving Him to be perfect in knowledge and wisdom, we are able to agree with Scripture's testimony that everything in the creation is accomplished according to a master plan that Yahweh established by His own counsel.

Ephesians 3:8-11
Unto me - the less than least of all saints, was given this favour, unto the nations, to announce the glad-message of the untraceable riches of the Christ, and to bring to light - what is the administration of the sacred secret which had been hidden away from the ages in God, who did all things create: In order that now, unto the principalities and the authorities in the heavenlies, might be made known, through means of the assembly, the manifold wisdom of God, - according to a plan of the ages which he made in the anointed Jesus our Lord.
(Rotherham's Emphasized Bible)

Those things God will do have been known from ancient times. Yahweh has set testimonies in His creation, among the heavens, and on the earth, to proclaim His will. Thousands of years ago Yahweh established a witness in the scriptures that He entrusted to man. The Law and the prophets give testimony to Yahweh's plan of the ages. Our Father has not neglected to provide a testimony of the resurrections of mankind. Even as plants mature and crops are harvested on the Earth, the day will come when mankind will reach maturity. The time of man's harvest will be at hand.

The Bible frequently uses a harvest allegory to show forth the resurrections of mankind. Thecrops we grow arise from the dust of the earth even as man's flesh was formed of thedust of the earth.

Genesis 2:7
And Yahweh God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

We have previously observed Christ's parable where He compares men to both wheat and tares that are sown in a field and grow together. There are many more Scriptures that compare men to various types of plants that arise from the dust of the earth. Following is a small sampling of the great variety of Scriptures which employ this allegory.

John 12:24-25
"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal."

Psalms 1:1-4
How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of Yahweh, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

Psalms 80:8-13
You removed a vine from Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground before it, and it took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shadow, and the cedars of God with its boughs. It was sending out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the River. Why have You broken down its hedges, so that all who pass that way pick its fruit? A boar from the forest eats it away and whatever moves in the field feeds on it.

Psalms 92:12-14
The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of Yahweh, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still yield fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and very green...

Isaiah 40:23-24
He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, but He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the storm carries them away like stubble.

I Corinthians 3:6-7
I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

A great many more Scriptures could be cited, as the comparison of men to plants is one of the most abundant analogies that Yahweh uses in the Bible. There are truths that we can glean (pun intended) as we look at men in this light.

One thing that is observable in the natural realm is that plants bear fruit at different times of the year. Even so, Yahweh has determined that men should come to maturity at different times which He has established by His own counsel. Every man must eventually arrive at a state of conformity to Christ so that Yahshua might "fill all things." However, this subjection of all men to Christ will occur "each in his own order."

When Yahweh sought to give a testimony of the resurrections of man in the Law delivered to Moses, He chose to use annual gatherings as the symbol to represent this matter. Three times a year Yahweh required that all males appear before Him at a place

He would choose. These appointed times (moedim in Hebrew) serve as types of the three resurrections. Each of them occurred at a time of harvest. The three feasts and the harvests associated with them are:

Passover/Barley
Pentecost/Wheat
Tabernacles/Grapes

Yahweh chose these three crops to reveal specific truths about those men who would attain to each of the three resurrections. Before I address what is revealed through these three types of plants, let us first establish the foundation upon which we can correctly conclude that the Feasts were intended as symbols of the resurrections of man.

When Yahweh delivered the Law to Moses, He did so to provide mankind with types and shadows that would give those with understanding insight into the hidden mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

> Colossians 2:16-17
> Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a *festival* or a new moon or a Sabbath day - things which are a shadow of what is to come...

The word "festival" that Paul used here is a reference to the Feasts established by Yahweh. The apostle says that these "are a shadow of what is to come." The Law with its festival ordinances was given to Moses 1,500 years before Christ was born. It would be about 2,000 more years before a group of firstfruits sons would pass through death into life at the first resurrection. The hour is now close at hand. Those things that have been foreshadowed from ancient times are soon to take place.

In the details of the Feasts of Yahweh we can discern much about the character and timing of the three resurrections of man.

> Deuteronomy 16:16
> Three times in a year all your males shall appear before Yahweh your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) and at the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and at the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles)...

Appearing before God is symbolic of resurrection. Men were required by Yahweh to leave their dwelling places and journey to a place where they were to meet with Him. At each feast the men were to bring with them the firstfruits of that which was being harvested in that particular season.

> Exodus 23:15
> And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.

Each resurrection will be distinct in its character even as the three feasts, and the crops associated with them, were different. God looks for fruit in the lives of men. Christ told His disciples, "You shall know them by their fruit." Yahweh knows every man by his

fruit. He knows those who are the barley crop. He knows those who are wheat. He also knows those who are grapes.

Passover, and by extension the first resurrection, is associated with the barley harvest. Barley is an early ripening crop. It matures in the spring of the year, being spared the heat and drought of the summer months. This is a parable. Those who attain to the first resurrection come to maturity quicker than the rest of the body of Christ. Because they gave themselves eagerly to pursue God's will for them of becoming like Christ, they will not have to experience the heat of the lake of fire, even as barley doesn't have to go through the heat of summer.

The Barley of Passover differs from the wheat of Pentecost in a very significant way. Barley contains very little gluten, while wheat has an abundance of gluten. Gluten is the component of grain that reacts with yeast to make the bread rise. Because barley lacks gluten it is often baked as an unleavened bread. This is a parable, for bread represents man's flesh and leaven represents sin.

The Last Supper was held during the Feast of Passover. During that meal, Christ took an unleavened loaf of barley bread and said to His disciples, "This is My BODY, broken for you." The bread had to be unleavened, for Christ was completely righteous, having never sinned.

> Hebrews 4:15
> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

The disciples partook of this meal during the days of unleavened bread prescribed by Moses.

> Exodus 12:15
> "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel."

These days are called The Feast of Unleavened Bread, and they are part of the larger Passover celebration. The Feast of Unleavened bread occurs at the time of the barley harvest. The barley loaves represent not only Christ, but those overcomers in Christ who buffet their bodies and keep them under subjection. These ones do not permit their flesh to rise up in the presence of sin. They keep their bodies under the rule of the Spirit.

> Galatians 5:24
> Now those who belong to Christ Yahshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Wheat is harvested at Pentecost, and therefore corresponds to the second resurrection. Wheat contains an abundance of gluten. At Pentecost Yahweh gave instructions that the wheat presented to Him be baked as a leavened bread. Pentecost occurs fifty days after Passover.

Leviticus 23:16-17
"You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to Yahweh. You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to Yahweh."

It was not a random whim of God to instruct Israel to remove all leaven from their homes during Passover and to bake the barley as unleavened bread, anymore than it is a meaningless requirement that the bread at Pentecost must be baked WITH leaven. Yahweh is showing forth truth through means of parables. Those who do not rule over the flesh with its passions and desires, will be excluded from the honor of attaining to the first resurrection.

Because many Christians sow to the flesh, rather than to the Spirit, they must wait until a later resurrection to enter into their inheritance in Christ. God will not be mocked. Whether a person is a Christian, or an unbeliever, they will reap what they sow. Those Christians who walk in a manner unworthy of Christ will not only be excluded from being numbered among the firstborn of Yahshua, they will have to experience "apollumi" in the lake of fire, because they did not present themselves to God as "aliving sacrifice" in this present age.

Revelation 2:11
"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death."

Revelation 20:14
This is the second death, the lake of fire.

There is a parallel observed between the baking of the leavened loaves of wheat at Pentecost and the Christians who share a place with the unbelievers in the lake of fire. The action of the yeast in wheat bread continues to cause the bread to rise until the bread is placed in the oven and baked. The heat of the oven stops the reaction between the leaven and the gluten in the bread. Similarly, many Christians will only turn away from sin and learn righteousness as they go through the heat of the lake of fire.

The last feast of the year is Tabernacles, often called Sukkot, or the Feast of Booths. It is held in conjunction with the harvest of grapes. Grapes represent those men and women who have given themselves fully over to sensuality and have become the enemies of God. Even as the fruit of the grape can induce drunkenness, attended by an absence of self-control, so too are there many men and women who set aside all inhibitions and give themselves fully to a pursuit of selfish pleasure and ungodliness.

Romans 1:32
Though they are fully aware of God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them themselves but approve and applaud others who practice them.
(Amplified Bible)

These are the last to come to maturity. They are the last group from among

mankind to be resurrected. They must experience the wrath of God in full measure. Having this introduction to the symbolism of the three feasts established by Yahweh, let us look once more at Paul's words to the saints in Corinth relating to Christ's work of subjecting all things to the Father.

> I Corinthians 15:22-26
> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: the anointed first fruits (Barley/Passover), after that those who are Christ's at His coming (Wheat/Pentecost), then the remainder (Grapes/Tabernacles), when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

The more one learns about the Feasts, the better able they may discern the relationship between the feasts and the resurrections as described by Paul in these words. At Passover the firstfruits offered to Yahweh were to be anointed with oil.

> Numbers 28:17-20
> On the fifteenth day of this month shall be a feast, unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days... You shall present an offering by fire, a burnt offering to Yahweh: two bulls and one ram and seven male lambs one year old, having them without defect. For their grain offering, you shall offer fine flour mixed with oil...

The fine barley flour of Passover was to be mixed with oil. This was "the anointed firstfruits." Paul says that these are the first to be resurrected. When Paul writes of those who are last to be resurrected, he concludes with the statement, " For [Christ] must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." Grapes are harvested and then crushed under the feet of men. From ancient days, this was the method of extracting the juice from the grape.

Paul attaches to his words on the order of the resurrection the words "He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." These words express the thought that the resurrection work of God among mankind will not be complete until the enemies of God are crushed and then reconciled to the Father. These will be last in resurrection. Like grapes which are trodden under the feet of man, the enemies of God will be trodden under God's feet, experiencing His wrath.

> Isaiah 63:2-6
> Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the winepress? "I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger, and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come. And I looked, and there was no one to help, and I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; so My own arm brought salvation to Me; and My wrath upheld Me. And I trod down the peoples in My anger, and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

God's work among mankind will not be finished until all mankind has appeared before God. Each group of men must be harvested from the earth, "for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order." The enemies of God, like grapes, will be harvested last of all. They must endure the wrath of God. Before the ages are concluded, all who were incensed with Yahweh will be ashamed. They will confess "Surely in Yahweh I have righteousness and strength."

Yahweh was very deliberate in choosing these three crops to represent the various groups of men to be resurrected. Not only are the three resurrections of man observed in the Old Testament in the feasts established by Yahweh, they are proclaimed all the way to the last book of the Bible. In Revelation chapter fourteen, all three resurrections are in view.

> Revelation 14:1-5
> Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads... These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

In these words we see the overcomers in Christ. These are firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. They are the first to pass through death into the resurrection life of Christ. Later in this same chapter we see the next group to be resurrected.

> Revelation 14:14-16
> Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

The harvest allegory is clearly being employed in this chapter. We have seen the firstfruits, now a second resurrection is occurring. The earth is being reaped. Those who have come to maturity must be gathered together to be presented before theFather. Immediately after this we see a third and final reaping of the earth.

> Revelation 14:17-20
> And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

In this chapter we see a distinct parallel to Paul's words in I Corinthians chapter fifteen, and to the three feasts of Yahweh with their associated harvests. This chapter of Revelations begins with the firstfruits of Passover standing on Mount Zion with Christ. It ends with the grapes of Tabernacles being harvested and trodden underfoot. In between is the wheat harvest of Pentecost. John further elaborates on the enemies of God in this chapter.

> Revelation 14:9-11
> Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up to the ages of ages; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. How fitting it is that the Holy Spirit pictures these enemies as grapes. What marvelous design is seen in Yahweh's creation where the grape harvest is in the end of the year, long after the barley and the wheat have been gathered in. There is an appointed time for all things.

Mythology and the Bible

In the preceding chapters of this book I have labored to show forth through the Scriptures Yahweh's plan to reconcile all things in the creation to Himself through Christ. The rule of Christ must continue UNTIL He has accomplished a full and perfect reconciliation of the creation.

> Ephesians 1:22-23
> And He (God the Father) put all things in subjection under His (Christ the Son's) feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

> I Corinthians 15:27-28
> But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Seeing that these things are declared in plain speech in the Scriptures, how is it that the majority of the body of Christ have not understood or accepted the reconciliation of all things to the Father? Where did the abominable doctrines of eternal torment arise from which leave a majority of mankind and one third of the angels forever separated from God?

The apostle Paul prophesied that in the latter days men (in the Church) would not endure sound doctrine. He declared that they would turn aside to myths and fables. The doctrine of eternal torment is a myth. Those familiar with Greek and Roman mythology will recognize the origins from which the church's doctrines arose. Centuries before Christ's birth the Greeks believed in a place of the dead called Hades. Far below Hades was Tarturus, a place of unending torment and suffering.

One of the Greek myths related to a king named Tantalus. King Tantalus transgressed greatly against the gods. As punishment he was imprisoned eternally in Tartarus. Tantalus' punishment for his actions was to stand in a pool of water beneath a fruit tree with low branches. Tantalus was gripped with hunger. The desire for the fruit so close at hand was maddening. Whenever Tantalus reached for the fruit, the branches would rise, keeping the fruit just beyond his grasp. Likewise, Tantalus was tortured with thirst. Whenever he bent low to drink from the pool of water in which he was standing, the waters would recede out of his reach.

Another Greek myth told of King Sisyphus. Sisyphus boasted that he was more clever than Zeus, the chief of the Greek gods. Zeus punished Sisyphus by imprisoning him in Tartarus. King Sisyphus was given the task of rolling a large boulder up a hill that came to a sharp peak. As soon as the boulder reached the top, it would roll back down the other side. The process had to be repeated continually. Thus Sisyphus was doomed to an eternity of frustration.

A third Greek myth tells of King Ixion, who was another to transgress against the gods. King Ixion lusted after Zeus' wife Hera. Ixion sought to ravish Hera even in the presence of her husband. As punishment, King Ixion was bound to a flaming wheel representing his unbridled flaming lusts. He was forever tortured upon this wheel in

Tartarus.

In each of these myths we see that the Greeks adopted a belief that the worst transgressors would be cast into a place of eternal torment that was befitting their wicked deeds. This punishment was viewed as an act of vengeance by the gods that consigned men to Tartarus. The wrath of the Greek gods was never to be assuaged. The punishments would have no end.

The Greeks also taught that Hades, the god of the underworld, guarded the place of the dead and would never permit any who went there to depart. Hades was commonly pictured with a staff in his hand. He had a three headed dog named Cerberus who guarded the gates of Hell.

These Greek beliefs were carried over into the Roman Empire that followed. The church of Rome was corrupted as tares were sown among the wheat. Men like Emperor Constantine took unto themselves the highest position in the church, while granting the church freedom from persecution. Many Christians rejoiced that the centuries of persecution were ended, but they did not reckon on the destruction wrought upon the church by the introduction of false beliefs and doctrines by men who were devoid of the Holy Spirit.

The Roman Catholic Church adopted the practice of syncretism, the merging of the pagan beliefs of Rome's citizens with the doctrines of Christ and His apostles. Soon truth was abandoned and the original teachings of Christ and the apostles were no longer tolerated. Truth had been replaced with myths and fables. The apostle Paul accurately predicted the state of the church regarding these things.

II Timothy 4:3-4
For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

It is from this embracing of myths and fables that the church came to believe in a place of eternal torment. Additionally, the Biblical view of Satan was replaced by a caricature that closely resembled Hades, the god of the underworld. Common depictions of Satan show him with a trident, a three headed pitchfork in his hands, guarding the gates of hell. Satan is commonly viewed by many Christians today as ruling over those who are cast into hell. Such a belief is foreign to the Scriptures. The Bible never suggests that Satan will have any rule or authority in hell. Whether Satan is being temporarily bound and cast into the abyss, or whether he is being cast into Hades (Hell), he will have no more authority than any other creature experiencing the wrath of God.

Revelation 20:1-3
Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

Revelation 20:7-10

When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison... And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages.

Some years ago I was invited to attend a drama being put on at a local church. The drama was performed by a sizeable ministry that sent out teams of actors throughout the nation to stage this play in a multitude of churches. The drama was called *"Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames*." It consisted of a series of short acts depicting various people dying. Whenever a person would die without giving their life to Christ, a macabre scene would unfold. The stage would darken. Ominous music would play, and demons would appear to drag the terrified and shrieking victim off to hell as Satan stood by watching, pitchfork in hand, while laughing in a maniacal fashion.

I was disturbed by the reaction (or lack thereof) of the Christians in the audience. Not a single person I spoke with appeared to note that the play was a depiction of mythology, and the things portrayed found no support in Scriptures. The Bible nowhere pictures Satan and his demons dragging people into hell. Nor is Satan figured as the god of the underworld, or with horns on his head, or a pitchfork in his hand. All of these things derive from mythology. The belief that those cast into the lake of fire will remain there eternally is similarly derived from mythology. As has been testified previously, the lake of fire is synonymous with the second death. Death will not continue forever.

I Corinthians 15:25-27
For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet."

Isaiah 25:8
He will swallow up death for all time, and Yahweh God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For Yahweh has spoken.

Hosea 13:14
From the hand of Sheol I do ransom them, From death I redeem them...
(Young's Literal Translation)

II Timothy 1:10
The appearing of our Savior Yahshua Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Revelation 21:4-5
And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

In this book sound doctrine has been set forth, yet the majority of people in the church will not receive it. Paul testified that in the last days men would not "endure"

sound doctrine. Since I began to teach these things in 2002 I have been blacklisted from prophecy sites. I have been refused communion by other saints, and denied opportunity to teach. Some have used their ministries to declare me a heretic and to caution their followers to have nothing to do with me. These very actions are what Paul was describing when he said men would not "endure" sound doctrine. They will not hear it. They will not permit sound doctrine to be taught. Having embraced myths and fables, their minds are closed to all else.

God's plan of the ages has been transformed into something that is a gross aberration from the original. Yahweh is shown to be angry forever, and His wrath to be eternal. Those cast into hell and the lake of fire are believed to never escape. The reconciliation of "all things" through Christ is denied by the church. The church does not perceive the end of Christ's reign to come when all things will be subjected to Him that God the Father might be "all in all."

The church fell into error centuries ago. Over time myths and fables have come to be regarded as sacred truth due to their long antiquity. When in more recent centuries men in the church have applied themselves to translate the Scriptures into English, the influence of the mythology of Rome held sway over their minds. The Bible translations adopted by the masses of Christendom have become impregnated with the myths of pagan people. Words were translated to convey that false belief that had been adopted as orthodox theology.

Nowhere do we see this more profoundly thanin the confused and errant renderings of the Greek word aion and its variants. Consider the following examples showing the varied and inaccurate manner in which translators have rendered this word. All quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Ephesians 2:7
That in the *ages* (aions) to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:26
Even the mystery which hath been hid from *ages* (aions) and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints...

Ephesians 2:2
Wherein in time past ye walked according to the *course* (aion) of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Hebrews 1:2
Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the *worlds* (aions);

Hebrews 11:3
Through faith we understand that the *worlds* (aions) were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Galatians 1:4

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil *world* (aion), according to the will of God and our Father:

Ephesians 6:12
For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this *world* (aion), against spiritual wickedness in high places.

II Corinthians 4:4
In whom the god of this *world* (aion) hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

I Corinthians 2:6
Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this *world* (aion), nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

Luke 16:8
And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this *world* (aion) are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

Mark 4:19
And the cares of this *world* (aion), and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Mark 10:30
But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the *world* (aion) to come eternal (aionian) life.

Luke 20:35
But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that *world* (aion), and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

Hebrews 6:5
And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the *world* (aion) to come...

John 9:32
Since the *world* (aion) began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

These verses represent a fair sampling of the many ways in which the Greek word *aion* has been translated. In other places, the translators have rendered this same word as "*eternity*," "*for ever*," "for ever and ever," and "*everlasting*." Following are a few examples.

Ephesians 3:11
According to the *eternal* (aionian) purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our

Lord…

Hebrews 6:2
Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of *eternal* (aionian) judgment.

Revelation 19:2-3
For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up *for ever* (aions) and *ever* (aions).

Revelation 20:10
And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night *for ever* (aions) and *ever* (aions).

Matthew 25:41
Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting* (aionian) fire, prepared for the devil and his angels…

Jude 6
And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in *everlasting* (aionian) chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

It is evident that in each instance the translators interpreted this word to mean what they thought it should say according to the beliefs they had adopted. In the original KJV Bibles that were released in the 1600s, the translators included a list of restrictions that King James of England had placed upon them. One of these instructions was that the Bible could contain no translation that would upset the orthodoxy of the Church of England. The Anglican Church taught a doctrine of eternal damnation, therefore the scholars working on the King James Bible had to conform their translation to this belief.

It is apparent that the translators were very inconsistent in the interpretation of this word. If the word aion and its variants mean eternal, everlasting, or for ever, then the word should make sense when interpreted this way in the other Scriptures in which it is found. In this, it fails the test. Consider how nonsensical the following Scriptures would be.

Ephesians 2:7
That in the *eternities* (aions) to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Colossians 1:26
Even the mystery which hath been hid from *eternities* (aions) and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints…

Ephesians 2:2

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the *eternity* (aion) of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Hebrews 1:2
Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the *eternities* (aions);

John 9:32
Since the *eternity* (aion) began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

It is quite obvious that the Greek word aion is not referring to eternity in these and many other verses. The Greek word aion refers to an age that has a beginning and an end. Its variants refer to ages, or as an adjective to that which is age-lasting, or age-abiding. J. Preston Eby in his writing *The Savior of the World*, shares the following:

And now in reviewing the Scriptures we have just quoted we note that this aion is something which has a king; it has princes; it is in darkness; it had a beginning; it has an ending; it is evil; it has wisdom; it has children who marry; it has cares. The aions we find were made by Christ, simply through His spoken Word, and we also find in Colossians 1:26 that the mystery of Christ in us, the hope of glory, has been hidden from these aions. Now, if AION means ETERNAL, consider how ridiculous the Word of God would be! The Holy Spirit would be found saying, "the mystery which has been hid from eternities;" "the mystery of Christ which in other eternities was not made known;" "in the eternities to come;" "You walked according to the eternity of this world;" "by whom also He made the eternities;" "the rulers of the darkness of this eternity;" "now once in the end of the eternities has He appeared;" "the harvest is the end of the eternity;" "since eternity began;" "in the eternities to come," etc. etc... Suffice it to say here that there have been "aions" in the past, there is this present "aion," and there are "aions" to come. And these all combined make up TIME, encompassing the whole of the progressive plan and program of God for the development of His creation.
[End Quote]

Laying aside the myths of Rome, let us now translate these passages consistently, using the word "age," or "ages" in these same Scriptures. At once, the confusion is resolved, and a consistent teaching regarding the ages of God comes into view.

Eph. 2:7 "in the *ages* (aions) to come."
Col. 1:26 "the mystery which has been hid from the *ages* (aions). "
Eph. 2:2 "you walked, according to the *age* (aion) of this world."
Heb. 1:2 "by whom also He made the *ages* (aions)."
Heb. 11:3 "the *ages* (aions) were formed by the Word of God."
Gal. 1:4 "deliver us from this present evil *age* (aion)."
Eph. 6:12 "the rulers of the darkness of this age (aion)."
II Cor. 4:4 "the god of this *age* (aion)."
I Cor. 2:6 "the wisdom of this *age* (aion)."

Lk. 16:8 "the children of this *age* (aion)."
Mk. 4:19 "the cares of this *age* (aion)."
Mk. 10:30 "the *age* (aion) to come."
Lk. 20:35 "but they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that *age* (aion)"
Heb. 6:5 "and have tasted the powers of the *age* (aion) to come."
John. 9:32 "since the *age* (aion) began."
Eph. 3:11 "according to a plan of the *ages* (aions)."
Heb. 6:2 "and of *age-abiding* (aionian) judgment."
Rev. 19:3 "and her smoke rose up to the *ages* (aions) of the *ages* (aions).
Rev. 20:10 "tormented day and night to the *ages* (aions) of the *ages* (aions)."
Mat. 25:41 "depart from me, ye cursed, into *age-abiding* (aionian) fire."
Jude 6 "he hath reserved in *age-abiding* (aionian) chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

In a forthcoming chapter I will discuss further the meaning of expressions such as "the ages of the ages," and "the age of the ages." Note in this last verse that the *aionian* chains are "unto the judgment of the great day." The chains cannot be eternal if they serve a role that is limited in time.

The Bible has much to say about the ages God has allotted to creation. Before Yahweh ever began to create He had established a master plan for the ages. All would culminate in a great final age of the ages when all would be reconciled to the Father, when sin and death would be no more.

Myths borrowed from pagan societies are no substitute for truth. Though it be a remnant who are able to endure sound doctrine in this hour, let them hold fast the truth by proclaiming the fullness of the reconciling work of Christ, the Savior of the world.

Yahshua, the Lord of the Ages

It has already been shown that Christ's reign over the creation is temporal, for the creation itself will encompass ages, but not eternity. The apostle Paul in his letter to the saints in Corinth states:

I Corinthians 15:25
For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

In the sentence preceding the verse above, the apostle tells us:

I Corinthians 15:24
Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

There will come a time at the end of the ages when Christ gives all things back to the Father. The Greek word translated as "hands over" in the verse above is 'paradidomi.' *Strong's Concordance* defines the word in the following manner.

To surrender, i.e yield up, intrust, transmit:

When the kingdom is handed over to God the Father, the reign of Christ will be at an end. When all things have been reconciled to the Father, and the entire creation is rightly related to God, there will be no more need of any rule, authority, or power.

Young's Literal Translation of the Bible reveals the sense of this verse more accurately.

I Corinthians 15:24
Then — the end, when he may deliver up the reign to God, even the Father, when he may have made useless all rule, and all authority and power.

What will be the need of a ruler when all things are submitted fully and completely to the Father? There will be no more need for correction, for punishment, for reward, or judgment. Perfect love, and obedience to Yahweh, will permeate the creation. What a marvelous accomplishment the Son will have achieved! Yahshua will present to the Father the creation in a state of perfect righteousness and peace. There will be nothing left that is out of harmony with the will and character of Yahweh. An enemy will not be found anywhere in creation, whether in heaven or on earth. Sin will have been thoroughly purged, and death will be no more. All will be life, and peace, and righteousness at the conclusion of the Son's rule and the end of the ages.

This work of reconciling the creation to the Father goes on apace. Right now Yahshua is leading a firstfruits company to enter into a condition of complete Sabbath rest. There are ages in which this work will continue. Looking at the rebellion, sin and chaos of this present world system, the fullness of Christ's work at the end of the ages is difficult to envision.

Centuries before the birth of Christ, Yahweh restored a remnant of His people to the Holy Land. Yahweh indicated to the captives of Judah and Jerusalem who had been

carried into Babylon (confusion) that the appointed time had arrived for them to return to Zion. Only a remnant of the people heeded Yahweh's invitation. In this remnant we see a pattern for God's work today.

Yahweh tasked those obedient sons with rebuilding the Temple. The work was truly great, and the laborers were few. It was a monumental task just to get the foundation of the Temple laid. The prophet Zechariah writes of this event.

> Zechariah 4:8-10
> Moreover the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; His hands shall also finish it. Then you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent Me to you. For who has despised the day of small things?"

As we look at the work of God at this present time on the earth, we are seeing only a remnant who are yielding their lives (souls) to the rule of Yahweh. Even among those who call themselves Christians, the actual number of disciples of Christ is very small. In the Gospel of Luke we read of Christ being asked about the number of those being saved.

> Luke 13:23
> And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?"

It was surely apparent to the person asking the question that only a small percentage of the Jews were turning to Yahshua and heeding His words. Among the religious leaders, the numbers were small, and of the entire nation we read that a partial hardening had occurred. Yahshua did not deny that at that time only a few were being saved. He urged those listening to Him to strive to enter through the narrow door.

At this time, in this age, there are only a few being saved. The vast majority of men continue to experience separation from the life of Christ. They have not yielded their lives to the Father. They have not entered into the Sabbath rest which Paul defines in the following manner:

> Hebrews 4:10
> For the one who has entered His rest has himself ceased from his own works, as God did from His.

Sabbath rest is a cessation of all independent action; it is the end of all human initiative. Sabbath rest is knowing the Father's will and doing it. There are just a few entering into this rest at this time. We live in a day of small things, but such a day is not to be despised. That which has begun as a very small work will grow until it encompasses the entire creation.

In the book of Daniel, we read of the prophet interpreting a dream for the King of Babylon. The dream portrayed all the great kingdoms of the earth. At the end of the procession of earthly kingdoms there came a new, divine kingdom. It was represented by a stone that was formed without hands. This was a divine work. The stone is Christ. He is the stone that the builder's rejected, but has now become the chief cornerstone. Daniel speaks of this stone to the King of Babylon.

> Daniel 2:34-35
> You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue

on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Christ's work, of shattering the nations and establishing the rule of God throughout the creation, has just begun. It is in its infancy. Yahshua is establishing the kingdom of God inside the lives of a firstfruits group of men and women at this hour. These will be the first to be resurrected. They in turn will share in the work of reconciling the remainder of the creation back to the Father, both things in the heavens and on the earth.

Revelation 20:6
Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

I Corinthians 6:3
Do you not know that we will judge angels?

When Christ's reign has accomplished its full purpose, all things will be reconciled to the Father. Then Christ will hand the kingdom over to the Father. There will be no more need of rule, or of a ruler. Christ will reign to the end of the ages, then time itself will be no more as all things are summed back up into the Father.

When God's plan of the ages is understood, the error of proclaiming Christ to be an eternal king, and his kingdom to be forever, becomes apparent. The men tasked with translating the King James Bible did not understand the ages of God, or the end of all things. Even if they did perceive these things, the king's edict to not interpret the Scriptures in such a way as to upset the orthodox view of the church would have constrained them.

When King James of England authorized a group of scholars tocreate a new English translation of the Bible, he gave them fifteen rules to guide them. These rules were printed in the front of the early King James Bibles. Among these rules are the following guidelines.

1. The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the Truth of the original will permit.
2. The names of the Prophets, and the Holy Writers, with the other Names of the Text, to be retained, as nigh as may be, accordingly as they were vulgarly used.
3. The Old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation &c.
4. When a Word hath divers Significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most of the Ancient Fathers, being agreeable to the Propriety of the Place, and the Analogy of the Faith.
14. These translations to be used when they agree better with the Text than the Bishops Bible: Tyndale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitchurch's, Geneva.

It was points number 3 and 4 which have caused the greatest harm to this translation. The king was in effect ordering that the orthodox views of the Church of England should be supported by the translation. Not only could the Greek word translated as *church* not be changed to the word *congregation*, but the Greek word *baptizo* could not be translated at all. The meaning of the Greek word is "immerse," but the practice of the church was to sprinkle. To get around this obvious contradiction, the translators did not translate the word at all. They transliterated it, which is to simply keep it in its original Greek form with only a slight alteration for English reading. Thus baptizo was rendered as baptize, and the church could interpret this word any way they desired.

Obviously, the teaching of the church in 1611 supported eternal torment. The concept of the reconciliation of the entire creation was rejected by the Church of England, and the understanding of the ages and the temporal reign of Christ was not embraced. Therefore, to not upset the orthodox views of the church, the scholars working in this translation were not permitted to translate the Greek word aion as age. Instead, they erroneously interpreted it to mean for ever, or eternal.

To this day we have many erroneous renderings of the Scriptures that have led multitudes of Christians to false conclusions. Consider the difference in understanding the church might have today if they were taught out of an accurate translation of the Bible. Observe the difference in understanding that arises from the following two translations of the same verse.

> Revelation 11:15
> And the seventh messenger did sound, and there came great voices in the heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of the world did become [those] of our Lord and of His Christ, and *he shall reign to the ages of the ages*!'
> (YLT)

Contrast this literal rendering with the words of the men who produced the King James Bible.

> Revelation 11:15
> And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and *he shall reign for ever and ever*.
> (KJV)

In the Greek original it is recorded that Christ must reign to the "aions" of the "aions." This cannot be for ever and ever, for the day will come when Christ shall hand over the kingdom to the Father, and all rule will be abolished. It is a great tragedy that the church has not understood the Scriptures, nor the power of God. They see this present age in which a fraction of all mankind profess belief in God and in His Christ, and they believe this is the consummation and end of Christ's work of reconciliation. They are convinced that all who die separated from Christ and God must forever remain that way. What great error this is. It leaves the majority ofthe creation forever separated from the Father, eternally tormented in hell.

In this fallacious view of the church, Christ does not reconcile all things to the Father. Yahshua does not fill all in all, and there is no end to Christ's rule where He

hands over a perfected creation to the Father.

Rulers are established for the purpose of punishing evildoers and rewarding the righteous. This is what the apostle declared in the letter to the Romans.

Romans 13:3-5
For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

These words accurately describe the function of Christ's rule. Christ is a minister of God to you (and all creation) for good. He will both punish the wicked and reward the righteous.

Revelation 22:12
"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."

The rule of Christ is declared by the Scriptures to be temporal. He will rule UNTIL all enemies have been brought under subjection. Christ will administer wrath, but not eternal wrath, for His rule is only until the end of the ages. Being instructed out of faulty translations, and not studying carefully to discern where error has entered in, the church has been led to adopt many false doctrines about the punishment of the wicked. Following is the King James rendering of a verse out of Matthew's gospel.

Matthew 25:41
Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting fire*, prepared for the devil and his angels.
(KJV)

It is easy to perceive how saints can be led astray through faulty translation work. If we accept the rendering of the translators who worked on this version of the English Bible we would certainly conclude that the devil and his angels will be subjected to "*everlasting fire*." Contrast this with the following translations of the same verse.

Matthew 25:41
Then will He say to those at His left, "Begone from me, with the curse resting upon you, into *the Fire of the Ages*, which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels."
(Weymouth Translation)

Matthew 25:41
Then he will say to those on his left "Go from my presence, accursed, into *the aeonian fire* which has been prepared for the Devil and his angels."
(Twentieth Century New Testament - 1904)

Matthew 25:41

He will then also say to those at his Left hand, "Depart from me you cursed ones into *that aionian fire* which is prepared for the adversary and his messengers."
(Emphatic Diaglott)

Matthew 25:41
Then will he say unto those also on His left hand: Depart from me, accursed ones! Into *the age-abiding fire* which hath been prepared for the adversary and his messengers.
(Rotherham's Emphasized Bible)

Matthew 25:41
Then shall he say also to those on the left hand, Go ye from me, the cursed, *to the fire, the age-during*, that hath been prepared for the Devil and his messengers;
(Young's Literal Translation)

If we accept the testimony of the Scriptures that declare Christ's rule to be temporal, to be concluded at the end of the ages, then we can judge no translation as accurate or faithful to the original thought of the authors that speaks of eternal punishment. The thought in the minds of the original writers was that the fires of hell and the lake of fire are limited to the ages of the creation.

Andrew Jukes, an English minister, authored an excellent book on this subject in 1867. It is titled *The Restitution of All Things*. Mr. Jukes considered the various instances and combinations of the Greek word aion in the Bible. His comments are worthy of consideration.

(NOTE: Every scholar knows that the expressions, "ages," "to the ages," "age of the ages," and "ages of the ages," are unlike anything which occurs in the heathen Greek writers. The reason is, that the inspired writers, and they alone, understood the mystery and purpose of the "ages." They, or at least the Spirit which spake by them, saw that there would be a succession of "ages," a certain number of which constituted another greater "age." It seems to me that when they simply intended a duration of many "ages," they wrote "to the ages." When they had in view a greater and more comprehensive "age," including in it many other subordinate "ages," they wrote "to the age of ages." When they intended the longer "age" alone, without regard to its constituent parts, they wrote "to an aeonial age"; this form of expression being a Hebraism, exactly equivalent to "age of the ages:" like "liberty of glory," for "glorious liberty," (Rom. viii. 21,) and "body of our vileness," for "our vile body." (Phil. iii. 21.) When they intended the several comprehensive "ages" collectively, they wrote "to the ages of ages." Each varying form is used with a distinct purpose and meaning.)
At any rate, and whatever the future "ages" may be, those past (and St. Paul speaks of "the ends" of some,) are clearly not endless; and the language of Scripture as to those to come seems to teach that they are limited, since Christ's mediatorial kingdom, which is "for the ages of ages," must yet be "delivered up to the Father, that God may be all in all." (Compare Rev. XI. 15, and 1 Cor. XV. 24.) And the fact that in John's vision, which describes the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gives Him, our Lord is called "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,"(Rev. xxi. 6.) seems to imply an end to the peculiar manifestation of Him as Kingand Priest, under which special offices the Revelation shews Him, offices which, as they involve lost ones to be saved and rebels ruled over, may not be needed when the lost are saved and reconciled.

Would it not have been better therefore, and more respectful to the Word of God, had our Translators been content in every place to give the exact meaning of the words, which they render "for ever," or "for ever and ever," but which are simply "for the age," or "for the ages of ages;" and ought they not in other passages, where the form of expression in reference to these "ages" is marked and peculiar, to have adhered to the precise words of Holy Scripture? I have already referred to thepassage of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, which in our Version is rendered "throughout all ages, world without end," but which is literally, "to all generations of the age of ages." (Eph. iii. 21.)... It is, therefore, a matter of regret that our Translators should not have rendered them exactly and literally; for surely the words which Divine Wisdom has chosen must have a reason, even where readers and translators lack the light to apprehend it.

The "ages," therefore, are periods in which God works, because there is evil and His rest is broken by it, but which have an end and pass away, when the work appointed to be done in them has been accomplished. The "ages," like the "days" of creation, speak of a prior fall: they are the "times" in which God works, because He cannot rest in sin and misery. His perfect rest is not in the "ages," but beyond them, when the mediatorial kingdom, which is "for the ages of ages," (Rev. XI. 15.) is "delivered up," (1 Cor. xv. 24.)...

The words "Jesus Christ, (that is, Anointed Saviour,) the same yesterday, to-day,and for the ages," (Heb. xiii. 8.) imply that through these "ages" a Saviour is needed, and will be found... It will I think too be found, that the adjective (aionios) founded on this word, whether applied to "life," "punishment," "redemption," "covenant," "times," or even "God" Himself, is always connected with remedial labour, and with the idea of "ages" as periods in which God is working to meet and correct some awful fall. Thus the "aeonial covenant," (Heb. xiii. 20.)... is that which comprehends "the ages," during which "Jesus Christ is the same," that is, a Saviour; an office only needed for the fallen, for "they that are whole need not a physician."

[End Excerpt]

At this time, only a remnant discern God's plan of the ages, and the preeminent role that Christ has been appointed in it. Yahshua must reign until He has wrought a full reconciliation of the creation to the Father. This labor will occur within the period of time bounded by the ages that Yahweh has established by His own counsel. Christ is therefore the Lord of the ages.

When the final age of the ages has come to a conclusion, then Yahshua will deliver the Kingdom up to the Father. All rule will be abolished, and the ages of Sonship will be at an end. The Father will be all in all.

Marvelous are the plans of God! His work among the creation will in the end be found to be perfect, complete, and all-encompassing.

Revelation 11:15

The seventh angel blew his trumpet; and there followed loud voices in Heaven which said, "The sovereignty of the world now belongs to our Lord and His Christ; and He will be King until the Ages of the Ages."

(Weymouth Translation)

Unquenchable Fire

There is a curious expression used by Christ that has led many Christians to conclude that Yahshua taught that hell will be forever. In the Gospel of Mark we find Yahshua repeating the words, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

> Mark 9:43-48
> And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*.
> (KJV)

Examining the footnotes of a number of translations, you will find it mentioned that verses 44, 46, and 48 of this passage, which all repeat the expression "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," are not found in the best ancient manuscripts. The KJV Bible translators had only 8 Greek manuscripts to work with, and most of their labors were performed using the Textus Receptus which is for very good reason considered one of the most flawed and unreliable translations available today.

The Textus Receptus was hurriedly thrown together by the Dutch Catholic scholar Desiderius Erasmus in 1516 A.D.. Erasmus was rushing to get his translation printed as he was aware of other scholars working on what would be competing translations. His work was so poorly done that it was not even proofread for spelling errors, and was an abysmal piece of work.

Erasmus did not have available to him any Greek manuscripts that were older than the 10th century, and was even missing six complete chapters from the book of Revelation. He therefore took Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible (the Latin Vulgate) which was produced toward the end of the 4th century, using it to translate the portions of the New Testament he was lacking back into Greek. Erasmus' Textus Receptus was a Latin translation in which he included the Greek alongside the Latin for comparative purposes.

There are now more than 700 manuscripts available to translators, many of which are more ancient and reliable than that which Erasmus or the KJV translators had to work with. Two of the most highly regarded manuscripts are Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, both of which are in the original Greek and date back to the 4th century. These ancient manuscripts do not contain the phrase "Where there worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

It does seem strange that Christ would repeat such a litany, for His speech to those gathered to hear Him was normally quite common. Yahshua did not speak as if reciting poetry, but conversed in the common tongue using ordinary expression. Seeing that some of the best and most reliable ancient manuscripts of the New Testament omit these words, it is very possible that they were added to the text at a later time. Nevertheless, it is beneficial to understand what meaning these expressions were

intended to convey. They in no way contradict the Biblical testimony we have observed elsewhere of the limited duration of hell and the lake of fire. Even if we remove these doubtful phrases from the text, we are left with the following:

> Mark 9:43-47
> And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, *into the fire that never shall be quenched*: And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, *into the fire that never shall be quenched*: And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

Seeing these expressions in the text has confused many modern English speaking Christians. These phrases are commonly cited when people are expressing opposition, or doubts, regarding the doctrine of the reconciliation of all things. Simply put, a fire that shall never be quenched is not eternal fire. It is fire that will not be extinguished until it has consumed everything that is combustible. When the fire has consumed all that can be consumed, it will quite naturally cease to burn.

In comparing this expression to the rest of Scripture, we find that this has ever been what was intended when God speaks of a fire that will not be quenched. The prophet Jeremiah records the following words.

> Jeremiah 17:27
> "But if you do not listen to Me to keep the sabbath day holy by not carrying a load and coming in through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, then *I will kindle a fire in its gates and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem and not be quenched*."

These words of God were fulfilled a few years later when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem.

> Jeremiah 52:12-13
> Now on the tenth day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard, who was in the service of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of Yahweh, the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every large house he burned with fire.

Once this fire consumed that which it was set to, the fire went out. The fire which Nebuchadnezzar set does not continue to burn today. The unquenchable fire was not an eternal fire. It was simply a fire that was not interrupted. There were no Jewish fire brigades that were able to douse this fire. The Temple and houses of Jerusalem were fully consumed.

A remarkable truth appears when we compare God's words relating to fire with similar words speaking of His wrath. We find the parallel truth that Yahweh's wrath, which is also said to be unquenchable, is temporal. After Judah had transgressed for many generations against Yahweh, incurring His wrath which would not be turned aside, there arose a godly king named Josiah. Josiah humbled himself before Yahweh, and inquired of Yahweh concerning the fate of the nation. Yahwehresponded in the

following manner.

II Kings 22:17
"Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore *My wrath burns against this place, and it shall not be quenched*."

Yahweh's wrath was poured out after the days of King Josiah. In the days of the prophet Jeremiah, Judah and Jerusalem were captured and destroyed. Many of the people were slaughtered. The remnant were taken captive to Babylon. Those who know the history of God's people know that His wrath that "shall not be quenched" was satisfied seventy years later. Yahweh had compassion on His people and restored them to the land of their inheritance. He strengthened them to rebuild the city walls and the Temple.

Isaiah 54:7-8
"For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you," Says Yahweh your Redeemer.

Yahweh compares His wrath to fire. He speaks of His wrath burning. The wrath of God must accomplish its work, even as the fires He set in the Temple and the houses of Jerusalem had to burn until they were spent. Neither Yahweh's wrath, nor the fires of hell, are eternal. The unquenchable fire will go out when it has accomplished its purpose. In the end compassion will be renewed. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Yahweh did judge Judah and Jerusalem. His wrath and anger burned against them. Yahweh's righteous indignation had to be satisfied.

Jeremiah 7:20
Therefore thus says Yahweh God, "Behold, *My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place,* on man and on beast and on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground; and *it will burn and not be quenched*."

Nevertheless, after the anger and wrath of Yahweh had burned for a season, it came to an end. Wrath was replaced with compassion. Judgment gave way to mercy.

Psalms 30:5
For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.

Isaiah 60:10
Foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you; For in My wrath I struck you, and in My favor I have had compassion on you.

These words of Yahweh recorded by Isaiah were fulfilled in a very literal sense. Not only was a foreign king the instrument of Yahweh's judgment upon Jerusalem, but another foreign king was God's instrument of restoration. This foreign king was Cyrus of Persia.

Ezra 1:1-4
Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying: "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, "Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of Yahweh, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem. Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.'"

Is it not remarkable that the wrath of God that was unquenchable, and the fires He set in Jerusalem that would not be quenched, not only ended, but Yahweh restored that which had been cleansed by fire? Will not Yahweh do the same for those men and angels that are cast into the unquenchable fires of hell? Indeed, He will! How else will He fulfill that which He has sworn by His own name?

Isaiah 45:22-24
"Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance. They shall say, 'Surely in Yahweh I have righteousness and strength.' To Him men shall come, and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him."

There are numerous places where the Bible speaks of unquenchable fire. Following is a further example from the gospels.

Luke 3:16-17
John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but *He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire*."

It should now be understood that John the Baptist was not speaking of an eternal fire. The fire that Christ casts upon the earth must consume everything that is marred by sin until only that which is holy, righteous and true remains. Christ will reign UNTIL He has put all His enemies under His feet. His reign will continue UNTIL He has reconciled all things whether in heaven or on earth to the Father. Fire is emblematic of that purifying work that has been entrusted to Christ. Yahshua said:

Luke 12:49
"I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!"

We must understand these words of Christ in conjunction with all that He has testified. In another place Christ spoke the following:

Luke 9:54-56
When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."]

In fairness, it should be pointed out that the words enclosed in brackets in the Scripture above are not found in the most ancient and reliable manuscripts of the New Testament. Nevertheless, the Scriptures do consistently testify of this truth. Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that through Him theworld might be saved.

I John 2:1-2
And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Yahshua Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation (merciful covering) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

There are many Christians today who are like James and John. Although they may be zealous for Christ, they do not recognize the character of the Spirit of Christ. James and John had been raised under the Law. The Law is a manslayer. It is understandable that having been raised under the Law they might view God's wrath as predominant.

Today Christians have received the gospel (good news) of Christ. We have in full view before us the mercy of God. Yahweh did not spare His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all. We see Christ as the merciful covering who has laid down His life that all men might be saved. We transgress greatly if we commit the same error of judgment as James and John, enlarging upon the wrath of God, desiring to strike the people with blows that God does not intend. Yahweh will cast no man or angel into eternal fire. Those who teach such things do not know the Spirit to whom they belong.

There must be balance in all things. We are called to rightly divide the word of truth. The wrath of God is very real. Many Christians will experience the wrath of Yahweh right along with His adversaries.

Hebrews 10:26-27
For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

At the same time we must acknowledge that the wrath of God is not eternal. Yahweh's greatest attribute is not wrath, it is love.

I John 4:8
The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Throughout Scripture fire is employed as a symbol of God's judgment. Fire is a purifying agent. In the Greek language, the words for fire and pure both derive from the same root. Fire is the greatest cleansing agent upon the earth. If you want something cleansed of impurity, then subject it to the fire.

It is easy to see the similarity between our English words pure and pyre. The word pyre is defined as "a heap of combustible material, especially one for the ritual cremation of a corpse." How does one get rid of a dead body? The quickest and most complete way is to cremate it, subjecting the corpse to the flames. This is what Yahweh must accomplish for all mankind. All men born of Adam are dead men walking. Paul testified that "In my flesh dwells no good thing." Sin dwells in the flesh. The flesh must therefore be consumed.

Whether one readily acknowledges Christ as Savior, or has not yet done so, their flesh must be consumed. We can present ourselves as a free will offering by presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God, or we will be cast into the lake of fire as the mandatory offering. In either case, the fire cannot burn forever. Once the fires of God have purified everything, the fires must go out.

Having observed from the Scriptures that unquenchable fire is not eternal fire, can we not rightly conclude that the phrase "where their worm dieth not" is also speaking of a temporal work? Worms consume flesh even as fire consumes that which is combustible. What will happen when there is no more flesh to consume? The answer is obvious. There must be an end to this work as well.

Everyone who is impure and vile in the eyes of Yahweh must experience the fire.

Revelation 21:8
"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

When the unquenchable fire has purged every adversary of God, and rebellion and sin are no more, then the fire of the second death, even the lake of fire, will burn no more.

I Corinthians 15:26
The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

What is Aionian Life?

Note: In this chapter I am using the word "aionian" as a transliteration of the Greek word that is often interpreted as "eternal" in the most popular English Bibles. Rather than translating the word as "age-abiding," "age-lasting," or "age-during" as some literal translations have done, I am presenting it in a form that serves as an English equivalent to the actual Greek word form.

As I have taught the doctrines relating to God's plan of the ages I have encountered some common objections to what is being set forth. One of the more frequently raised protestations is that the same word is used in Scriptures to describe "aionian" fire and "aionian" life. The saints have heard it proclaimed with such repetitiveness that Christ has come to bring men "eternal" life, that any suggestion to the contrary is anathema to them. I am convinced that God never meant to place man's focus upon the length of the life which He provides. Aionian life is not an unending life, it is a life in union with the Father and the Son.

The two Scriptures below include the word aionios. Certain things can be discerned by looking at them.

> Jude 6-7
> And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in *eternal* (aidios) bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of *eternal* (aionian) fire.
> (NAS)

> Mark 10:29-30
> Yahshua said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present *age* (kairos), houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the *age* (aion) to come, *eternal* (aionian) life."
> (NAS)

I have specifically chosen these two passages from the Scriptures as they show forth the problem of interpreting the Greek word "aionian" as eternal. In the first passage we read that God has been keeping disobedient angels in bonds *until* they can be delivered up for judgment at "the great day." Seeing that these bonds are intended to hold these angels for a limited period of time, they cannot be eternal bonds. What is spoken of are temporal bonds.

In the second passage we read that Christ's disciples will receive *aionian* life in the *aion* to come. We have observed previously that the Greek word aion means an age. How then can one receive eternal life inside the bounds of an age to come? This would be akin to trying to contain that which is infinite inside something that is finite.

In the passage from Jude we find that the first occurrence of the English word "eternal" is translated from the Greek "aidios." This word only occurs twice in Scripture.

Numerous Bible translations have rendered this word as "hidden" or "unknown" rather than "eternal." If we examine the other Scripture in which thisword occurs, we see that it is appropriate to render it this way.

> Romans 1:20
> For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal (aidios - hidden) power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse...
> (KJV)

The context of this sentence reveals that it is speaking about things that are invisible to the creation. If we translate the word "aidios" as hidden, or unknown, we find that there is a consistency of meaning to this passage. God is Spirit, and the Scriptures declare that no man has seen Him at any time.

> John 6:46
> "Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father."

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

Although Yahweh is Spirit and no man has seen Him, He has made known His invisible attributes, including His power and godhead. This is the sense of Paul's words in Romans 1:20. The invisible God has revealed Himself in creation. When man observes the cosmos he is faced with the evidence of a divine Creator, for Yahweh's power and wisdom are evident through the things that are made.

Jeremiah 51:15
It is He who made the earth by His power, who established the world by His wisdom, and by His understanding He stretched out the heavens.

Although Yahweh's power is eternal, this is not what Paul is declaring in Romans 1:20. Paul is speaking of God's hidden power and sovereignty. No man has actually seen God, or observed Him seated on the throne of heaven. Yet, we can discern Yahweh's power and sovereign rule through that which He has created.

The Greek word "aidios" is followed by the related word "aidos" in *Strong's Concordance*. James Strong defined "aidos" in the following manner.

> aidos; perhaps from NT:1 (as a negative particle) and NT:1492 (through the ideaof downcast eyes); bashfulness, i.e. (towards men), modesty or (towards God) awe:

Observing the similarity between these two words, and perceiving that "aidos" is expressing the idea of "downcast eyes," it is not unreasonable to conclude that "aidios" would convey a similar concept. When one's eyes are looking down, as when one is bashful, then they are not looking directly at something in front of them. In the same way, man cannot look directly at God's presence, His power and godhead. Yet, we can look at the things Yahweh has made and discern much about His power and godhead.

Following is a rendering of this passage from Jude that I believe more accurately communicates the thought of the author.

Jude 6-7
And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in hidden bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of age-abiding fire.

Another point in support of this rendering is the reference to Sodom. We read previously that Sodom will be restored to her habitation one day. Sodom's inhabitants are at this time kept hidden away in bonds, but they are not eternal bonds.

Ezekiel 16:55
Your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to their former state, and you with your daughters will also return to your former state.

The question remains to be answered, "If eternal life is not the correct understanding of aionian life, then what is this expression intended to convey?" If I do not err, aionian life must refer to that life that God provides for man within the bounds of the ages. This present creation is not eternal. It must one day pass away. Yahweh has devised a plan for the creation encompassing many ages. All will culminate in one great age of ages when all is reconciled to the Father and sin and death are no more. Then comes the end when Christ delivers up the kingdom, all rule and authority, to the Father. All things, including the Son, are then summed up in Yahweh so that He becomes "all in all."

Aionian life must therefore constitute that divine life that is free of sin and death which Christ provides for men during the ages (aions) of creation. Aionian life is that exceptional life entered into by men who have been reconciled to the Father. These ones partake of fellowship with God, knowing Him, and being known by Him.

I Corinthians 13:12
For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

There are many Scripture verses that speak of aionian life as something promised, something set before the Christian as a hope. Although we are partakers of the life of Christ now, we have not yet arrived at the fulness that Paul speaks of in the verse above. One day we will know (Yahweh and His Son) fully even as we are known. This is the end toward which all things are heading. Knowing God is the predominant characteristic of aionian life.

John 17:1-3
Yahshua spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give aionian life. *This is aionian life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Yahshua Christ*

whom You have sent."

In these words of Christ we see that the true characteristic of aionian life is not eternal length, rather it is unfettered fellowship with the Father and the Son. Christ came to set the captives free. Those whom the Son sets free are free indeed. No longer will sin and death keep men from knowing the Father. The Son has brought life that all may know the Father and the Son.

I John 5:20
And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so *that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Yahshua Christ. This is the true God and aionian life.*

Many Christians are taught that Christ came to give them eternal life. This places the emphasis upon the length of life. Such a translation obscures the true meaning of that life Christ provides. Yahshua made a way for mankind to KNOW GOD. I do not mean that Christians may simply know things about Yahweh. Rather, an entrance into fellowship and union with the Father is provided. Those who are "in Christ" are able to experience union with the Father, a true, deep, abiding intimacy with the One who created them.

I John 1:1-3
What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life - and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the *aionian life*, which was with the Father and was manifested to us - what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, *so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Yahshua Christ.*

In this passage we once again see aionian life related to fellowship with God and His Son. This is the true characteristic of aionian life; not that it is eternal, but that it is an entering into union with Christ and the Father. If a man were to live forever he might have eternal life. Yet only in Christ are men able to experience aionian life in union with the Father. This is why Christ came.

John 17:20-23
"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."

Savor these words of Christ. He yearns that men might experience a union with the Father and Himself that was not possible before His crucifixion and resurrection. Adam's sin had brought a separation between man and God. Christ came to repair the breach. To be restored to fellowship with the Father and the Son is to become a partaker of aionian life.

I John 5:11-12
And the testimony is this, that God has given us aionian life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Notice a key thought conveyed by John in these words. Aionian life is not like a gift one man would give to another. Aionian life is not something separate from Christ that can be handed to another person. Aionian life is found only "IN" God's Son. This is what Christ symbolized at the last supper when He invited His disciples to drink the wine as a symbol of His blood.

Mark 14:23-24
And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

The Bible teaches that life (the soul) is in the blood. We must sup up the life of Christ; His divine nature must be found in us; we must be directed and empowered by His Spirit if we are to truly experience aionian life.

John 6:53-56
So Yahshua said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has aionian life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him."

Here is the crux of the matter. Abiding in Christ is the essence of aionian life. Consider for a moment the attitude of many Christians today. Many testify happily that in Christ they have received eternal life, but their actions reveal that they have little desire for intimacy or fellowship with the Son. It is a rare event for many Christians to spend intimate time in communion with Christ through seasons of prayer, meditation upon His word, or walking daily with a consciousness of His presence. Such ones are not abiding in Christ. They are not partaking of aionian life. Nor are they much concerned at this deficiency in their Christian walk. They are content to have ministers and other Christians assure them that they will live forever because they have said a sinner's prayer and confessed belief in the Son of God.

Are not a great many Christians committing the same grave error as the Jews to whom Christ first appeared? To them He declared:

John 5:39-40
"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have aionian life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life."

Many Christians study doctrine and quote Bible passages while neglecting to daily abide in Christ. Knowledge about Christ, and a hope of living forever, is not a substitute

for eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood. The very life of Christ must be in us. Consider the implications of the following words of Yahshua.

> John 12:49-50
> "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. *I know that His commandment is aionian life*; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

Yahshua did not do anything of His own initiative. Any action or word that is independent of the Father is contrary to life. We are only partaking of aionian life when we are being led of the Spirit in those things we say and do. When the life of God is animating us and directing us, then we are truly experiencing life. This was Christ's meaning. He testified that to do the Father's will, fulfilling Yahweh's commandments to Him, is the essence of life.

Such life by necessity is one of fellowship and union. We must know the mind of the Father, and we must look to the strength He provides to accomplish His will. To walk in the light of truth we need to conform our thoughts to God's thoughts.

When we hear or read about aionian life, we need to think about union, intimacy, and fellowship with the Father and the Son. There should come to our minds a vision of abiding in the Son and the Father.

> I John 2:24-25
> As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

This is the promise which He Himself made to us: aionian life. Mankind entering into an abiding relationship with the Father and the Son is the promise which God has given to us. This is aionian life.

The Ages of the Earth

Yahweh established a plan for the creation that encompasses a determined number of ages. This truth is taught in the Bible, but given little attention by Christians today. The church has very little understanding of the ages of the earth. Our world has known many different ages, and there are yet more ages to come. The Scriptures reveal that their will be three creations of the earth, and the earth will abide in seven distinct states.

The numbers three and seven are very significant in Scriptures. The tertiary (three-fold) and septenary (seven-fold) design of Yahweh is seen profusely both in the creation and in the Scriptures. We have previously observed that Yahweh established three great feasts to be observed annually by the Jews. These three feasts break down into seven individual moedim, or appointed times.

Passover:
Feast of Unleavened Bread
Firstfruits
Passover

Pentecost:
Pentecost

Tabernacles:
Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets)
Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)
Sukkot (Tabernacles, Booths)

This pattern is a reflection of the godhead. God is revealed to be a tripartite being in Scriptures, consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19
"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit..."

We have previously looked at the three-fold relationship of God through the parable of speech. There is Yahweh (the Father), His breath (the Holy Spirit), and His word (the Son). The Scriptures proclaim the tri-part nature of God, but they also reveal a seven-fold character.

Revelation 4:5
And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God...

Revelation 5:6
And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

Some have correlated these seven Spirits of Yahweh to the following passage from Isaiah.

> Isaiah 11:2
> The Spirit of Yawheh will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.

Spirit of Yahweh
Spirit of Wisdom
Spirit of Understanding
Spirit of Counsel
Spirit of Strength
Spirit of Knowledge
Spirit of the Fear of Yahweh

Because Yahweh formed mankind in His image, man conforms to this same pattern. The new man in Christ is a tripartite being. He consists of body, soul and spirit.

> I Thessalonians 5:23
> Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Yahshua Christ.

The apostle Paul lists the three parts of man in the order of their intended ascendancy. The spirit is to rule over the soul and the soul over the body. These three parts of man can be further subdivided into seven parts forming a perfect parallel to the Feasts of Yahweh.

Soul:
Cognition (Mind)
Volition (Will)
Emotion

Body:
Body (Sensory life)

Spirit:
Conscience
Intuition
Communion

I have laid this framework in order to establish the concept of the earth also having a tertiary and septenary design. The earth is closely related to man, for Adam was formed of the dust of the earth. From dust man came, and to dust man shall return. In Yahweh's plan of the ages, the earth will exist in three distinct forms.

The First Earth

Genesis 1:1
In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

After the creation of the first earth, but prior to the creation of Adam, Satan rebelled and was cast out of heaven with one third of the angels. At this event the first earth was destroyed. It was made formless, void, and covered in darkness until the time Yahweh moved to create the earth anew. We find the re-creation of the earth described in Genesis chapter one verses 3-31. This present earth is the second creation of the earth. It must pass away and be replaced by a third earth.

The Second Earth

II Peter 3:7, 10
But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men... But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

There will then come a third and final creation of the earth.

The Third Earth

Revelation 21:1
Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

Kenneth F. McKinley, in his book *Scanning the Plan*, breaks down the three creations of the earth into seven subsidiary states.

Original Earth
Before Satan's fall. In the beginning... This is the earth of the dinosaurs. We are not told how long this earth existed before Satan rebelled and it was destroyed.

Chaotic Earth
This is the earth after the fall of Satan. It is now formless and void and covered in darkness. The length in which the earth lay under this judgment is not known. Being sealed in darkness, this was likely a period in which the earth was covered in ice, corresponding with evidence of an ancient ice age.

Adamic Earth
This is the re-created earth as described in Genesis chapters one and two, before the fall of man. The earth is a paradise. There is no rain, but a mist arose from the ground to water the earth (Genesis 2:6). There is no sin or death.

Pre-Flood Earth
This is the earth after Adam sinned. Sin and death has now entered the creation. The earth no longer gives forth abundantly. Man must cultivate it by the sweat of his brow.

Present Earth

This is the earth after the flood of Noah. It is an earth under human government. After the flood Yahweh shortened man's life span from a thousand years to one hundred-twenty years (Genesis 6:3). This present state of the earth will continue until the millennial reign of Christ.

Millennial Earth

During this period Satan will be bound for a thousand years. Christ will reign upon the earth with His overcoming saints. Sin and death will still be present, but greatly mitigated.

> Isaiah 65:20
> There shall no more be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who dies prematurely; for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner who dies when only a hundred years old shall be [thought only a child, cut off because he is] accursed. (Amplified Bible)

Christ's reign will transform the earth.

> Isaiah 11:4-8
> With righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist. And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.

After a thousand years Satan will be loosed and war and judgment will fall once more. The present earth will be consumed with fire. Then will come the third and final creation of the earth, which will also be the seventh state of the earth.

New Earth

There will be no sea on the new earth. Seas represent death, and death will be no more.

These seven states of the earth conform to that septenary structure God has imprinted upon the creation.When one correctly discerns the Biblical teaching of the earth and its ages, they will find that many of the conflicts the church has with science are removed. Yahweh is the author of both the Bible and the creation. There is no conflict between them when they are correctly understood.

There is much evidence that points to the earth being quite ancient. The Bible does not deny this. Those who have misapprehended the words of Genesis have supposed that the earth can be no older than six thousand years. They have not discerned that there exists a gap of ages between verses one and two of the first chapter of Genesis. This understanding is obscured by erroneous English translations of the ancient Hebrew

Scriptures. Men translate according to their understanding and beliefs, which are quite often faulty.

Genesis 1:1-21
In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
(KJV)

The most popular modern English translations render this passage similarly to the KJV Bible. The translation makes it sound like God created the earth formless and void, yet other Scriptures reveal that this is not true. The phrase "And the earth was without form and void" should be properly rendered,"*but* the earth *became* formless and void." The words in question are rendered correctly in other places in the first few chapters of Genesis.

The translators knew they could be rendered this way, but it did not fit with their understanding, or the orthodoxy of the day. The word rendered in the KJV as "was" is the Hebrew word "hayah." It is the same word used in Genesis 2:7, "Adam *became* a living soul."

Strong's concordance defines the meaning of this word as "to become" or, "come to pass." Similarly the word rendered "and" is the Hebrew "wa." This word is a conjunction. The KJV translators rendered this word as "but" in the very next chapter, for in Genesis 2:6 we read, "*but* a mist used to..." The translators could have rendered the first two verses of Genesis in the following manner:

Genesis 1:1-2
In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. *But* the earth *became* formless, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

By examining the testimony of other portions of Scripture we can discern that this is the correct interpretation of these verses. The following passage from Jeremiah provides a key to understanding. As you read it, note clearly the context of a judgment occurring due to the presence of sin and rebellion.

Jeremiah 4:16-28
Make ye mention to the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because *she hath been rebellious against me*, saith Yahweh. *Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee*; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart. My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for *the whole land is spoiled*: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? For my people are foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. *I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light*. I beheld the

mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of Yahweh, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath Yahweh said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and *the heavens above be black*: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.
(KJV)

This passage is speaking of a judgment of Yahweh falling upon the earth due to rebellion and disobedience. As part of this judgment the land is made formless, void, and covered in darkness. These are the three same descriptive elements we find in Genesis 1:2. These words only occur in this combination in these two passages, and one other. The third instance is in Isaiah 34 where the destruction of Babylon is prophesied.

Seeing that both Jeremiah and Isaiah used these words to describe the appearance of the earth, or a portion of it, brought about by a judgmentof God, we can reasonably conclude that a judgment of God precipitated the condition of the earth found in Genesis 1:2. The Bible provides more evidence in support of this understanding. Isaiah tells us the following:

Isaiah 45:18
For thus says Yahweh, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited)...

Yahweh did not create the earth as a waste place, yet in Genesis 1:2 we find that it has become one. Let us look once more at the correct rendering of the first 2 verses of Genesis.

Genesis 1:1-2
In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. But the earth became formless, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

At the very beginning of the creation God made the heavens and the earth. He did not create them a waste. He created them perfect. Yet something occurred to mar their perfection. By looking at the language of verse two, and comparing it to the rest of scripture, we understand that it was due to a judgment of God that the earth was made formless, void and covered in darkness. The remainder of Genesis chapter one speaks of the re-creation of the earth, not its original creation.

What occurred on this original earth that caused Yahweh to judge it so completely? We are only given one event that could have caused such a judgment to be rendered. This event occurred prior to the creation of Adam. It was the rebellion of Satan.

Ezekiel 28:12-18
Thus says Yahweh God, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. "You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx and the jasper; the lapis

lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; it has consumed you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth in the eyes of all who see you."

Where did the judgment of Satan take place? We are told that God cast Satan *"to the ground*." Yahweh turned Satan to ashes "*on the earth*." The judgment of Satan took place on the earth, and the earth suffered judgment in his fall.

Isaiah 14:12-15
How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.

The Scriptures reveal that the angels existed prior to man, and among the angels was a most magnificent cherub called Lucifer. He was created perfect in beauty and in wisdom, and his role among the angels was very exalted. Yet this being took his eyes off of his Creator and began to look at his own magnificence. This led to pride and the corrupting of his wisdom. Paul refers to Satan's transgression in the following verse where he is speaking to Timothy about the qualifications for an elder:

I Timothy 3:6
And not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil.

Satan's fall began with the formation of conceit within his heart. Conceit led to rebellion, and ended in judgment. After an undisclosed period of time God began to re-create the earth. At this time Satan was released from his first imprisonment, even as he will be released at the end of Christ's millennial reign.

There is much more Biblical evidence to support the understanding that Yahweh was re-creating theearth in Genesis chapter one.

Genesis 1:27-28
So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and *replenish* the earth, and subdue it:

(KJV)

The phrase "replenish the earth" means to fill it again. You can only replenish something that has been made empty. We speak of replenishing the supply of food in our cupboards when the cupboards have been emptied. Some of the translators of our common English Bibles have perceived that the word replenish infers that the earth was being re-filled. This thought is not in accord with the teaching of a large portion of the church. Therefore the translators in some instances chose to use the word "fill" instead of "replenish."

The original language supports the usage of the word replenish. The root word in the Hebrew is 'male' (mal - ay), which means to fill. However, the form of the word found in this passage, and in only a few other occurrences, expresses the idea of a replenishing, or refilling. We find this same word form used in Genesis 9:1 where God is speaking to Noah after the flood.

Genesis 9:1
And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and *replenish* the earth.
(KJV)

We know that 'replenish' is the appropriate word to be used in this passage, for all but a remnant of living creatures perished in the flood of Noah's day. Only eight descendants of Adam survived. They were instructed by Yahweh to fill again the earth which had formerly been populated. Noah's sons and daughters were not filling the earth a first time. They were re-filling it. This same Hebrew word form is found in the following verse.

Genesis 1:21-22
And God created great whales, and every living creature that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and *replenish* the waters in the seas..."

When we perceive that Yahweh was re-creating the earth in Genesis chapter one, we also discover that the earth's creations and states conform to a tertiary and septenary pattern. When we "rightly divide the word of God" we see that all fits according to the pattern Yahweh has established. When we fail to rightly divide the word of God, the pattern is broken.

This septenary structure is further observed in the opening chapters of Genesis in that Yahweh appointed six days for the creation of the earth, and on the seventh day He rested. The number seven is equated with rest. When the seventh state of the earth appears, it will be an earth at rest. The seventh and final state of the earth will have no seas. There will be no sin or death. Yahweh will no longer dwell in the heavens and man on earth. Yahweh will dwell among man.

Revelation 21:1-5
Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea... And I heard a loud voice from the

throne, saying, "Behold, *the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them*, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

A Final Note

It is my hope that the revision of this book will prove effectual in leading those who seek truth to the discovery of Yahweh's magnificent plan of the ages. It is not possible in any writing to answer every question that could be raised. To write an exhaustive teaching of these truths is beyond the ability of this author, and would certainly prove tiresome to many.

It has been my aim to lay a foundation for understanding that which is taught in the Scriptures concerning the reconciliation of the creation to the Father. It is the responsibility of every saint to pursue truth. All of Christ's disciples must acquit themselves as workmen, laboring to become skilled and knowledgeable in the truths of Yahweh's kingdom. Those who are most faithful will surely reap the rewards of their labors.

In this teaching it has been established that all who died in Adam will be made alive in Christ, but "each in his own order." Yahweh has appointed some as barley, some as wheat, and others as grapes. Each will be harvested at the appointed time. Each must come to maturity according to the election of God.

That salvation is a gift of God, granted to those whom He chooses, at the time He appoints, should be patiently considered. We were all at some point children of wrath.

> Ephesians 2:3
> Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

That any should repent and be reconciled to God is not due to man, but rather is a gift from God.

> Ephesians 2:4-5
> But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...

It should not offend any Christian to learn that God will in the end demonstrate His mercy to all whom He has created. If you are a Christian, a disciple of Christ, it is not due to your own piety that you were shown mercy. Your eyes were not opened to perceive the salvation of God because you were better than other men. Yahweh simply chose to have mercy on you, while He has chosen to harden others.

Consider for a moment the plight of the Jewish people today. At this time Yahweh has given grace to Gentiles, while hardening the majority of the natural descendants of Abraham.

> Romans 11:25-27
> For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins."

II Corinthians 3:14
But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted...

Why does God find fault with the Jews, seeing that it is by His will that a hardening has occurred? Would you condemn to an eternal hell those whom God has prevented from perceiving the truth? Yahweh has appointed a time when all Israel will be saved, but the time is not yet. Seeing that Yahweh hardens some, and has mercy on others, how can those who have received mercy hold any greater desire in their heart than to look for the day when Yahweh will demonstrate the same mercy to others?

Romans 9:14-18
What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

None can come to Christ unless the Spirit draws them (John 6:44). Is it right for those who have been granted mercy to revile those who have not, saying that they are getting what they deserve? To receive mercy is to obtain that which is undeserved. All men have sinned and are deserving of death. At this time we see Yahweh demonstrating mercy to some, while hardening others. This is the situation of all men. We are all born as children of wrath. Yahweh has shown mercy to some at this time, while hardening others.

A remnant from among men have seen their peril. They have become aware of the judgment and wrath that awaits the sons of disobedience. Yahweh has opened their eyes to perceive the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. It is appointed to them to be among the first to see and believe. Will such ones not desire that the mercy shown them be made manifest to all men?

Christ has come to deliver men from sin and the penalty of death, but each in his own order. Some are appointed to be firstborn sons, and others latter born sons. Yahweh does all things according to His own counsel. He reveals Christ to some, while blinding the eyes of others.

Romans 11:5-8
Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work. What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: "God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day."

Romans 10:20
But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was

made manifest to those who did not ask for Me."

An hour will come when those whom Yahweh has hardened will be shown mercy.Those rejected will be accepted. Those dead in their sins will receive life in Christ. Yahweh sent His Son into the world that all men might be saved.

Isaiah 45:22-23
Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.

Titus 2:11
For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men...

We see at this time a firstfruits company who have received mercy. This is a token and pledge of that full redemption which is to come.

I John 2:2
And He Himself is the propitiation (merciful covering) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

Let not those who have now obtained mercy despise those who have not. It was by no merit of your own that you have obtained grace. When God's plan of the ages has reached its final conclusion there will be left nothing in creation that has not been reconciled to the Father. Christ's will wield the power given to Him to subject all things to Himself.

Hebrews 2:8
For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

The church has failed to perceive the meaning of the words "not yet." What we see today is "not yet" the end of Christ's rule. Christ must reign until He has subjected all things to the Father. Then will come the end. This is the testimony of Scripture.

Revelation 5:13
And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion to the ages of the ages."

What is excluded from the phrase "every created thing"? Every creature "in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and in the sea" will worship God in spirit and in truth.

Philippians 2:10-11
At the name of Yahshua every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Yahshua Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Hallelujah! Jesus Christ, Yahshua the Messiah, is the Savior of the world!

Some Who Held This View

Due to the doctrine of the reconciliation of all things rarely being taught in the churches today, many Christians have mistakenly assumed that it must be a new teaching. Some have even asked me if I am the only one who believes and teaches these things. I am very happy to respond by pointing the saints to the great antiquity of this doctrine, and the many who have embraced it as truth.

Augustine (often referred to as Saint Augustine) lived from 354-430 A.D.. He is widely hailed as the father of Roman Catholic doctrine. Augustine was a believer in eternal torment, but acknowledged that this was not the universal view of the day in which he lived. Augustine made mention of Christians who embraced the doctrine of the reconciliation of all things to God, and of a limited duration to God's punishments of sinners in hell, or the lake of fire.

> I must now, I see, enter the lists of amicable (friendly) controversy with those tender-hearted Christians who decline to believe that any, or that all of those whom the infallibly just Judge may pronounce worthy of the punishment of hell, shall suffer eternally, and who suppose that they shall be delivered after a fixed term of punishment, longer or shorter according to the amount of each man's sin. In respect of this matter, Origen was even more indulgent; for he believed that even the devil himself and his angels, after suffering those more severe and prolonged pains which their sins deserved, should be delivered from their torments... Very different, however, is the error we speak of, which is dictated by the tenderness of these Christians who suppose that the sufferings of those who are condemned in the judgment will be temporary...
> [Augustine, The City of God, Book 21, Ch 17]

Augustine referenced Origen, one of the early church fathers, who dwelt in Alexandria, Egypt. Origen had a wide influence upon the doctrine of the early church. Origen lived nearly two centuries before Augustine, his life spanning the years of 184-253 A.D.. Origen was less than two centuries distant from the time of Christ's bodily ministry, and he wrote and taught in support of the doctrine of the reconciliation of all things to God through Christ.

Origen was a pupil of an even earlier church father, Clement of Alexandria (Clemens Alexandrinus), who lived from 150-215 A.D.. Clement also taught the doctrine of the reconciliation of all things in the catechetical school in Alexandria, which was a type of early seminary, or Bible college. These men in turn pointed to the teachings of the apostles of Christ in setting forth their beliefs, even as I have done in this writing. The great antiquity of this doctrine is well documented. It is not a new teaching as some suppose.

In more recent times there have been a number of notable saints that have believed in the universal reconciliation of all. Among them are Jane Leade, author of *A Revelation of the Everlasting Gospel Message*; William Law, in *A Humble Earnest and Affectionate Address to the Clergy* (John and Charles Wesley made William Law required reading for the Methodists); Hannah Hurnard who wrote *Hinds' Feet on High Places* (In her book *Unveiled Glory*, Hannah Hurnard discusses her belief in this doctrine); Hannah Whitall Smith, author of *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (It

was in her autobiography titled *The Unselfishness of God* that she discusses her belief in the reconciliation of all. Several chapters were devoted to this topic, but have been removed by others from later re-prints of her book.); and Sadhu Sundar Singh.

I have previously cited Andrew Jukes, a minister in England who wrote *The Restitution of All Things* in the year 1876, and J. Preston Eby who penned the worthy teaching series titled *The Savior of the World*. These represent some of the saints who have held to this teaching in these latter days, demonstrating that this doctrine has never been extinguished. It has always been held by a remnant of God's people.

In 1895 a Biblical encyclopedia was published that included an entry on the origin and history of the doctrine of universal reconciliation. The authors of the encyclopedia were Reverend John McClintock, and James Strong. This is the same James Strong who compiled *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Neither of these men were adherents of a belief in the restitution of all things, but they provided an unbiased account of the history of this doctrine, and of some who taught this view. The Biblical encyclopedia is now out of copyright, and is in the public domain, so I am including the majority of the text from the article in this addendum.

McClintock and Strong did not provide an exhaustive history of this doctrine, nor name all of those who have taught this truth, but what they did provide is well researched and serves to provide an understanding that this is not some new teaching that has recently appeared. As you read this article, I would draw your attention to the persecutions suffered by many who taught this view, and note the role of the Roman Catholic Church in the suppression of this doctrine. The Roman Church is not known to be a champion of truth, but has frequently been the persecutor, and executioner, of men and women of conscience who have sought to walk in the light of truth.

The following is taken from the *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Volume 10, 1895, pp. 109-133, Rev. John McClintock and James Strong.

I. Origin and History. -

(I.) Informal. -1. In Former Centuries....

In 195 Clemens Alexandrinus, who was president of the Catechetical School at Alexandria, advocated Universalism on the ground of the remedial character of all punishment. His pupil and successor in the school, Origen Adamantius, famous alike for his learning, piety, and zeal, taught Universalism on the ground of the ever-continuing freedom of the will, the deep mental and spiritual anguish occasioned by the light and knowledge of the truth until it leads to repentance, and then the harmony of the soul with God. Origen's position, abilities, and untiring efforts for the spread of the Gospel gave him great influence with his pupils, and with the Church at large, in whose behalf he became a voluminous writer. In addition to his position and work in the school of Alexandria, he also had care for several years, in connection with Pamphilius, of the theological school at Caesarea, one of whose distinguished pupils was the celebrated Gregory Thaumaturgus, a great admirer of his master's theories, and finally, about A.D. 235, his strong defender and ardent eulogist. Pamphilius, and Eusebius, the first Church historian, also defended Origen's doctrines from charges brought against them by the Western Church, and in answering the complaint that he denied all future punishment they quote from his writings in contradiction thereof, not only his positive assurances of future and severe punishment, but his equally positive assertion that such correction is purifying and salutary. In A.D. 364, Titus, bishop of

Bostra, wrote in advocacy of Universalism, contending that, although there are torments in the abyss of hell, they are not eternal, but that their great severity will lead the wicked to repentance and so to salvation. Gregory of Nyssa, A.D. 380, also advocated Universalism on the same grounds. Contemporary with him was the justly celebrated defender of orthodoxy, Didymus the Blind, a successor of Origen in the school at Alexandria, and a zealous Universalist. Prominent among his scholars was Jerome, eminent alike for his abilities, his inconsistencies, and instability. Universalism as taught by Origen is clearly and ably set forth by Jerome in his commentaries on the epistles, and in his letters. John, bishop of Jerusalem at this period, was also an advocate of Universalism on Origen's theory. Another contemporary, Diodorus, a teacher of great repute in the school at Antioch, and afterwards bishop of Jerusalem, was also a Universalist, who, in opposition to the then general prevalence of allegorical interpretation, strictly adhered to the natural import of the text in his many commentaries on the Scriptures. He defended Universalism on the ground that the divine mercy far exceeds all the effects and all the desserts of sin. His pupil and successor in the school, Theodore of Mopsuestia, A.D. 420, called "the crown and climax of the school of Antioch," and by the Nestorians, whose sect he founded, "the interpreter of the Word of God," and whose writings were text-books in the schools of Eastern Syria, was a prominent and influential Universalist. His theory was that sin is an incidental part of the development and education of the human race; that, while sore are more involved in it than others, God will overrule it to the final establishment of all in good. He is the reputed author of the liturgy used by the Nestorians, a Church which at one time equaled, in its membership the combined adherents of both the Greek and Latin communions, and which has had no rival in military zeal. In the addresses and prayers of this liturgy Universalism is distinctly avowed. Theodoret, A.D. 430, bishop of Cyprus in Syria, a pupil of Theodore of Mopsuestia, was also a Universalist, holding the doctrine on the theory advocated by the Antiochian school. For some time prior to this, certain opinions of Origen on pre-existence and on the salvation of the devil had been in dispute and pronounced heretical by a synod; but his doctrine of the universal salvation of the human race had not been involved in this condemnation. At a local council called by the emperor Justinian at Constantinople, A.D. 544, Origen's doctrine of universal salvation was declared heretical. Nine years later another council was held by the same authority at the same place, when condemnation was pronounced on the Nestorians, although their belief in Universalism was not mentioned. It has been common to call this an ecumenical council, but without warrant (see the action of the Latin Church in refusing to recognize it or to send a legate to it). Doderlein, in his Institutes of Christian Theology, after quoting the decree of Justinian against Origen, says, "That was not the belief of all, and in proportion as any one was eminent in learning in Christian antiquity, the more did he cherish and defend the hope of the termination of future "torments." Drexelius, in his defense of eternal punishment, gives this testimony, "That God should doom the apostate angels and men at the day of retribution to eternal torments seemed so hard and incredible a doctrine to some persons that even Origen himself who was mighty in the Scriptures, and no less famous for his admirable wit and excellent learning, presumed to maintain in his book of principles that both the devils and the damned, after a certain period of years, the fire having purged or cleansed them from their pollutions, should be restored to grace. Augustine and others set forth his error and condemned him for it. But, notwithstanding their

condemnation, this error has found a great many in the world who have given it a kind of civil reception. The Anti heretics so called, dispersed this error throughout all Spain under various interpretations." Gieseler, the ecclesiastical historian, says, "The belief in the inalienable capacity of improvement in all rational beings and the limited duration of future punishment,was so general, even in the West, and among the opponents of Origen, that, even if it may not be said to have arisen without the influence of Origen's school, it had become entirely independent of his system." And Augustine bears this testimony: "Some - nay, very many - from human sympathy commiserate the eternal punishment of the damned and their perpetual torture without intermission, and thus do not believe in it; not, indeed, by opposing the Holy Scriptures, but by softening all the severe things according to their own feelings, and giving a milder meaning to those things which they think are said in them more terribly than truly. "Universalism almost wholly disappeared during the period known as the Dark Ages, although there are occasional glimpses of it even in the mutilated records which the papal Church has permitted to descend to us. In the 7th century, Maximus, the Greek monk and confessor taught Universalism; in the 8th, Clement of Ireland was deposed from the priesthood for teaching that when Christ descended into hell he restored all the damned; while in the 9th, John Scotus Erigena, a famous philosopher who stood at the head of the learned of the court of France, was a bold defender of Universalism. In the 11th century, the Albigenses were, according to papal authorities, Universalists; In the 12th, Raynold, abbot of St. Martin's, in France, was charged before a council with holding "that all men will eventually be saved;". In the 13th, Solomon, bishop of Bassorah, discussed the question ofuniversal salvation, answering it in the affirmative. The Lollards in the 14th century taught Universalism in Bohemia and Austria; and at the same period a council convened by Langman, archbishop of Canterbury, gave judgment against Universalism as one of the heresies then taught in that province. In the early part ofthe 15th century, a sect called "Men of Understanding" taught Universalism in Flanders, advocating it on the ground of the German Mystics, as did Tauler of Strasburg, and John Wessel, who, with others, have been called "the Reformers before the Reformation," whose writings Luther industriously studied and greatly admired.

2. In Modern Times. -

With the Reformation, Universalism made a fresh appearance early in the 16th century, chiefly among some of the Anabaptist sects. The seventeenth article of the Augustine Confession, 1530, was expressly framed to "condemn the Anabaptists, who maintain that there shall be an end: to the punishments of the damned and of the devils." Denk, Hetzer, and Stanislaus Pannonius were the most eminent defenders of Universalism at this period. Later in the century, Samuel Huber, divinity professor at Wittenberg, taught Universalism, it is alleged by Spanheim; and because, says Musheim, he would not go back to the old methods of teaching, "he was compelled to relinquish his office and go into exile." Early in the 17th century, Ernest Sonner, professor of philosophy at Altorf, published "a theological and philosophical demonstration that the endless punishment of the wicked would argue, not the justice, but the injustice, of God." John William Petersen, at one time court preacher at Lutin, and subsequently superintendent at Lunenberg, adopted and defended Universalism with such zeal that he was cited before the consistory, and, as he could not conscientiously renounce his convictions, was deprived of his office and forced into private life. In his retirement he wrote and published three folio volumes on

Universalism, entitled *Musterion Apokatastaseos Paltan*, in which he mentions many who had defended that doctrine. The volumes appeared between the years 1700 and 1710. They opened a century of spirited controversy, of which Mosheim says, "The points of theology which had been controverted in the 17th century were destined to excite keener disputes in the 18th, such 'as the eternity of hell torments, and the final restoration of all intelligent beings to order, perfection, and happiness." Dietelmair, an opponent of Universalism, wrote on its history about the middle of this century. In the preface to his work he speaks of the contests which raged vehemently enough within the very bounds of the orthodox Church in the end of the last century 'the' beginning of the present." Among the defenses of Universalism contained in the first volume of Petersen's work was *the Everlasting Gospel*, attributed to Paul Siegvolk, which was but an assumed name of George Klein-Nicolai, deposed for his Universalism as preacher of Friessdorf. He published other works in defense of Universalism, but the most rapid and lasting popularity belonged to *the Everlasting Gospel*, which in forty-five years passed through five editions in Germany. In 1726 John Henry Haug, professor at Strasburg, having procured the assistance of Dr. Ernest Christoph Hochman, Christian Dippel, Count De Marcey, and others, commenced the publication of *the Berleburger Bibel*, an entirely new translation and commentary of the Holy Scriptures. They made themselves familiar with all the writings of the Mystics, and in their great work taught and defended Universalism from the Mystical standpoint. Their work fills eight large folio volumes, the last of which was published in 1742. Strong persecution assailing them, and no printer being willing to risk his office in doing their work, they were compelled to purchase their own type and a small press. When the Church they had established was at last broken up by their enemies, the members fled to America, taking their press with them, and it was set up by Christopher Sower in Germantown, Pa. One of De Marcey's intimate friends was George De Benneville, born of French parents in London in 1703. Before he was twenty years of age he commenced preaching in France, where he was arrested and condemned to die, but was reprieved on the scaffold by Louis XV. Making his way into Germany, he 'there preached Universalism several years, and then came to America. In 1727 appeared Ludvig Gerhard's *Complete System of the Everlasting Gospel of the Restoration of All Things, together with the Baseless Opposite Doctrine of Eternal Damnation*. The author was at one time professor of theology in the University of Rostock, and his publication called forth, according to Walch, no less than fourteen volumes in reply. Jung, Stilling in the latter part of the 18th century, an able defender of Christianity against German rationalism, was an ardent and eminent Universalist. Prof. Tholuck wrote, in 1835, that this doctrine "came particularly into notice through Jung-Stilling, that eminent man who was a particular instrument in the hand of God for keeping up evangelical truth in the latter part of the former century, and at the same time a strong patron to that doctrine. "During the present century, Universalism has made rapid progress in Germany. Olshausen says of it that it 'has, no doubt, a deep root in noble minds, and is the expression of a heart-felt desire for a perfect harmony of the creation.'" Dr. Dwight wrote in 1829, "The doctrine of the eternity of future punishment is almost universally rejected..." In England the Protestants, in drawing up their *Forty-two Articles of Religion*, in 1552, condemned Universalism. Ten years later, when the convocation revised the doctrines of the Church, the number of articles was reduced to thirty-nine, omitting, among others, the one condemning Universalism. Since that time Universalism has not been a forbidden doctrine in the

Church of England, but has been advocated and defended by some of the most eminent members of its communion-such men as Dr. Henry More, Sir George Stonehouse, Bp. Thomas Newton, Dr. David Hartley, William Whiston, Dr. Thomas Burnet, Revs. Frederick W. Robertson, Charles Kingsley, Stopford Brooke, and canon Farrar, and indirectly by archbishop Tillotson. The Presbyterian Parliament of 1648, which temporarily overthrew Episcopacy, passed a law against all heresies, punishing the persistent holders of some with death, and of others with imprisonment. "That all men shall be saved" was among the heresies punishable in the latter manner. This law was not long operative, for the Independents, headed by Cromwell, soon overthrew the law-makers. Gerard Willstanley published a work in advocacy of Universalism only a few days after the passage of the law, which was soon followed by similar works from his pen. William Earbury fearlessly preached Universalism. Richard Coppin was active in its advocacy, publishing largely in its exposition and defense, and was several times tried for his offence. Samuel Richardson, an eminent Baptist, also wrote strongly in its behalf. Sir Henry Vane (the younger), member of the Parliament dissolved by Cromwell, and in 1636 governor of Massachusetts, was a Universalist. Jeremy White, one of Cromwell's chaplains, preached Universalism, and published a work which has passed through several editions. Jane Lead, a Mystic, was the author of several Universalist books. Henry Brooke, a literary writer, avowed his belief in Universalism in his *Fool of Quality*, and in a poem on the Messiah. William Law, author of *the Serious Call*, declared in his Letters, "As for the purification of all human nature, I fully believe it, either in this world or some after ages." The English literary reviews of the last century contain many notices of works in defense of Universalism. In 1750 James Relly, who had been a preacher in Whitefield's connection, shocked at the doctrine of reprobation, was by meditation and study led into another scheme of redemption, some of the peculiarities of which may be said to have had their origin with him. Accepting as true the common theory that all men, having sinned in Adam, justly incurred eternal damnation, and that Christ had borne this infinite guilt and punishment in behalf of all who should be saved, Relly was moved to find, if possible, some ground of justice in such a scheme. The divine law explicitly declares that "the soul which sinneth, it shall die," and that the innocent shall not suffer for the guilty. How could a transfer of human sin and penalty to Christ be consistent with that law? How could it be reconciled with equity? The divine sovereignty, without regard to inherent justice in the plan, could not account for it for the absoluteness that could set justice aside might just as easily, and more mercifully, have gone straight to its aim by remitting instead of transferring sin and its deserts. To say that the sufferings of Christ were merely accepted as satisfaction for human deserts, only reckoned as such, by God's sovereign pleasure, was no adequate explanation, since they were thus only a fictitious, not a real, satisfaction; and, further, any sufferings whatsoever, even those of a man, would have answered just as well as an arbitrary acceptance of the coequal of God. The perfect consistency of God's procedure, its absolute harmony with justice and equity, Relly found, as he claimed, in such a real and thorough union of Christ with the human race as made their acts his, and his theirs. All men, he held, were really in Adam and sinned in him, not by a fictitious imputation, but by-actual participation; equally so are all men in the second Adam, "the head of every man," and he is as justly accountable for what they do as is the head in the natural body, accountable for the deeds of all the members united to that head. Accordingly Christ, in his corporate capacity, was truly guilty of the offence of the 'human race, and could be, as he actually

was, justly punished for it; and the race, because of this' union, really suffered in him all the penalty which he endured, and thus fully satisfied justice. There is no more punishment, therefore, due for sin, nor any further occasion for declaring the demands of the law, except to make men feel their inability to obey, and thus compel them to an exclusive reliance on Christ the head. He has effected a complete and finished justification of the whole world. When man believes this he is freed from the sense of guilt, freed also from all doubt and fear. Until he believes it he is, whether in this world or in another, under the condemnation of unbelief and darkness, the only condemnation now possible to the human race. In illustration and defense of this theory, Relly wrote and published several books, preached zealously in London and vicinity, and gathered a congregation in the metropolis. After his death in 1778, two societies were formed from his congregation; but both have now ceased to exist, as has the society gathered by Winchester about 1789, and the Church founded by David Thom, D.D., in Liverpool in 1825. The Unitarians in England are all believers in Universalism, as are also many of the Congregationalists.

3. In America

Universalism is the result of the proclamation of a variety of theories, some of them at a very early date, all resulting in one conclusion - the final holiness of the human race. Sir Henry Vane as was said above, was a Universalist. It is not known that while in America he made any public avowal of that belief; but the presumption is that he did not stand alone. In July, 1684, Joseph Gatchell, of Marblehead, Mass., was brought before the Suffolk County Court for discoursing "that all men should be saved," and, being convicted, was sentenced "to the pillory and to have his tongue drawn forth and pierced with a hot iron." Dr. George DeBenneville, also mentioned above, came to America in 1741, expressly called of God, as he believed, to preach the Gospel in the New World. For more than fifty years he preached in various parts of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas. He was not an organizer, but simply a preacher, and quite a voluminous writer, though only a few of his productions were published. For several years he was welcomed to the pulpits of the "Brethren" (Dunkers). It was no doubt at his suggestion that Siegvolk's *Everlasting Gospel* was translated into English, and published by Christopher Sower, printed, probably, on the identical press on which *the Berleburger Bibel* had been struck off. This edition was reviewed by Rev. N. Pomp, a German minister in Philadelphia. Alexander Mack, an eminent preacher among the Dunkers, replied to Pomp, defending Siegvolk's views. This work was never published, but the MS. is still preserved. There was found among Dr. De Bonneville'spapers, after his death, in 1793, a Commentary on the Apocalypse, which was printed in German, at Lebanon, Pa., in 1808. There was also Universalism in the Episcopal Church. Rev. Richard Clarke, rector of St. Philip's in Charleston, S. C., from 1754 to 1759, was a pronounced advocate of it; as was Rev. John Tyler, rector of the Church in Norwich, Conn., who wrote a work in its defense, which was published by someone to whom he had loaned his MS., about 1787. Some of the Congregationalists of New England were believers in Universalism; among them Dr. Jonathan Mayhew, minister of the West Church in Boston from 1747 to 1766, who distinctly avowed his belief in it in a published Thanksgiving Sermon, Dec. 9, 1762. Dr. Charles Chauncy, minister of the First Church in Boston from 1727 to 1787, issued a pamphlet on the subject in 1782, which was reviewed by Dr. Samuel Mather. In 1784 his larger work *The Salvation-of All Men* was published, a second edition following in 1787. Dr. Joseph Huntington, minister in Coventry, Conn., from 1762 to 1794, left a work in

favor of Universalism, entitled *Calvinism Improved*, whichwas published in 1796.
[End Article]

Should any desire to read further, I recommend the following as some of the most thorough writings documenting the history of this teaching.

Ancient history of Universalism: from the time of the apostles to the fifth general council, with an appendix tracing the doctrine to the Reformation by Hosea Ballou. This book consists of 313 pages.

Following closely on this writing was one by a different author. *The Modern History of Universalism: from the era of the Reformation to the Present Time*. This book is 458 pages in length and was written by Thomas Whittemore. It should be pointed out that "the Present Time" is a reference to the year 1830 in which this book was published.

These two books together provide perhaps the most comprehensive history of the doctrine of universal reconciliation as can be found today. Both of these books can be read online, or freely downloaded from Google Books.

Final Note:

Today, the term Universalism is used to denote a wide array of very diverse, and often incompatible, views. Some have asked me if I consider myself to be an Universalist. Following is a reply I recently gave to one who asked this question.

It is necessary to define what you mean by the term "Universalism" as the word means very different things to different people. Some who consider themselves "Universalists" are clearly heretical in their beliefs. The Unitarian Universalist Church is an example of this. They believe that all religions provide various paths that lead to God.What I proclaim is that there is only ONE Mediator between God and man, and that is Yahshua, the Son of God. He is THE gate through which ALL MEN must enter. There is no other name given under heaven by which men must be saved.
There are many who are called Universalists who deny the uniqueness of Christ. Like thieves and robbers they seek to enter by another way. I would not want to in any way be associated with these false doctrines and beliefs. For this reason, I find it expedient to avoid labels. I do not call myself an Universalist. I am a son of God who believes that Christ has been given the singular role to reconcile the creation back to the Father. I believe His power is sufficient to subject all things unto Himself, and by extension, unto the Father. I believe Christ's reconciling work will not be complete until every enemy has been brought to repentance, and every knee bows before the Father. I believe that what God has sworn is true. Every tongue will confess "Surely in Yahweh I HAVE righteousness and strength," and all who were incensed with Him will be ashamed.
This is what I teach, for it is what has been delivered to the saints by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days,
Joseph Herrin
(November 25, 2011)