

What's Going On?

This is an effort to break down the components of the world's workings in order to see what is going on from a Biblical perspective.

By B. D. Tate

Introduction:

Is God angry with us? Is God punishing us? Is God out to get us? Is the suffering of this world something God is allowing? If God is sovereign and all-powerful why doesn't he do something? Why do good people suffer? If God is love, how can this world exist? What loving God would sit by and watch "24/7" the things that go on here? There must not be a God...what is going on?

Life is like coming across a situation in the middle of things. We have walked into the middle of someone else's conversation in a sense, all of us born after the beginning (Adam & Eve) of creation. The world is messed up and things are out of line and naturally we want to know what happened and why are things the way they are?

To understand just about anything one must go to its source of when it began, what took place, how it all got started; but that is impossible. The beginning is in the past and no one is alive today to tell us what happened. We have many stories passed down to us from different cultures (Babylonian, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, African, etc.), that conflict with each other. Which one is the truth?

Even though we may discover what the beginning was like, it can be very complicated to figure it all out; many just give up. For example: the source of the conflict between Irish Republican Army and English rule, or the source of the conflict in the Middle-East with Israel and the Arab nations. Some would rather not bother to know how it began but try to fix the problem anyway. Trying to fix a problem without knowing the source of it can make it worse. We may think we've fixed the problem only to find it manifesting in another way. For any sure solution we must understand the problem or we'll be spinning our wheels so to speak, wasting our time or making things worse. A good example of this is our nation's welfare system: one solution has been to throw a lot of money into it hoping the whole thing fixes itself—billions of dollars are spent and problems persist.

To understand anything we must understand its beginning, which isn't always simple: Which story is accurate? Which can be trusted? And what can we understand or know from it?

When it comes to understanding what is going on in this world, why it is in the condition it is, why there is such suffering, and why God appears to be doing nothing about all of it, we need to turn to a reliable source of beginnings—The Bible and the first book contained in it: **Genesis**.

Genesis is God's revelation to Moses about the beginnings. Without this book we'd be lost with speculative conflicting explanations at best. Many scholars, scientists, skeptics, agnostics, and atheists have criticized, denounced, and discounted Genesis, **but its content is still relevant, accurate, and authoritative for today.** It is still the authoritative revelation of God about what happened and what is going on (Chapter VI

discusses two proofs to validate this claim. Proofs that no other source concerning the truth and beginnings can offer).

Unfortunately, even many in the Church have lost confidence in Genesis having been taught that evolution is true and the account of creation is false, they simply don't trust it anymore. The enemy of our soul has worked diligently along with men and women to discredit Genesis. The specific reasons may not seem important but they are convinced Genesis is not trustworthy; **but in truth it is absolutely fundamental to understanding what is going on in this world.** Genesis tells us vital information about what happened, why, and what the governing rules of our world are. Therefore we must get past the question, "CAN GENESIS BE TRUSTED?"

Jesus said,

"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:46, 47)

And also,

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle (The smallest stroke in a Hebrew letter) will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." (Matt. 5:17, 18)

Jesus trusted the writings of Moses that should be good enough for anyone; however, when it comes to the attack and onslaught of evolutionary dogma and liberal scholarship and/or propaganda, many are not sure. If that is the case for you I would suggest a good source for creation science that could bolster your confidence in scripture such as:

Answers in Genesis Website

Scientific Creationism, Henry M. Morris, Master Books, copyright 2001

Refuting Compromise, Jonathan Sarfati, Ph.D, Master Books, copyright 2004

The Collapse of Evolution, Scott M. Huse, Baker Books, copyright 1997

In regards to liberal issues such as is the transmission of scripture faithful? Is there proof of inspiration of the scriptures (especially the Old Testament)? What about the stories we read in Genesis of the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Tower of Babel, the culture and times of the Patriarchs, etc., are they true or just myths? I would suggest reading these materials:

Halley's Bible Handbook, Henry H. Halley, Zondervan Publishing House, copyright 1965.

The Signature of God, The Handwriting of God, Grant R. Jeffrey, Inspirational Press, New York, copyright 1996.

The Case for Christ, Lee Strobel, Zondervan, copyright 1998.

Fast Facts on Defending Your Faith, Anderberg & Weldon, Harvest House Publishers, copyright 2002.

The Answers Book, Ham/Sarfati/Weiland, Master Books, copyright 1990.

What you will find is that the world doesn't always tell us the truth about what is going on. Often the world (The world system, media, movies, music, scientists, education, politicians, etc.) tell us only what they want us to know or believe. Many times they actually change the facts, reverse them, and then present them—as is the case with the movie "Inherit the Wind" Hollywood's retelling the story of the Scopes Trial of 1925. This was the pivotal legal confrontation of the infamous "Monkey Trial" where evolution and creation was debated concerning human origins being taught in public schools. This movie is shown today in many public schools as if it was "gospel." Yet, just about every fact in the movie is reversed. The fact that our world is not honest hopefully doesn't

surprise anyone and the world often would rather lie or make things up in order to avoid the truth.

In a nutshell, evolution is a made up story for adults interpreting the facts of our world according to their belief system. What is not widely known is that the tenants of evolution do not exist in our world. There is no evidence that actually proves, substantiates, or genuinely supports evolution. Maybe a few quotes from leading evolutionary scientists will be enough to support this claim:

“Evolution [is] a theory universally accepted not because it can be proven by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible.” (Professor D. M. S. Watson, “Adaptation” *Nature*, 124:233, 1929)

“The more one studies paleontology [the fossil record], the more certain one becomes that evolution is based on faith alone.” (Professor Louis T. More, one of the more vocal evolutionists; *Why I Believe*, Dr. D. James Kennedy, chapter 4, pages 50-59)

“Evolution is unproved and unprovable. We believe it because the only alternative is special creation which is unthinkable.” (A famous British evolutionist, Sir Arthur Keith: *Why I Believe*, Dr. D. James Kennedy, chapter 4, pages 50-59))

Can Genesis be trusted? There has never been a detail, historical claim, scientific aspect, cultural element of Genesis found to be in error. No one over thousands of years from all walks of life and science has ever been able to prove it wrong. Many make claims that it is false, just a story, a myth, from outside and inside the Church, but in truth, it still stands the test of time—it is the inspired Word of God (That means that God authored it, He was there, He would know). The truth is that archeology over the past 100-250 years has unearthed thousands of artifacts, inscriptions, sites, obelisks, etc. validating, affirming, collaborating the minute details found in Genesis and the Bible as a whole. Nelson Glueck, the renowned Jewish archaeologist, wrote:

“It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.” He further exclaims, “the almost incredibly accurate historical memory of the Bible, and particularly so when it is fortified by archeological fact.” (ETDAV p. 65)

I believe that genuine, honest, scholarship, with faith and integrity, finds not only the writing of Moses faithful and trustworthy, but the whole of scripture to be so. Therefore, I present a theological and practical approach, with a firm conviction that Genesis can be trusted, addressing the many issues that are encompassed by the question, **“What is going on?”** in our world.

Chapter I

Going back to Genesis we find answers to important questions many are asking. **We find what happened. We find what went wrong. We find who is in control. We find the laws or rules that govern our world. We find out why there is suffering and who is to blame. We find that God is involved and how.**

God did not leave us without answers. God has revealed to us all we need to know about the past, what governs and applies to the present and future.

BREAKING IT DOWN: A VITAL TOOL

What I want to do now is break it down into smaller pieces so that it is better to understand. I do this for my own benefit and hopefully for yours.

The world we live in is complicated. There are many things going on, many principles of life, many players, a world of choices, and a world of consequences. **Trying to look at it all at once can be very confusing.**

THE FOREVER WHY...

Also, for anyone who wants to confuse the situation by asking the endless question of why this or why that, breaking it down diffuses this attempt to undermine understanding. There are those who really don't want Genesis to be accurate or that there is proof of a God, because that would mean the obvious need to be accountable. In an effort to avoid this conclusion, some with this intent will constantly ask questions for which many of them we will never know the answer. ***This implies that if we don't have all the answers then we don't have any that can be trusted.*** It is true we don't know all the answers but we don't have to, we just need to recognize the ones that matter and the answers we do have. Are the answers we do have enough? They are absolutely.

Breaking it down: What the World is like...from a Biblical perspective.

First, God made man in His image. This means that God wanted mankind to have and know life like He has it. God is looking for sons and daughters not servants and slaves. As it has been said many times before, God could have made us robots but He decided to give us free will.

God-like life: it means having choice, the right to choose, a will, a conscience, a sense of self, a sense of right and wrong, and most of all **dominion**.

When God made us He placed us in dominion over our own souls but also the world. The dominion of the world included all we know of it and the universe.

Dominion (is like ownership): We were given the right to rule.

In understanding the right to rule or choose maybe we need to look at what it means to not have it, or only seem to have it.

BABYPROOFED!

When my kids were little around two, and I had to watch them, meaning mom was out or asleep or it was "my turn" I did what a lot of parents do. I baby-proofed the room I was watching them in. That means that I removed all the choices from the room I did not want my son or daughter making. Choices that would include glass, pointed objects, breakable items, or things he or she could destroy or tear up, anything that I didn't want to worry about hurting them or being destroyed by them. Only those things I deemed safe or I didn't care about were left. In essence I took away all the other choices and left them with my choices. It was great because I could relax and watch the TV, read or even take a nap that's how baby-proofed I made it. It meant they couldn't leave the room either. There was no way out, no place, no how, just my pre-approved choices. It worked for a while until they got older and they got bored. Then I'd have to include more choices.

What if I'd raised my kids only in a baby-proofed environment? What if I'd never given them any other choices than my own? What if they'd never heard the word "No?" I mean every choice up until the day they are eighteen is okay because all of the other not

so good choices didn't even exist for them. Do you think they'd grow up? Do you think they'd be ready to face the world? Do you think they'd have a clue of right and wrong, good or bad? I think we can easily see that although I'd given them choice I had not given choice like I have it.

My children wouldn't grow up to be adults they would be stunted, backward, underdeveloped, genuinely unable to face responsibility. In fact, they would most likely be forever dependent upon me. We've seen this sort of thing when parents smother and dominate their children. We've seen the results or experienced them ourselves when we've been sheltered from life. It's not good nor loving it is selfish.

God gave us choice, genuine choice that included options that were not His will. Adam and Eve were given the choice to obey or not to in regards to the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In breaking it down we can see that love would not shelter forever.

DID GOD SET ADAM AND EVE UP FOR FAILURE?

Love gives us choice and then provides the answers, the warning, and the discipline to develop our choice making. I say this because when we look at the account of Adam and Eve in the garden some have argued that God wanted them to fail. Or more bluntly, God set them up for failure. **The implication being that they would not have known good and evil unless they disobeyed.** In other words, they would not have ever developed disciplined choices, being like God, knowing "good from evil," without eating of that tree. Their eyes were opened because they ate otherwise their eyes would have remained closed. This would then mean that God either wanted to keep their eyes closed, or he wanted them to disobey him to learn good and evil and for their eyes to be opened. If God then, wanted them to disobey to learn these things, **wasn't he just setting them up?** Consequently, how just is it for God to condemn them, cast them out, curse the world, bring death upon us all? After all, weren't they just doing what God wanted?

BASEBALL ANALOGY

I was coaching my son in little league baseball. He was pitching when a situation arose that we had not covered in our practices. The batter hit a little pop up right in front of home plate. The ball had a lot of back spin on it and I knew that when it hit the ground it would spin out of bounds making it a foul ball. My son however didn't know this and ran to get the ball. I called out to him to stop and let it go. He had no idea what I was getting at and so kept going after the ball. Again I called out to stop and let it go, but he kept on after it. I yelled to him to stop, but to no avail. He got the ball and started to throw it to first base only to see the batter on first base. By touching the ball it made the ball fair. He stopped it from spinning foul. He wanted to complete the play but it had taken too long for the ball to fly up and then down to the ground. The batter could easily beat out any throw. It is one of those plays where chances are you can't get to it in time, you can't catch it in the air because it's just too far away, so the only real option is to let it go and see it spin out of bounds foul. My son didn't know this, I did. I called to him to listen to me but he didn't. His disobedience meant that the batter would be safe on first

base. It meant that he would learn everything about this type of play the hard way. Now he knows it's better to let a ball like that go.

Here's the point. If my son had obeyed me and let it go he would have learned the same thing that he learned by not obeying me. His eyes would have been opened if he'd stopped and watched the ball go foul because of the back spin. The situation would have been different however in that he would not be faced with the consequence of the batter being safe at first base. The batter would have to return to the plate to face another pitch.

This small microcosm shows us that obedience leads to understanding and opened eyes too. If that is true, then God did not set us up for failure but placed before us a test.

God did not want Adam and Eve to disobey Him. He wanted them to obey and learn from their obedience. However, if the world is baby-proofed and everything in it is safe and pre-approved of God, then that obedience is never challenged, developed, or matured—it is never tested.

In fact, a major theme of Jesus Christ living and suffering as one of us in our world has to do with his obedience. Through obedience his substitutionary atonement was validated:

“In the days of His flesh, when he offered up both prayers and supplications with loud cryings and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and who was heard because of his piety, 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 eternal salvation.**” (Heb. 5:7, 8, 9)

Jesus came and obeyed in a world with many choices that were not God's will. He suffered in that he had to deny himself, resist temptation, and obey even to the point of death (Phil. 2:5-7). Jesus learned, He grew, He understood, His eyes were opened; He knew right from wrong, the difference between good and evil, **and yet never sinned.** He never disobeyed. So, to argue that God wanted us to disobey so that we could see having our eyes opened is fundamentally wrong. **When we obey, we also see, having our eyes and understanding enlightened.** Adam and Eve would have learned the same lesson of the knowledge of good and evil had they obeyed God. They would have learned what evil is, evil is disobeying God. Evil is not some alternate source of being, or power, it is taking what God has made, what God is like in nature, and using it for selfish means and motivations. God is love; evil is not acting in love. Evil is treating others in ways you'd not want to be treated. Ultimately evil is making decisions on our own in opposition or rebellion towards God's rule.

God didn't set them up for failure; however, He did provide genuine choice with consequences. God's decisions and choices all have eternal consequences. If He made us in His image and gave us true dominion like He has it, then our choices will also have consequences.

Sin nature: a fundamental truth in all of us is the strong inclination to only obey if we understand. For us to obey without understanding is in opposition to our nature. The

Spirit however, births in us a new way, that is, we will come to understand in time if we obey. God is looking for obedience first, understanding second. King David recorded in the Psalms, “I understand better than the aged because I obey thy precepts oh, Lord” (Psalm 119:100).

FIXED RESULTS!

Can you imagine playing a basketball game and every time you shot you made it? There was never a time when you missed. Or playing the game of pool and every shot pocketed a billiard ball. In this situation every decision was successful, every shot made, there are no mistakes, no bad things could ever happen. A baby-proofed room means there are no bad decisions, no bad choices, everything will always be okay.

Another way of looking at it: Atari.

When my kids were real small Atari came out with a video game called tennis (or ping pong). Its graphics were very basic. There was a small rectangular white graphic at the top and the bottom, these represented paddles, or tennis rackets. Then there was the moving graphic in the shape of a small square which represented the ball. When the game began the ball would go up and the one operating that paddle needed to move in front of it before it left the screen field. It would hit this paddle and head back down toward the other side where the other player would be moving that paddle to hit the ball back again. That was the game and maybe in time it would pick up some speed but that was about it. It was fun for a while but then it got boring. The game was so simple anyone with half a brain would out grow it.

Now of course there is **X-Box** and other completely overwhelming games today. These games are so programmed with graphics and options that it **takes time to understand what is going on** and how to play. And the game is so involved that it may take months to master it if at all. The graphics are almost real and the games almost like life.

When you think about it which would you rather be born into Atari or X-Box? God didn't create a baby-proofed world. God created a world that we could grow up in, learn, and grow some more. In fact, as smart as we all think we are, as much as we all think we know, we have barely scratched the surface of the information and understanding that our world and universe offers us.

Was God being faithful with us or setting us up for failure when He placed Adam and Eve in the garden and gave them dominion?

God placed us in a world with real graphics and real life. **The decisions are real. The consequences are also real.**

Chapter II

DOMINION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES:

Dominion also means authority. What kind of authority is it? It is a true and complete dominion or some kind of phony arrangement?

False dominion: something that is made to look like it's real but in essence is false.

The joke about some husbands being the head of the house is: He is merely a figure head. In the movie “*Tombstone*” there was a town marshal by the name of Behan, but he was merely a puppet of the outlaws who were wearing the red scarf—the cowboys. Someone with real dominion is the one in charge, the one with real power.

GIVING THE CAR AWAY

In breaking dominion down and its aspects I think of what it is like giving a car to my teenager when she gets her license. I could give the car conditionally, with parameters, or I could give the car completely over to her. If I give her complete control then I am passing-on dominion to her. If she decides to take the car for a joyride with her friends, that’s okay because it is her car. If she decides to use the car to rob a bank, I would be totally against it, but I can’t stop her if she does (I’m speaking about it after the fact). If she decides to drive people who are my enemies I can’t take the car back because I don’t like the way she’s using it. It’s not my car anymore it’s hers—that’s dominion. If I try to take it back without her permission that would mean I lied to her in saying I gave her the car in the first place. Even the law would be against me if I had included in the gifting of the car the transferring of title to her name. Our dominion included the right to choose and the legal authority that goes with it.

God’s gifting program was not a partial gift it was a complete one. If we are created in His image then anything less would have been false.

God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”
(Gen. 1:26)

With **Full** dominion come **Full** consequences. When Adam and Eve disobey God’s direct command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, death is the consequence. **Did God choose death as the consequence or was it the only result of disobedience?** It seems death is a very severe consequence of one disobedient act or decision.

What about the consequences of complete dominion? Did God overreact to Adam and Eve eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? It doesn’t appear fair that death fits the crime. Okay they didn’t obey Him once, why the drastic measure of cursing the whole of creation and bringing death upon all things? Why not slap them on the wrist? Why not some “time-out” on some tree branch? Why not a good talking to? It seems way over the top **what is going on?**

Did Adam and Eve know what death meant? They didn’t know what good and evil was. Did they realize the consequences of their actions? It seems they were set up for a great fall. I didn’t reject my son when he didn’t obey my coaching call. I didn’t end his baseball career over it.

It seems a strange arrangement this Garden of Eden being a beautiful place and they could do anything except eat of this tree. How long were they in the Garden? What did they do there? Why did they have to leave it? What is this tree of life that God did not allow them to eat from?

There must be more to this than meets the eye.

I want to strongly suggest that there is a whole lot more going on in this particular issue than meets the eye and are described in the recording of this account. Why would God not include these other factors in the account? Why would God leave us wondering about the gravity of Adam and Eve's decision? Why wouldn't He explain or have revealed the "rest" of the story?

There is a proverb that says: "*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; it is the glory of Kings to search it out*" (Prov. 25:2). It seems that God gives us the challenge to search things out. He doesn't give us every detail or point, but actually expects us to dig deeper. In a way it is like "hide and seek." God is hiding wanting us to seek.

Giving away too much?

Have you ever wanted to jump in and give your son or daughter the answer? Maybe they were working on a puzzle and you could see the answer. There you were just biting your teeth, holding yourself back, then suddenly you just blurted out the answer. If you have ever been guilty of such a crime, then you'll remember the disappointment and unhappiness on the face of your son or daughter. They wanted to figure it out for her/himself and not be spoon fed. There is no sense of accomplishment or reward if everything is spelled out, and everything is given. We were meant to search. We were meant to ask questions. We were made with longings, with yearnings, with emptiness, so that we would have purpose, meaning, and fulfillment. The curiosity, the desire to know, the longing to understand that is part of what makes us human. **We were not meant to be zombies.**

God also being sovereign not only wants us to obey His will for our benefit, he also wants us to believe Him. He could make us believe Him. He could overwhelm us with His glory but has decided to give us genuine choice.

The Choice is it real?

If I laid before you a lit candle and the sun and said to you which would you rather live by during the daytime, is that really a choice? The obvious answer overwhelms the lesser answer really making it no choice at all. If I lay before you a lit candle, a flashlight, and a cigarette lighter and said which would you choose to go into a cave with? The answer still might be obvious but much more competitive so to speak.

God has sufficiently hidden Himself from us that His glory doesn't overwhelm the choice. In hiding, the notion that the world's origin, design, life, and complexity, may have happened by chance is actually believable to those who don't want God. The choice actually competes with the truth especially when you add the lie.

Why would God allow it to look like His punishment is too severe concerning the consequences for Adam and Eve disobeying Him? The implication is that He is being too harsh, over the top; the punishment far out weighs the crime, for one act of disobedience. It seems God is not loving just mean. **What's going on?**

I wonder if there have been times in your life when things happened that made you look bad. Has there ever been a time when the facts seemed so clear that indicted

you, implicated you, and made you look guilty and at fault? I'm speaking about situations that look one way but in reality they are another.

What it looks like may not be right!

I remember playing football and getting injured in the previous play. My hand had been banged up so that my thumb lost its strength to hold the football in order to pass. The very next play I passed hoping that my injury was not serious; the ball sailed over my receivers head into the waiting arms of the safety. He returned the ball all around my team leaving me to make the tackle near the sideline. When I got up I was holding my hand. It looked to everyone that I had injured my hand in making the tackle. This implied that I had made a very bad throw all on my own without the excuse of the injury. It looked one way but reality was different.

There are thousands of examples of this sort of thing happening to all of us. What does it mean? **It means that those who believe in us will listen and accept our explanation of the order of events while those who don't will accuse us of making things up in order to cover up failure.**

God looks guilty. God looks like He overreacted. Is there more to the story than meets the eye?

What if God not only wants us to search out the matter, **he is actually testing our hearts for us to see what is inside of us.** God tests the hearts and exposes our intents, what we are about, what we believe, what our true motivations are, and what our true nature is.

Have you ever had a loved one not believe you? A story is out about you but it is one sided. The story makes you look guilty. The one person you thought loved and trusted you also jumped to the conclusion that you must have done it. In such a case, we may be able to understand why strangers and those who don't know us believed the false report; however, it is a wholly different matter to realize that someone who knows you and claims to be your friend, also believes the false report. In such a case, trust, love, friendship, all burn up in flames. It hurts real badly; this is what we call a wounded spirit or heart.

Some people claim to love and trust but they do not. God knows He is righteous, He knows He is love; we are the ones that don't know these things. When it looks like God is not righteous or loving what do we do? Do we join in with others and also make the same accusations? Do we hold onto the truth of God's nature even though it may appear otherwise?

Sin nature: "Seeing is believing; I'll believe it when I see it." Doubting Thomas said, "I will not believe unless I can see and touch Him and place my hands in the nail prints." The Spirit births in us a new nature that is the opposite. "Believing is seeing." I'll trust God's nature even though it appears otherwise. I will remain steadfast in the faithfulness

of God although the world and the situation strongly suggest God is unfaithful and/or guilty.

It Validates True Dominion!

The enemies of God rejoice when God looks bad. They can use such things to accuse and fabricate other stories of injustice, ungodliness, and unrighteous behavior. **Think about it, if God could never look bad, then He has not sufficiently hidden himself in order to give us a legitimate choice.** If God cannot be lied about, misrepresented, falsely accused, made to look like a liar, then He has baby-proofed the world—**He is still controlling everything!** Our dominion would not be complete because we couldn't present God in a bad light.

Evil includes choosing to lie, to misrepresent, to jump to conclusions, to accept at face value things that appear wrong, or out of sync with God's nature. **In a very serious way we are being tested as to whether or not we love and trust and believe God.**

Many don't care, they don't want God in their lives in the first place, they don't want to be accountable, or held responsible, and if they can convince the world that God is not perfect, holy, loving, good, then all the more they can persist in doing it their own way.

IT'S NOT ABOUT RIGHT IT'S ABOUT POWER

Have you ever noticed that sometimes Newspapers print gossip, slander, and false reports as though they are facts? The reputations of people have been destroyed by one article that is printed making claims but with no real substance or facts to back it up. In time the article is proven false, the writer's claims inflammatory, it was hype and propaganda to destroy a threat or political adversary. When the truth comes out the Newspapers don't print the retractions on the front page with big bold letters where the original false report appeared, no they print something in a small paragraph hidden somewhere back in the pages where generally no one reads. The retraction usually isn't a true confession but something of a vague sense that things were misconstrued, misinterpreted, a mistake may have been made and so on.

The nature of such activity shows that people are not being honest. They are not after the truth they are after power. When accusations fly it isn't that people are interested in the truth so much as destroying the reputations of others. When the facts come out, they weren't after the facts in the first place unless of course they line up with their agendas.

Satan's nature **is to only tell the truth when it is in his best interest.** This motivation of sinful desire when it is exposed shows why God often chooses to be hidden. Hidden in order to expose what lies underneath--Hidden for a time, to expose His accusers. It has been said give some people enough rope and they will hang themselves. Many claim to be innocent but in reality are full of corruption.

What about God's punishment of Adam and Eve's disobedience?

Regardless of their disobedience doesn't the punishment seem way too much? Look at all the world has gone through, the violence, the wars, the pain and suffering, and all over one decision?

Is there really anymore to be added to the story? I think there is. **Can one decision change things dramatically?**

ONE DECISION, ONE DRAMATIC CHANGE

One decision my son made concerning our new computer changed everything about it. He was playing on it, exploring all of its features, roaming here and there learning what was in it. He must have been on it for some time when I heard him call out to us with a rather concerned voice. He must have been ten or twelve at the time, anyway we came into the room and he explained the problem. He said that he was playing around as I explained when a question appeared in a box on the screen. He didn't know what it meant but he answered it yes. When he did we lost our programming. He'd spent the last half an hour trying to get it back. I got on and tried to get it back too. Nothing any of us did returned the computer back to its original content. What we lost was the word processing and its accessories. I don't know how to this day he managed to do it. In answering one question the computer asked we lost the whole reason for our purchasing it. Ninety percent of why we bought the computer was to use word processing, filing, printing, etc. now it was gone--**One question, one dramatic result.** I was shocked and furious with my son. It was days before I recovered my senses. We didn't have a lot of money and the whole thing seems absolutely ridiculous that it could happen, but it did. We now had in our house a new computer that we could not use or relate to. The whole function of the computer was of no value to us—it seemed a complete loss. We didn't know much about computers then, so we didn't realize how we could regain its function to us.

We did learn through someone else that we could reprogram it with new software. In fact the name of the new software is called "Word Perfect." The computer was dead to us but it could be re-born with a new program. The new program restored all that we had lost and some. We were greatly relieved to have our computer back and so was my son.

The parallel is undeniable.

God tells us plainly that Adam and Eve's decision changed their nature (programming). A nature that is opposite to His can not be used by Him, or fellowship with Him, or be in his presence. In essence, Adam and Eve were dead to Him as much as the computer was dead to us. What God does over the centuries is plan salvation that includes "Word Perfect." When Jesus is presented, ministers, teaches, and then offers Himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, he in effect has become a new program for the world. The book of Romans teaches us that through Adam all sin and through Jesus Christ, the new Adam, all are made righteous.

What about our nature is it changed from God's?

Only a short investigation reveals that is true. Our human nature is in opposition to God much like the computer languages of Macintosh and IBM are incompatible. God does not think the way we do, live the way we do, act, reason, or behave the way we do. Sin is described as falling short of the love of God. Sin is also understood as one acting as their own god. At the core of sin is pride which believes we are our own source for

success, life, happiness, love, entertainment, purpose, etc. The programming prior to the fall was in agreement with God's nature. The programming after the fall is in opposition.

So was the consequence of Adam and Eve's decision the result of having been given *FULL* dominion or was it God's punishment? Many see it as God being angry and in wrath punishing the world for their disobedient act. **There is another perspective that what happened is their decision, like with our computer, changed the programming or nature within Adam and Eve.** That change results in separation from God and separation from God is death. **God then would be *informing* them of what the consequences would be rather than *deciding* the consequence is death.**

There is something more to inform on the results of having Full dominion.

We are told that God's holiness is so pure that no sin can be in His presence. Sin is understood to be rebellion against God. Sin is a heart motivated by selfish ambitions and desires. God's nature purges, purifies, destroys, and eliminates all sinful behavior because love does not join in with it. God will not entertain, engage in, or be party with, sin. Is there anything in life that would represent or act like this purging influence? Is there anything we know that if we come in contact with it we will perish?

Electricity's Nature.

Electricity is known to electrocute with no mercy or second chances. The nature of its power is scary. I don't like working with it because if you make one mistake it will kill you. In other words, no mistakes can be made in connection or contact with electricity. There can be no exposure or contact with electricity for which we can survive. We must have insulation to work with it, or it must be turned off (no presence). Jesus Christ becomes our insulation with a Holy God.

WE DON'T REMEMBER WHO GOD IS!

God is described as greater in glory and power than the sun. He created the universe so it would make sense that He is greater in size and power than anything we know. Yet, when it comes to relating to Him we forget who we are dealing with. We forget that God is all powerful and greater than electricity. We assume that we can deal with him and make mistakes and everything will be okay. **We don't do that with electricity but we do with God.**

Struck down dead!

There are accounts in the Bible of God's glory costing the lives of people simply by coming in contact with Him. His holiness filled the temple and the sons of Aaron offered up unauthorized fire and were struck down dead (Lev. 10:1,2). When David brought back the Ark of the Covenant and it was being carried along by oxen, it was about to fall and one of David's men reached out touching it to steady it only to lose his life—for he was immediately struck down dead (II Sam. 6:7). We look at such accounts and think God is just being mean, cruel, or harsh; yet, again and again God speaks to us about His glory, presence, and power being too much for us. In fact He says no man can see His face and live (Ex. 33:20; James 1:17; Lev. 11:45).

There is more to God than just relationship there is fundamental truth of His glory. His glory must be hidden from sinful man or we would perish (Ex. 33:20). Jesus

Christ becomes the receiver of the wrath of God for sin; he, who knew no sin, became sin that we who are sinners could be made righteous. To be made righteous means more than just being made acceptable to God, it also means **being able to exist in His presence.**

The truth is that we are to reverence God. The fear of God is purifying, healthy, and stabilizing (Psalm 19:9). We often forget or do not realize who we are dealing with and who it is that made us.

Is God being harsh when He separates Himself from His creation knowing that any contact in our sinful condition would mean instant death?

AT THE SAME TIME...the result of losing contact with God is death itself. A strange paradox is that we cannot live in Him with sin and we cannot live without Him in sin.

It is like flowers cut for displays that remain beautiful for a while even though they are dead being separated from their source of life--they wither, they fade, they dry up, and they die. People, like flowers, are dead although they walk about. We are dying, aging, etc., and we don't really know why. But God told Adam and Eve they would die the day that they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil. Death according to Biblical standards means separation: from life, from relationship, from the source of life. They died spiritually, they died physically, they died in relationships, and they died in character and nature.

The new "life" Adam and Eve were born to, having their eyes opened, was a nature corrupted from the original. The nature taking over is programmed to be self centered. The new nature is about being our own god: we decide, we choose, we will, we do, and we are in charge. Like a cancer it infected our whole being. To this day there isn't born a human being who doesn't think they know what is best. Every human being wants control, wants their own way, thinks that their opinion is right, and is looking out for number one. We all fall far short of loving our neighbor as ours selves.

Chapter III

So why does God curse the earth and all of nature with us? Why does everything change? Why doesn't God just let us live on our own? The *Fall* seems so trivial compared to its consequences was there anything more going on?

After Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God acted to prevent them from eating of the tree of life so that they would not continue to live forever in their sinful nature. God's love compelled Him to eliminate the possibility of humanity remaining forever lost and separated. Can you imagine what it would be like for humanity to live forever in sin? The first 1,800 years of human existence gives us an example. Start reading in Genesis chapter six and see what happened. Verse five:

"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and he was grieved in His heart."

This is the account of Noah and the flood that destroyed the world at that time. Men lived hundreds of years and continually did evil. So death is not just the end of life it is ultimately an end of evil. Death also becomes the door way to life. Unless we die we cannot be purged of our sin nature. Unless we die we cannot be freed from our bodies of

“death.” Death warns us that life is ending. There is something very wrong and we need to find the answers to life’s questions. Why are we dying? Why is the world the way it is? Is there life after death? The search for these answers is intended to lead to eternal redemption in Christ Jesus. Our sin and this fallen world are the result of being separated from God; therefore the answer is finding God. The Bible reveals the account of the past to show us the way to God’s salvation which comes to all who believe and call upon the name of the Lord.

THE STACKED DECK!

Some have argued that God cursed the earth and set us up for failure. God tricked humanity it was unfair to curse everything just because we didn’t do what He wanted. Our choices shouldn’t always lead to sorrow, suffering, violence, war, hatred, death, stealing, killing, destroying, sickness, and disease. Our choices should also lead to life, happiness, joy, peace, good things...It’s not fair that His choices lead to good things while ours lead to bad things...that’s what’s wrong with this whole set up. **He makes it so that we need Him.**

Like a stacked deck that is set up to serve the dealer, we are being dealt a hand that cannot win. Only the dealer wins, only the dealer has the good cards, and the dealer will get away with it if he/she is not caught. **God is like the cheating dealer!**

God should set up the world so that we are not cursed, so that we can do just as well without Him. God should give us the same powers He has, the same knowledge, the same chance, the same advantage, instead of leaving us with so much going on, and so little experience to deal with it. It’s really God’s fault that our freedom, dominion, and choices aren’t working out, He doesn’t want them to.

OUT OF CONTROL

My brother in law had an old boat for fishing. The wheel was like the old cars with a lot of play in it for turning. He knew how it worked and could control the boat easily. He asked me to drive once and I took over. The boat had been going in the right direction, smoothly, efficiently, until I began to play with the wheel. As I turned the wheel it seemed like nothing was happening, so I’d turn it more, the results were so delayed that I grew impatient and began to turn it some more. When the boat started to turn too much in one direction I began to rush the wheel back the other direction. In a short time I managed to loose control of our direction as the boat seemed to wonder this way and that. I felt embarrassed, a little humiliated, and certainly set up especially as he began to laugh.

Why didn’t he teach me how it worked? Why did he let me look stupid? He was a good guy but had a little fun at my expense. If I’d had the same experience that my brother in law had, I’d done just as well! We think this same way concerning God. If we had the same experience, the same powers, the same knowledge, we’d do just as well as God. But we don’t and for God to give us dominion without all the tools He has is wrong and unfair, of course we are going to fail we don’t have what God has...

Have you ever thought, ***“I am so glad that so and so is not God?”*** Sometimes people act like they are; but aren’t you *really* glad they are not? I know most of us think that we’d make pretty good gods if we were ever given a real chance. But as we look back into history every man who has been given power has been corrupted, and every

man that has been given absolute power has been absolutely corrupted. Is it the power that corrupts or is it the fact that our human nature merely manifests itself fully? Human nature without restraints and discipline is ugly. A child left to its own ways becomes spoiled. A willful teenager raging against authority in an arrogant tantrum is ugly. An adult that is completely self centered and absorbed, uncaring, disregarding others, irresponsible, is ugly. The fact is that sin nature is ugly.

Sin nature is responsible for great suffering in our world. Sin nature in selfishness, greed, and looking out for number one, destroys, steals, and kills the lives of others to get what it wants. Eliminate sin nature and suffering would cease.

What if we were given a good nature like God's? Why didn't He give us a nature just as good as His and let us have dominion then? **That's exactly what He did do.**

Maybe at the core of this is the idea that we want all of God's stuff but without God.

AT THE CORE WE WANT TO RULE.

We'd like to rule and reign, choose our own ways, but have things turn out right, good, and beautiful. We'd like to have our own way and there be no sickness or disease. We'd like to do it our way, what is best in our own eyes, and have no hatred, violence, war, etc.

If everyone has their own way that is what creates conflicts, contradictions, violations, disturbances, power issues, struggles, trials, shortages...because there can be no peace where there is no law and order. There will never be law and order when everyone is the law unto themselves. **If I get my way then you are not likely to get yours...now add to this mix millions of people.**

There must be law and order but trying to get people to agree on what that will be has caused wars, violence, rebellions, fighting, power struggles, etc...

At the core of this conflict is: **What right do you have to tell me what to do?** Who are you to tell me anything? You are neither my boss nor my owner.

WHO IS THE OWNER?

The true owner is God. As the owner doesn't that give Him the rights of ownership? That would mean that He could determine what the rules are and how things are going to be done. After all, God created everything, it is His life in ours, His knowledge we think, His wisdom we decide from, His material world we walk on, His food we eat, His provisions we use, and I could continue to describe everything.

What we want is His stuff without Him. At the core of this reasoning is selfishness not love. The very reason we are angry at God in the first place is selfishness. We don't want to be responsible, we don't want to be told what to do, and we certainly don't want to be under authority. We don't want to be judged. Why are we like this? Because we are rebellious sinners wanting to do whatever comes to us without the hang up of consequences. We want power but not the responsibility that comes with it--**The primary responsibility of caring for others.**

IN THE GARDEN: THE FALL

In the Garden of Eden the Bible describes the fall of man in Genesis Chapter three. Adam and Eve could be any place in the garden but where were they? They were continually hanging around the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That tree was in the middle of the garden and its mystery allured them there every day. They were looking at it, walking around it, thinking about it, feeling somehow drawn to it. **Why would God forbid them from eating of this tree?** Why would God place it here? Why is it here in the first place? What was God keeping from them or dangling in front of them?

Without the tree there would be no choices in the Garden other than God's choices. Somehow they felt like they were missing out on something. Is there more to life than God's will? **Yes there is it is called evil.** Evil is the knowledge of doing things not according to the will of God. Evil is using God's stuff in ways that God would not. Evil is being in charge of one's own life—now that is a foreign thought!

Sin nature: It is sin nature's tendency to feel left out, missing out, and the "grass is greener on the other side of the fence." It is impossible for willful, rebellious, and selfish humanity to be content. We woefully do not trust anyone including God with our life. We are trying to get all we can in the time we have. It is the "look out for number one" agenda. The Spirit births into us a new agenda, we were made to please God not ourselves, we were meant to trust God with our lives to bring fulfillment and meaning. The result of sin nature's drive is stress, fear, envy, anger, disillusionment, frustration, anxiety and pain--failure. The result of living to the Spirit is rest, patience, peace, meaning, and contentment in God. Life is not in the collection of things, experiences, and money, but in knowing God—God is our reward, God is life!

THEY LISTENED BECAUSE THEY WERE ALREADY THINKING ABOUT IT.

Adam and Eve listened to the serpent because they were thinking about evil. Eve answered the serpent, "*...but the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'*" God said not to eat of it; He didn't say not to touch it. Why the additional prohibition? Why did she add to God's command?

Because they were thinking about it, meditating upon its meaning, the mystery, the unknown of evil, their desires were becoming confused and unfocused. They were not thinking straight. I say "they" because Adam was right there with Eve and didn't correct her. Why didn't he? There was an opportunity to return to sanity by correcting the wrong information; but if he did then he would be squelching the moment's passion. Adam's correction would put them back on track in obedience to God's command. He didn't do it because he too was captivated by the meaning of evil.

There is a phrase that is often given to someone who speaks up to correct or rebuke or stop what is going on. The phrase is: "Don't be a kill-joy!" Someone is about to take their first smoke and a friend reminds them that their parents don't want them to smoke. Someone is about to sneak food into the theater because the price of food inside is way out of line, but the theater prohibits bringing food in from the outside. Your friends show you the stuff under their jacket, you laugh, but then what do you do? If you say

anything about it that it is wrong, your friends will mock you, turn on you, calling you a “kill-joy.”

There was a mood with Adam and Eve they were in a position of pressing over the line that God had drawn. This wasn't an accident; they'd been at this tree before. They had explored the Garden of Eden well enough to know that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was in the middle. They'd been everywhere else but this tree was the most fascinating place because of its allurement.

In this allurement has God set them up? Eventually, all of us succumb to allurement. We have all failed to resist temptation again and again. We are thinking that it is inevitable that Adam and Eve will cross this line. We think this because we are enticed, tempted, and driven by sin nature's passions. We lust, we desire, we want, we lack, we are empty, and we are never satisfied.

Adam and Eve didn't have this passion in them they had not yet sinned. What then was compelling them to be at this tree? What was the allurement? **Was it that they felt God was keeping something from them?** Was it that they felt nothing should be “out of bounds?” Was it that they, being in ignorance, innocent, were unwise? They had already added to God's command changing it, fencing it in. **This addition meant they were threatened by the tree's presence.** After all God had said that if they ate of this tree they would die. That is a grave consequence (No pun intended)! Did they know what death meant? Even if they didn't they knew it wasn't good.

Was the presence of this tree a constant reminder to them about something? As long as that tree remains it would always be a threat in some way. It was a threat of death whatever that meant and a threat to their freedom. They could eat of every tree except this one. They had complete dominion except here at this tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **Did Adam and Eve feel controlled?** Did they feel impinged by this command? Did they feel somehow confined? They must have felt a loss of control because they added a controlling addition to the command. They added the command to not touch it. **The allurement for them must have been control.** They had dominion everywhere but here by this tree. The serpent comes to them by the tree. Why the tree and no where else? **It is because it is here that control and dominion are restrained by God. There was no other place the serpent could tempt them.**

Why the tree?

Was it that God tested them? Was it that God wanted them to realize that their dominion would always be subject to Him? Was it that God wanted them to be aware that their dominion needed to be responsible and had consequences?

If God keeps the Garden of Eden free from wrong choices so that no matter what Adam and Eve decide nothing could go wrong, **there is no real dominion.** It is just a show, a game, a farce, to give dominion with no options but good (God) ones. If God had never placed an option before them the world never would have fallen into sin. The curse, evil, suffering and pain, death and destruction, all of it never would have existed. That would have been a good thing. Yet, it would have meant that Adam and Eve did not really choose God's will. They would have had no other option than God's will. That is not real dominion.

Because evil is possible, that disobedience to God is possible, not giving them the option to exercise it would not be life in the image of God. It would not be true freedom of choice. What is the cost of giving Adam and Eve true dominion? The cost to God is that His creation can reject Him. The cost is that His creation may decide to do things “on their own.” The basic issue for every human being today is just that: **Do we want God’s dominion or our own?**

The serpent saw the issue.

The serpent approached Adam and Eve when they were wrestling with this whole prohibition. When he spoke to Eve, *“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”* He knows what the struggle is. He knows they are thinking about it because they are always around it. Eve immediately and dutifully recites the commandment but with a twist. She could have been saying, “We may eat of every tree! We have rights, we have privileges, and we can do a lot of things!” She would be defending their place or predicament; yet, there is this hole inside of them. **A hole that says they are not completely satisfied with their place.** She continues, *“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden...”* She states where this tree is. It’s not at the end of the garden out of the way, it is in the middle. She may have continued, “It is always reminding us of its presence. **It is always reminding us that we do not have full dominion.** God has placed a restraint on us right in the middle of our dominion. We are happy that we can do everything else but...this tree!”

Eve then says, *“God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”* God did say they are not to eat it. God didn’t say not to touch it. In fact, they could have destroyed the tree! If it was bothering them so much being in the middle of the garden they could have transplanted it somewhere else. They could touch it, they could destroy it, they could chop it down, burn it, the only thing God said they couldn’t do was eat of its fruit.

Then the serpent says what they were thinking in part all along. *“You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”* The serpent is intending to say something like, **“God is keeping you from something and He is lying to you to do it.** You have the power to be like Him and He knows it and He doesn’t want you to be. **This tree is here to keep you in your place.** This tree is here to remind you that God is in control not you. Eat the fruit and you will be wise and free.”

The serpent: “You will be free from God’s command and God’s dominion over you. You will be free from its constant allurements. You will no longer be ignorant, no longer be innocent, and no longer be unwise.” When the serpent spoke, they didn’t question him, or deny his arguments, they were already on board. **The serpent just tempted them to take the next step.**

NO ONE CAN BE TEMPTED BY SOMETHING THAT HAS NOTHING IN THEM!

If you don’t like chocolate someone can’t tempt you to eat it. If you don’t like smoking no one can tempt you to smoke. If you aren’t thinking about murder the temptation to murder has nothing in you. We can’t say the devil made them do it he only

provided the encouraging temptation to do it. The Bible teaches us that we are all led astray by our own lusts and desires that war within us.

In essence then, Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent because they were already thinking about it. The temptation worked because they were already bothered by their place, their subordinate role, the reminder of God's ultimate Lordship, and this tree that must be left alone. **It seems that dominion wants complete dominion.**

If this is true, then the decision to eat of the tree was already in their heart and mind. **This wasn't an accident. It wasn't a one time decision of passion. It was premeditated.** They didn't rebuke the serpent because they were already in agreement with the serpent.

No, they didn't understand all of the ramifications of their decision.

They didn't know what death meant. They didn't know that their hearts would become **bound to sin—self rule.** They didn't know that generations of humanity would now suffer greatly and most would be eternally lost from God (And the serpent wasn't about to tell them). However, what mattered to them was their freedom and dominion. They trusted their own heart. They trusted their thinking. They wanted what was prohibited. They didn't want to be subject any longer to God or this command.

They were stunned. They were shocked at what happened to them. **For the first time they were under their own dominion completely. God's covering of security, love, peace, safety was gone**—they were naked. They were naked and tried to cover up. They were ashamed and tried to excuse it. They tried to play the victim. They tried to play dumb. They tried to act like they were tricked and fooled and that God should understand. The truth manifested itself. They wanted to be in control and have things their own way without any prohibitions from God. **They in essence rebelled against his authority in their lives and kicked God out of their hearts.**

Someone might say, "Well, what right has God to claim our hearts anyway?" Does someone have God's heart? **We only want to be like God ruling our own hearts.**

ANOTHER ARGUMENT:

If God were really fair, we'd be able to make our own choices, have our own dominion, and our own freedom, and it be just as good without Him as it was with Him. What we want is God's blessings without God. What we want is God's dominion without His will. We want heaven without God. We want control without accountability to anyone. We want to do as we please and not have to answer to anyone.

WANTING SOMEONE ELSE'S STUFF

It's like going over to a neighbor's house, which you really don't like, but because they have the big screen TV and the surround sound, a great layout, great food, plus the Jacuzzi, pool, etc...you are willing to put up with them to enjoy their stuff. But, if things were really perfect, you'd tell those neighbors to get out we only want your stuff not you. Then you could use it without having to answer to your neighbor.

Do you want to be used like this? Wouldn't you be hurt if that was why people came to visit you? Do you want people being around you because you're rich and they want to enjoy your stuff? Once you figured it out wouldn't you separate yourself from

those people? If you knew they weren't interested in you at all, just what you can give them, wouldn't you decide to kick them out?

God's not interested in being our vending machine either.

God is interested in sons and daughters who love Him, who understand what is going on, who willingly subject themselves to His rule and reign. Why? Because there is no safer place, no better Lord, no better set of laws, rules, governing, than God's. God's dominion is life, joy, peace, rest, health, safety, love, goodness, kindness, truth, honesty, there is no one or place that compares. **We've seen what others can do with dominion.** We've seen what selfishness does with dominion. We've seen what evil does with it. We've seen what sin does.

THE REAL ISSUE IS:

The real issue is that God is God and our part in it is that **we were made to please Him.** We are not God, nor shall we ever be. We want God to serve us that is evil. It is evil because it doesn't recognize the creator, owner, rightful Lord, of all things. At the core of sinful behavior is pride. Pride is practicing and embracing self as the source of one's own happiness, meaning, and purpose.

Sin nature: Our pride assumes responsibility, credit, ownership, rights, dominion, and the source of our life. **God hates pride because it is false, a lie,** that is embraced by humanity. Pride in humanity has led to all kinds of disastrous behavior; most importantly it has blinded us to God's glory.

After addressing the fall and seeing the outcome. After speaking to the decision to disobey and realizing it was a premeditated rebellious act of taking complete dominion of their hearts. **Where does that leave us and the world?**

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT? WHY THIS WORLD?

God created the world and the universe and knew before it all came to be what was going to happen. He knew Adam and Eve would rebel against Him. He knew sin nature would rule the world for six thousand years. He knew the untold suffering, pain, destruction, killing, stealing, and evil that would mar His creation and humanity. Millions upon millions of people have suffered greatly at the hands of evil men and the unrelenting oppression of evil spirits and their agenda. If you knew all of this would you create the world and the universe and place humanity in it? Would you go-ahead knowing what was going to happen? I have to admit I would not. I don't see it as worth all of the loss, pain, anguish, torment, fear, and anxiety the world has produced. I don't see the horrendous abuse, holocaust, crimes against humanity as worth it. I wouldn't have proceeded and I wouldn't have allowed evil. God did. Who is right? Obviously God is so there must be something worth it for Him. This whole experience and the eternal values placed upon souls, love, choice, and dominion, were worth it for Him. What is He after? What could possibly be of more worth than preventing evil and the world's nonsense? What does God get from sacrificing Himself on a cross in the midst of an evil and perverse generation? What good does God see that is far greater in value than preventing all this suffering? I honestly struggle and don't get it. Yet, God in His infinite wisdom,

love, and compassion, saw the salvation of a few (in comparison to the many that are going to be lost), the value even of one soul, as worth it. Was there no other way? Couldn't God have sons and daughters through a much less evil way? Why this horrendous baptism of life and its ungodly behavior and consequences? Jesus prayed, *"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours be done."* This "cup" of the world's mess and its consequences was worth it for the Father. It was worth the repentance, the salvation, the submission, the willing love, the genuine choice of everyone to call upon the name of the Lord—Those who willingly choose the Father's will and dominion. It really is no wonder why the scriptures record, *"The eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, the half of what God has prepared for those who love him"* (I Cor. 2:9).

Chapter IV

What is going on in the world because of the fall? Where is God now? Why does all this suffering continue? Why doesn't God stop it? If He did truly love this never would have happened? Where does all the suffering come from?

Breaking it down: What the World is like...from a Biblical perspective.

The result of the fall and separation from God is death. Death is separation from God's sustaining presence, sustaining nature, and sustaining power.

Like flowers wilting so is humanity.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN: BUT NOT IN CONTROL

The laws of God's creation are still in effect. Everything reproduces after its own kind (Gen.1). Whatever a man sows that shall he also reap. The curse that is in the earth results from unloving beings running the world in an unloving way. The world was meant to be a blessing where love ruled; however, sin and selfishness reigns instead. The laws of nature, the laws of the Spirit, and the laws of relationships still operate. Sin reproduces sin; Sin reaps what it sows (Gal. 6:7). God is sovereign and yet He is not in control.

Humanity governs and yet humanity is out of control. It is a strange situation, like the car is running but no one is really driving. The world is operating yet things are not directed. The world is trying to balance itself but cannot.

ALL OF CREATION FELL TOO

Since humanity was given dominion over creation, when humanity fell so did all that was under their authority. The world became cursed and with it the nature of all things became corrupt. Devouring and being devoured is the rule of life. Likewise, human beings use people to get things. People want power and will step on, devour, destroy, to get it.

The curse occurs when the very thing that was meant to be a blessing is turned around and becomes the power behind the problem. **The power of sin is the law of God (I Cor. 15:56)**. God's sovereignty is faithful to make sure that cause and effect takes place, whether it is good or evil.

THE RESULTS OF THE CURSE: SUFFERING INSTEAD OF BLESSING

Breaking it down: Why is there suffering in the World?

At one level the world is like a great big pond. Each person's decisions and actions are like stones being thrown into the pond. Each stone causes ripples and the ripples hit each other. So many stones, so many ripples we can't even figure out which came from which. This process means that our choices have causes which affect people in different ways. This confusion means that people may get hit with ripples for which we don't know the source. We know someone threw in a rock somewhere we just don't know which one. Furthermore, we don't understand the impact of multiple ripples in the world of cause and affect. These complications compound results creating diseases, plagues, collateral damages of great magnitude. **What we do doesn't just affect us.**

Then there is **another level** which our own personal choices affect our own outcomes. If we choose to do drugs and we become addicted we've no one else to blame. If we smoke and get cancer we've no one else to blame. If we get drunk and smash the car we've no one else to blame. **We do have some determination for our personal outcomes.**

Then a third level exists in that the fall separated us from God's sustaining life. That separation means we are going to age and die. With death also comes *vulnerability and weaknesses*. Many are born with defects, weaknesses, a lack of proper gene alignment; some are missing genes all together. This human weakness means that some are born deformed, born deficient, born without protections, because the gene pool has also been corrupted and/or cursed. Everyone has physical weaknesses, everyone gets sick, and everyone is susceptible to the transmission of illnesses. Why do some get cancer and others not? Why do some have proper immune systems and others not? Why do some become alcoholics and some do not even though they drink? Some seem to be able to smoke and quit at will while others are extremely addicted to nicotine. The gene pool is corrupted and its transmission through the generations means that defects, deficiencies, and deformities get passed on. In a way it is like rolling the dice for each person conceived that their chromosomes will be healthy and compatible. This explains why parents are not responsible directly for their children's health; yet, the sins of the fathers are passed on to the third and fourth generation. It explains why heart disease is generally inherited. It explains why some seem to get hit with debilitating and/or terminal diseases while others go untouched. **IT'S NOT GOD PUNISHING ANYONE IT IS THE BAD LUCK OF THE DRAW IN A FALLEN WORLD.**

A fourth level exists in which all of **nature, the world, the elements** are functioning but without a director. The weather of our world is in constant movement and attempting to balance itself. The cold and heat, the winds and waves, the high and low pressures, the laws of gravity, attraction, magnetism, the power of electricity, all the way down to the power of atoms, are in motion operating but not under control. Hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, typhoons, storms of all kinds, lightening and rains, flooding, landslides, snow slides, earth movements in plate tectonics, are the results of the car running and no one is driving. The world has been judged, the world has been cursed, and it has power to bless and to devastate as we have all seen. Great suffering occurs because the

sons of men have sinned against God and kicked Him out. We were meant to have dominion and like Jesus when He spoke to the winds and waves, the elements were supposed to obey us. We lost control and connection to God's divine plan of dominion and the world has been in travail ever since (especially since the flood of God's judgment upon this world's wickedness). *The world and animal kingdom without a ruler!*

A fifth level is satanic involvement. *Lucifer and a third of the host of angels*, now called demons, fell before we did. In falling they were cast out of heaven but the earth and creation belonged to men. When we fell an invasion took place. Jesus said in John chapter 10 that they came only to steal, kill, and destroy—they are thieves and robbers. They have inhabited the earth since the beginning of the fall. They are responsible for deceiving the world. They are responsible for temptations, false witnessing, lying, corruption, manipulating humanity in order to control the world system. They are the true god of this world. They possess and torment. They possess and brutally murder again and again. They mislead, confuse, misrepresent, teach half-truths, and doctrines in opposition to God. They are as angels of light seeking to be taken in as trustworthy only to ship wreck the lives of those they beguiled. How do they do this? It is done through words, leadings, psychic connections, soothsaying, tarot cards, palm reading, mediums, and other means of teaching, deceptions, accusations, beguiling stories, myths, distractions, disillusionments, and trickery. But mainly by getting humanity to violate God's law. The power of the demonic is the law of God in sowing and reaping. God's sovereign laws are operating and the demonic want us on the wrong side of it. Their hatred of man being created in the image of God knows no bounds. They can not hurt or touch God; but they can certainly hurt and touch humanity in order to get at God. Their doom is certain when the **earth lease** runs out God can and will legally cast them out of this world. While humanity still has dominion they remain. *The demonic horde is stealing, killing, and destroying lives through deception and the lie.*

Then a final level exists in which the suffering of this world can be explained--God. Certainly **God does discipline and His wrath** has been shown upon the earth. From the Bible we see many acts of God's involvement. The flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the plagues in Egypt at Moses' hand, the acts of God with Joshua in the Promised Land, and others. **God's judgments are in the earth** as well (Psalm 105:7). God's laws are operating and many times He would judge disobedient Israel simply by letting them have what they asked for, deserved, and/or sowed. God's judgments are prophesied as yet to come upon this earth in the final **tribulation period**. However, during the Church age God's grace is poured out through the gospel of Jesus Christ, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, in people's lives being saved, forgiven, healed and redeemed. **God's discipline has taken on a new dimension in the Church age**. Since God's Spirit can reunite within the hearts of those who repent and call upon the name of Jesus, God can deal with us from the inside. God disciplines us in convicting us of sin, of chastening our conscience, of rebuking our spirit, in burdening us with compassion, awareness of the lost, and in providing needed pressure to do His will. We suffer in responding in obedience to His Word. We are to deny ourselves and pick up our cross and follow Him. We are to resist temptations and not provide for the flesh. We are to not love the world but seek first the kingdom of God. We are to live a life as a living sacrifice

where by we have been crucified with Christ, and the life we now live He lives in us and through us. *God's judgments are in the earth and God's wrath is coming upon sinners.*

What's going on in the world with suffering?

Plenty and the difficult part is discerning as much as we can what is the cause of any particular suffering. Have you ever heard someone say, "God is in control, God is sovereign, whatever happens, God allows?" Or have you ever heard someone say, "It is all predetermined, whatever will be, will be?"

Is God in control? Are all things predetermined? Is that what's going on? God has predetermined it all?

WHAT ABOUT PREDESTINATION VS. FREE WILL?

Does the Bible teach predestination or do human beings really have free will? The answer is both. The Bible teaches predestination and free will. How can both be true?

BACK TO THE X-BOX!

In answering what is going on, I think the best way to understand God's part and ours, or the things predetermined and the things we decide, is understanding how a video game is programmed and works.

The programmer of a video game inputs everything. There is nothing in the video game that is not programmed in. There are no loose ends so to speak, although because programmers are not God, there may be some glitches. What does a programmer do when designing a game? He or she tries to make it like real life. Programmed into the game are all the possible choices, movements, and their outcomes (cause & affect; sowing & reaping). Programmed into the game are levels of difficulty, levels of advancement, and levels of struggle. These things are predetermined or predestined; yet, in this predetermined world the programmer has made anyone who plays the game free to make many choices. Some of these choices work out for good, some do not. The more choices, outcomes, and options are programmed into the game the more challenging it is for someone to play it. The more information, the more strategy, the more options, and challenges, designed into the game the better it is. What we have then is a meshing of predestination and free will.

Likewise, God has preprogrammed the world and its judgments. Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap. Seed, time, and harvest are the way of things. Nothing in this world exists except by the direct will of the creator. God has set before us blessing and cursing, life and death; so choose life so that you and your descendants may live (Deut. 30:19). Furthermore, there are positions in life that God has predetermined their outcome. The righteous and the unrighteous, the good and the evil, the wicked and the godly; these are positions in God's world that have destinies. The wicked are predestined to eternal damnation; the righteous are destined to life eternal in Jesus Christ (Matt. 25:33; I Cor. 6:9; I Pet. 4:18). What anyone chooses to be is up to the way they live in this world. More importantly, what they do with God's Son. *"He who has the Son, has life; He who does not have the son does not have life"* (I John 5:12)—it is predetermined. **What is not predetermined is which position we choose to be in. The position is determined by one choice, do I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior repenting of my sin or not (II Pet. 3:9).**

Someone might argue that God then created evil since everything in life that exists is by His programming. Evil is not an alternative person, place, or thing, it is a way of acting. When good things are used for bad reasons or when good ideas are turned into bad ones; when good people change into bad people...that is evil. Good is defined as: loving your neighbor as yourself. Evil is defined as: treating others in ways you would not want to be. God's will is not being done on the earth that does not make Him responsible for evil.

THE GUN SCENARIO!

If you bought a gun to hunt with or go to the practice range to enjoy shooting and someone else stole that gun and used it to kill. Would that make you responsible? Just because you are the owner doesn't make you responsible for everything involved with that gun. Yes, there are things we can do to prevent its misuse like locking it up and keeping it unloaded; however, if someone wants into our home bad enough and wants to steal our stuff, including a gun, it is nearly impossible to stop. Some would argue that making the gun in the first place is irresponsible or having such a weapon around is irresponsible. Yet, guns have saved millions of lives. Guns have made survival in the wilderness much safer and easier. Guns have protected us from evil, invasion, criminals, animals, and been a major deterrent to would-be muggers. In our world it is the weak that get taken advantage of, it is the weak that serve the stronger. **Even evolution recognizes the survival of the fittest—or devouring and being devoured.** By strength this evil is kept at bay. Besides the fact that guns can be used for good as well as evil, the argument reinforces that God did not "Baby-proof" the world. Just because God didn't baby proof our world doesn't make Him responsible for our misuse of it. God created a world in which we could grow and grow again...unfortunately, we turned God's good world into a world of evil. Sin rules and it reigns over us, keeping us in it, dominating our nature, binding us to its passions, lusts, and actions (Rom. 7).

SIN IS THE PROBLEM. How do we know sin is the real problem?

Some people are good. Some live their lives as best they can in trying to live right. They are kind, friendly, helpful, generous, serving of others, willing to do, and often do the right things.

Some people are bad. Some people live their lives trying to get away with evil. They are selfish, cruel, mean, unkind, taking, demanding, walking on others, destroying, stealing, even killing, to get their way in life.

Surely anyone can see there are differences between people. Some deserve to go to hell; others are good people do they deserve hell too?

What about Good People?

The Law of Moses was given to show us sin. At the same time if we keep it we will be blessed to the degree that we do. No one is justified by works of the law because no one can keep it completely (Gal. 3:11). In fact, no one keeps it very well at all. We know about sin because the law of God explains the difference between good and evil, right and wrong, what is righteous and what sin is. For example we wouldn't know that adultery is wrong except that the command says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" We wouldn't know that stealing is wrong if the commandment didn't say, "*Thou shalt not steal.*" From the Ten Commandments to the expanded laws written by Moses in Exodus,

Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, God shows us what is required, what is good, and what is righteous. Because the law was given it shows us that we are neither righteous nor able to be. We all fall short of the love of God. We all sin in many ways. Therefore the law was meant to be our tutor, teaching us that we have a serious and incurable problem called sin nature (Gal. 3:24). The law then points to the problem and God provides the answer in His Messiah, Jesus Christ. **Let's not forget that at the core of every good person you will still find a deep embedded desire to self rule. Self rule is in opposition to God's rule.**

Chapter V

Still regardless of sin, why would a loving God send anyone to Hell? “Why would a God who claims to be love allow this world to suffer? Why would a loving God let it go this far? Wouldn't love intervene, stop it, and end the suffering?”

People trust that their understanding of God, as basic and/or ignorant as it is, will justify or protect, or in the end save them. Why would a loving God send anyone to hell? If God is love and love is good, kind, patient, forgiving, longsuffering, accepting, tolerant, etc. then it doesn't make sense that He would punish anyone with eternal damnation. Love doesn't hurt, love doesn't condemn, love doesn't reject, love is unconditional, love is gracious, love wants us, love accepts us, and most importantly love forgives!

Think about it. If Hell is a place of torment, eternal darkness, pain, weeping, gnashing of teeth, unrelenting sorrow, loneliness, condemnation, isolation, described, as a lake of fire, what loving person, let alone a loving God, would send anyone there. Sure people do horrible things, and maybe they deserve some punishment, but an eternal doom?

Something seems out of balance again. Something seems greatly over the top again! There are many good people who do wrong things and they are going to hell? There are many people who love God, whatever God they choose to worship, who spend their entire lives serving that God, and they are going to hell? There are many people who may never hear the whole story and they are going to hell?

Whatever happened to matching the punishment to the crime? Whatever happened to rehabilitating someone with punishment for a while? Should someone spend eternity in hell because of not choosing Jesus Christ? What kind of love is this?

TWO GREAT REALITIES

There are two powerful realities we face in our world: The first is we are born not knowing this loving God; the second is death. Two very important realities that should wake everyone up from their stubborn stupor and search to know the truth. These realities should motivate people to find out *what is really going on*.

If a loving God would not send someone to hell, **why would that same loving God make us empty inside? Why would a loving God make us not knowing Him?**

Why is it that everyone is born not knowing God? I don't hear that question. People seem content to live their lives without God, but when it comes to death and the after life they are ready to condemn this loving God if he sends them to hell.

Death is another major event in our world. Death alone should be a wake up call. **If God loves why are we all dying?** That doesn't make sense either. Many people do

ask: If God loves why there is so much suffering, death, dying, sickness, and disease? Why are there wars, violence, hatred, fear, destruction, greed, pain, and loneliness?

HERE ARE FOUR MAJOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS GOD:

- 1) Why would God send anyone to hell?
- 2) Why would God born anyone into this world without knowing Him?
- 3) Why would God allow death?
- 4) Why would God allow suffering, violence, sickness, and disease?

These are valid questions and everyone should be seeking to know the answers to them. The problem is that some are not seeking the answers, they are happy with their lives. Others have sought the answers and in getting the answers they didn't like them. Others again, have sought alternative answers that pacify but do not make sense...

The answers to these questions are so important that God inspired his prophets to write down what happened to cause the world and us to be in this predicament. God had the scriptures written to reveal the answers.

OTHER FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES!

There are other fundamental issues that apply when considering love that must be reviewed:

- Is it loving to lie?
- Is it loving to prevent choice?
- Is it loving to keep others down, ignorant, or as prisoners making them puppets?
- Is it loving to give only to take it back?
- Is it loving to force your will on another?
- Is it loving to treat others in a way you would not want to be treated?

What kind of love do we really believe in? The world's kind of love is wishy-washy that changes the rules to fit what we want? We call it relative or situational ethics. ***Do we believe in the kind of love that the facts don't matter?*** Do we believe in the kind of love that is so self-centered that what others are about, how they are treated, what kind of life they experience, doesn't matter? Do we believe in the kind of love that lives for the moment, seeks only to please self, desires, lusts, seeks pleasure, and is not responsible, or accountable for tomorrow?

Is it truly loving to lie? Some believe it is better to lie than tell the truth sometimes. Integrity and character are they important? God seeks truth in the inner most parts of our being, even if it hurts. God will not lie, nor can he (Num. 23). We have practiced in our household that we would never lie to our children. We never told them that Santa Clause was true only to enlighten them later. We didn't always come forth with all the details when they were younger, but we always treated them like we'd want to be. We did this because that's what we believe love is. And we believe that is exactly what God commanded us to do (Prov. 20:7).

Is it loving to prevent choice? Some parents love to manipulate their children. They pretend to give them choices while all the while making it obvious which choice

they are to make. Controlling other's choices we call that a monopoly, we call it manipulation, we call it oppression, we call it dictatorship, and we call it wrong.

It is loving to keep others down, ignorant, or like a prisoner? Some parents tell their children they are bad, stupid, idiots, and dumb. Then they live through their children making the children entertain them, tend to the parent's needs, manipulating, controlling, and intruding upon the children's lives, space, and person. Some children never get to grow up because mommy won't let them. The children become the parent's prisoners emotionally, mentally, or otherwise. **God is the only being who is giving and protecting individual freedom.** Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty (II Cor. 3:17).

It is loving to give only to take back? When someone gives you something and then takes it back it was never really given in the first place. It wasn't a true gift. Such giving is a lie, a deception, meant to only appear to be a gift. If I give my daughter the car and then take it back when I don't like the places she's going or who she's driving with, then I really never gave it to her. Conditional giving of friendship, or relationships, is a common experience in our world. **God gave us dominion of our world and our souls; he didn't take it back when we turned on Him.**

It is loving to force our will on another? "It's my way or hit the highway" may be valid for a parent to say to an 18 year old, but as relationships go, there is no love in it (although true love needs to be tough at times). I don't know of too many people who would argue that forcing our will on another is loving. We are to love by example, we are to love and train our children to obey authority, we are to **instill in our children self-control, not parent control.** In fact, we are to begin the process of letting our children gain self-determination while at home so that when they enter the world as adults they are ready. Satan will force his will on us. Evil men will dictate government over us. Evil judges will legislate ethics from the bench. God will speak the truth and command obedience however the choice to obey is ours. We must surrender to His will if we want to live in His kingdom. **In His kingdom no one forces his or her will upon another, everyone obeys God's will—by nature.**

Is it loving to treat others in a way we would not want to be treated? Jesus said, "*Love your neighbor as thy self.*" Most of us understand that the world's ills, problems, curses, sins, troubles all come from the fact that we do not treat others like we'd want to be treated. We violate love all the time. Does a loving God want such violations to continue in His kingdom? Does a loving God want sickness, disease, violence, and war, evil, to continue in His kingdom?

Why would a loving God send anyone to Hell? It is because there is no other place for them? God will not lie to us. God will not take away our choice. God will not keep us in ignorance or prisoners, or as puppets of His love. God will not give us life, control over our soul and then take it back. God will not force His ways or will upon us. God will not treat us in a way he would not want to be treated. Furthermore, God is not

going to give us His stuff without Him. How loving would it be to let the world continue forever as it is now?

If we can grasp these fundamentals and if we can apply these fundamentals, then we can easily understand that a God of integrity, character, truth, holiness, and unconditional love, will send unrepentant, disobedient, rebellious, willful, defiant, unloving, totally self centered, ungrateful, disrespectful, arrogant, sinners to hell. A place that Jesus said was created for the devil and his angels, not human beings (Matt. 25:41). God is not willing that anyone should perish, but sent his only son into the world to save them; that whosoever believes in the Son of God, should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

The suffering, pain, beatings, scourging, crucifixion, of Christ occurred because of the wrath of God's love towards evil, sin, and disobedience. **Have you ever been righteously angry towards someone's evil treatment of another?**

The eternal life that God offers is about His will, His way, His kingdom. Anyone who chooses to come to God through Christ **must realize that our will, our ways, and our ideas must be surrendered to His.** This is a choice to live, but it is also a choice to live under God's rule! That choice God will not force on us. We must choose it.

And finally, it is loving for the one who made us, who owns us, who provided for us our souls, our spirits, our bodies, and the world itself, to claim us? Is it right and loving for God to hold us to account? It is indeed. **For people to do whatever they want and not be held accountable is not about love.**

IS IT LOVE TO WANT TO BE LOVED IN RETURN?

Is it love to want to be loved? It is love to require and desire those who would chose Him, do so out of respect, love, admiration, faith, hope, and trust? **Even when things appear to not make sense?** Even when life is unfair? Even when things go wrong? It is loving to want those who come to Him, do so out of faith--A faith that God is love? That God is just? That God is righteous and true, despite what a lying world says about him, despite what lying devils propagate about him? Despite what humanity makes up about him? Since He became one of us, walked among us, loved us so much that He laid down His life for us, we should realize that God has intervened in the only way possible.

God has gone to tremendous lengths to give us choice, to give us freedom, to give us a chance to choose Him. He has given us legitimate choice, not coerced, not manipulated, not lied to, not deceived; **but in the midst of evil** manipulations, lies upon lies, and deceptions, we believe His Word, His Son, His prophets, His Bible, His scriptures, His Spirit. We are to hold onto Him, onto His Word, and **we believe despite a world gone wrong.**

Is it loving to reach those who are willing to come? Is it loving to offer salvation by grace, a free gift to anyone who will surrender? It is loving to rescue those who are perishing even by your own life? Is it loving to let the world exist and let the world choose? It is loving? Absolutely, and I bow down to such a loving, true, faithful, God.

I would bow down to a God who would risk rejection on my account. Absolutely, He is worthy, loving, and true. Jesus is Lord, and worthy to be obeyed, adored, and worshipped. I willfully, decidedly, believe, trust, and obey such a God as this. He has given me an unbelievable opportunity to choose for myself, and I do. I choose Him. I love Him in return. **I choose Him in return** because He first loved me, chose me and offered Himself on my behalf.

And finally, there is one more important point; **God is the one who decides how it is going to be—it's His call and His game.** He has the power and authority as the owner and creator to decide who, what, when, how, where, and why. We can complain, argue, disagree, claim unfair, protest, deny, refuse to believe, reject His ways, His truth, His salvation plan, etc. and it won't change anything. God is sovereign. His word says "The soul that sins it shall die" (Jer. 31:33 & Eze. 18:4). Who are we to argue, really?

Chapter VI

How do I know Jesus Christ is God's Son? How do I tell the difference between the Bible and any other "holy" book? How can I trust that God inspired the gospel of Jesus Christ? How do I know that God programmed salvation ONLY in Jesus?

What's going on?

There are two proofs that God established for us to know the answers to these questions.

TWO PROOFS!

Here are the Two Proofs of God's Inspiration and Direction which validate His Word (The Bible) and His Prophets, and especially Jesus Christ. These two proofs are evidences for anyone who claims to speak for or by God's will as Prophets are indeed speaking from God. These two proofs, if neither is present, means that anyone claiming to be a Prophet of God, a founder of a new religion or sect, a person to be followed, **is a false leader!**

God gave us these two proofs in order to make a difference between that which is truly God inspired that which is not.

PROPHECY!

The first proof is PROPHECY. Prophecy means publicly expounding, declaring, speaking the Word of God to teach, exhort, rebuke, warn, or predict. God's word is eternal explaining the past, dealing with the present, and predicting the future. **It is the predicting of the future aspect that is so important.**

"I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." (Isaiah 46:9-10)

Only God knows the past, present and FUTURE. Only God can speak and reveal what is going to happen days, months, years, decades, centuries, before it happens. No other being exists with this capability. God did not grant any other being the ability to see the future. Only those who have heard from God can know or see anything about the true future. Only those who have truly heard from God, what they say will come to pass.

“Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream.” (Numbers 12:6)

In another place,

“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you (Moses) from among their brethren (Jesus), and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.” (Deuteronomy 18:18)

Yet there is this **WARNING**...

*“But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, **that prophet shall die.***

*And if you say in your heart, ‘**How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?**’*

When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously: you shall not be afraid of him.”

Very simply then, when someone speaks in the name of the Lord as a Prophet, if what he/she says comes to pass, it is the Lord; if not, then they are to be put to death.

This is a very high standard indeed.

Furthermore, we are to be afraid and respect the position of a true prophet of God. We are not to fear false prophets.

THE EXAMINATION!

The Examination goes like this:

Does a religion, a book of so-called holy writings, contain prophecy?

Does a man or woman who claim to speak for God, prophesy?

The proof of God is prophecy that comes to pass. This is the proof that God has given us to know whether or not a man or woman, a holy writing or book, is of God.

*****Not only prophecy that comes to pass, but that ALL the prophecies are accurate and come to pass. In other words, it is one hundred percent accuracy not some lucky guess.**

There are many claiming *psychic* powers to know the future.

David Hocking, of Biola Bible Class radio broadcast reported on a fascinating article entitled *“The Shattered Crystal Ball.”* This study analyzed the accuracy of the ten top psychics whose prophecies were published over a three-year period, 1976-1979. The study compared all of the published predictions with their subsequent success or failure rate. The results are certainly intriguing: 98% percent of all their predictions were totally incorrect. Only 2 percent of their predictions were fulfilled. However, some predictors were much less accurate than their colleagues: Six out of the ten psychics were wrong 100 percent of the time as recoded in the study. The other four accurate psychics made only one correct prediction each during the three-year study. (Information gleaned from the Book Armageddon, Appointment with Destiny, by Grant R. Jeffrey, page 15)

This of course is only one study but others have been done with very similar results.

THE STANDARD

The standard for God’s Prophets is not getting something right but getting them ALL right. When a prophet is wrong, when what they claim would come to past didn’t come to past but something else did, they were to be put to death. This high

standard means that God doesn't take it lightly that someone would try to fool, mislead, misinform, counterfeit, His proof of inspiration. They were not to be tolerated or allowed to live. **Why? It is because the eternal destination of everyone depends on getting it right.** It depends on hearing God's Word, believing, and responding to Him in repentance and accepting His plan of salvation—not some other. That plan of salvation centers around one figure Jesus Christ.

How do we know this? Jesus Christ fulfilled over 300 prophecies in His coming, birth, ministry, teaching, suffering, crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Furthermore, Jesus' prophecies in His prediction of His death, where and how, His resurrection, the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, all came true, just to name a few. **Jesus fulfills the first Proof of God's inspiration like no other.**

A DANGEROUS THING

It is a very dangerous thing then in God's eyes to speak presumptuously about prophetic future speaking either as His spokesman or some other god.

"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells or a medium or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your god drives them out from before you." (Deut. 18:10-12)

[**Witchcraft** involves using spirits or spells to influence or overcome the will of others. **Soothsaying** involves demonic connections, mimicking of the dead, bringing false comfort to others (Jonathan Edwards of TV Fame). **Interpreting omens** is predicting future events, curses, blessings, based on worldly foundations or truth. **Sorcery** is deception, half-truths, manipulations from the world of the demonic, trickery, illusion to gain power over others. **One who conjures up:** makes up spells in acting like a **medium** between our world and the demonic world, a **spiritist**, who calls up the dead. **Diviners** are those who are trying to act like they have divine powers such as psychics, palm readers, tarot card readers, crystal ball readers, all of which predict the future. These diviners are connected to evil spirits which attach themselves to those who come to them and become under their power and influence. All of these practices are an effort to confuse, diffuse, distract, counterfeit, and mislead from the One true God.]

The true prophet of God would be taking his own life in his hands by fulfilling the position of a Prophet. In other words, it isn't something you try out for, or that practice makes perfect, or give it a try and see how it turns out.

HOW THEN DO WE APPLY THIS TRUTH?

First, we take a person who claims to be a Prophet and examine whether or not he/she has made prophetic statements--Statements that include future events coming to pass.

This is important because God established this as a proof that He was speaking through a person or not—by predicting the future. Only God can do this so as a sign that God is indeed speaking to this person, future predictions were always included to validate God's true Prophets. These future predictions **were short term, medium and long term predictions.** This countered the idea of someone only predicting events far off into the future alone. Predicting only events to take place long into the future would make it impossible to examine or verify. God set up this proof in order to validate it therefore God always, with His true Prophets, gave them short term prophecies that could be examined.

Second, we examine these prophecies in light of history to see if they came to pass. **We are always looking for 100 percent accuracy**—surely God would be that accurate.

It is a simple test yet it has far reaching ramifications. This simple procedure is not always easy to apply. Sometimes our information about history is skewed, sometimes the facts have been covered up, and sometimes the prophecies themselves are obscured from our eyes until they have come to pass.

This last point is a very important. In war as in the spiritual war that God is in with the satanic, it is not always wise to be so obvious. We understand this when we code our messages to keep their true meaning hidden from the enemy.

However, there are certainly major and very clear prophecies from everyone one of God's Prophets that we can see and validate. We don't necessarily have to argue or struggle over the not so clear, the obscure, and coded prophecies.

WHO ARE GOD'S PROPHETS?

Christianity and Judaism recognize the same Old Testament Prophets, for example:

Noah, who predicted and prepared for the flood, also was given the promise of the rainbow, and:

*"While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat, Winter and summer,
And day and night Shall not cease."* (Gen. 8:22)

What we have to understand is that before the flood, the world was very different, it was balanced, there were only tropical conditions all over the earth, and the earth was watered by the dew each morning (Gen. 2:6). It had never rained until the flood according to scripture. Furthermore, they did not know cold and heat, winter and summer that was all new as well. This prophecy as history has shown is true. Also, the rainbow that represents God's promise to never destroy the whole earth again by water has also held true.

Abraham, God established a covenant with him:

*"Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house
To a land that I will show you, I will make you a great nation; I will bless
you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless
Those who bless you, I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the
earth shall be blessed."* (Gen. 12:1-3)

Abraham is promised the land of Canaan, or Israel as we know it today, predicted his descendants would be enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years until God delivers them (Through Moses). God promises Abraham a son in their old age, Isaac, and there are many other predictions in the account of Abraham, one of which was that Abraham saw the days of the Messiah in a vision and was glad. These predictions came true history verifies that the children of Israel (who is Abraham's grandson), lived in Egypt and were delivered from the greatest nation at that time. Isaac of course was born to him a year after the Lord promised even after Sarah's womb had ceased its function. And Abraham is known as the father of faith to Judaism, Christianity, and even Islam. The nations that have descended from Abraham are numerous, and it is **through His lineage that Jesus the Messiah is born**. And it is through Jesus that all families of the earth are blessed, saved, and redeemed.

Each of these men were prophets in some way and can be examined for predictions of prophecy that came true and are coming true.

Isaac	Samuel	Daniel	Nahum
Jacob/Israel	Elisha	Hosea	Habakkuk
Moses	Elijah	Joel	Zephaniah
Joshua	Job	Amos	Haggai
Judah	Isaiah	Obadiah	Zechariah
David	Jeremiah	Jonah	Malachi
Solomon	Ezekiel	Micah	

As far as the **writing of Holy Scripture the test is** also applied consider the number of prophecies in some of the following biblical books:

Book	Number of Predictions	Percent of Book covering predictions
Genesis	77	14
Exodus	69	40
Numbers	50	36
Deuteronomy	58	36
2 Kings	50	20
Psalms	59	10
Isaiah	111	59
Jeremiah	90	60
Ezekiel	66	65
Daniel	58	45
Hosea	28	56
Joel	25	68
Amos	26	58
Obadiah	10	81
Micah	40	70
Zechariah	78	69
Zephaniah	20	89
Matthew	81	26
Mark	50	19
Luke	75	22
Acts	63	13
Romans	29	21
Hebrews	52	45
Revelations	56	63

(Information gleaned from Fast Facts on Defending Your Faith, by John Ankerberg & John Weldon, page 59, 60).

SPECIAL NOTE:

-**The Bible's rate of fulfillment is 100% accurate**, (not including future prophecies yet to be fulfilled).

-Interestingly, over 1800 verses in 29 books (including 318 verses in the NT) **deal with the second coming of Christ**.

-The Bible predictions are specific and far-reaching having to do with Israel and the political landscape of history for everyone to see.

-These prophecies are so sound and thoroughly investigated by honest scholarship that no one can dispute them, **nor can they claim they were written after the fact**.

-**Blaise Pascal** in regards to the Messiah:

“If one man alone had made a book of predictions about Jesus Christ, as to the time and the manner, and Jesus Christ had come in conformity to these

prophesies, this fact would have infinite weight. But there is much more here. **Here is a succession of men during four thousand years, who, consequently and without variation, come, one after another, to foretell this same event.”**

-This includes 39 different books written by 30 different authors over a 1,500-year period, describing in detail the life and death, resurrection of one person, hundreds and even thousands of years in the future.

(Information gleaned from Fast Facts on Defending Your Faith; John Ankerberg & John Weldon. PP. 59-62)

ACTUAL PROPHECIES!

FOR EXAMPLE:

Micah predicted the birthplace of the Messiah 700 years before it took place.

David predicted 1000 years before in Psalm 22 how the Messiah would die. This detailed description includes a method of execution that did not exist until hundreds of years after David’s death. That method is crucifixion.

Daniel predicted the rise of the Medes & Persians, the rise of Alexander and the Greeks, and the rise of the Roman Empire, while Babylon was still the world’s military power, hundreds of years before they came to be, hundreds of years after his death.

Daniel also predicted the specific date of the Messiah’s arrival 530 years before He appeared!

Here is a list of predicted **prophecies concerning the Messiah** which were fulfilled in Jesus:

<i>Born of a virgin</i>	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
<i>Live in Nazareth of Galilee</i>	Isaiah 9:1-2	Matthew 2:23; 4:15
<i>Massacre of Bethlehem’s Children</i>	Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:18
<i>By Anointed by Holy Spirit</i>	Isaiah 11:2	Matthew 3:16, 17
<i>A Special Messenger would prepare the way, John the Baptist</i>	Isaiah 40:3	Malachi 3:1
		Matthew 3:1-3
<i>He Mission would include the Gentiles & be rejected by the Jews</i>	Isaiah 42:1-3 & 6	Matthew 12:18-21
	Psalm 118:22	I Peter 2:7
<i>His Ministry includes Miracles</i>	Isaiah 35:2; 61:1-24	Matthew 9:35; Luke 4:16-21
<i>The Sheep would scatter when Shepherd was struck</i>	Zechariah 13:7; Matthew 26:31, 56; Mark 14:27, 49, 50	
<i>He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver</i>	Zechariah 11:12, 13	Matthew 27:9-10
<i>He would die a humiliating death</i>	Psalm 22; Isaiah 53	Matthew 28
<i>He would be rejected</i>	Isaiah 53:3	John 1:10, 11; 7:5, 48
<i>He would be silent before his accusers</i>	Isaiah 53:7	Matthew 27:12-18
<i>He would be mocked</i>	Psalm 22:7	Matthew 27:31

His hands & feet would be pierced

Psalm 22:16

Luke 23:33

He would be crucified with thieves

Isaiah 53:12

Matthew 27:38

The list continues... (I left out the citations for brevity—they are available)

He would pray for persecutors

His side would be pierced

Buried in a rich man's tomb

Cast lots for his garments

Be given vinegar & gall to drink

He would rise from the dead

Would be hated without cause

Rejected by rulers

Ascend into heaven

His star would appear

His lineage of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Jesse, David, Solomon,

In all there are as many as 456 specific prophecies concerning the Christ in His first coming! (Information gleaned from Fast Facts on Defending Your Faith; John Ankerberg & John Weldon. Pp. 64-67)

Why prophecies? To make it clear and obvious and to **make imposters impossible!**

THE PROPHECIES STAND UP TO SCRUTINY!

The Prophecies stand up under intense scrutiny and show themselves true despite every possible criticism, objection, or denial...

To the open-mind, to every honest, seeking, hungry skeptic, atheist, or agnostic, these prophecies are proof that **God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.**

What is that proof? First, that the prophecies are real, they were written hundreds and sometimes thousands of years before their fulfillment. Second that the magnitude and number of prophecies coming to pass in Christ's life **is astronomically impossible to have happened by chance.** Taking only 30 of the more than 300 prophecies concerning his life, mission, and death, and resurrection, the chance of all of them coming to pass on their own is a number of 1 times 10 to the 110! That is a number one with 110 zeros after it. Any number larger than 1 times 10 to the 50 is believed by scientists to be impossible—in other words, no chance. The only way that 300 prophecies come to pass in Christ is by divine inspiration. It is the only logical and consistent answer!

A NEW SET OF PROPHETS!

From the New Testament we find **a new set of Prophets** for which ONLY Christianity recognizes:

Mary the mother of Jesus

Joseph the step father

Elizabeth, Mary's cousin

Simeon, who met the baby Jesus in the Temple

Anna, the prophetess to exhorted Mary
John the Baptist
Jesus
John
Matthew
Peter
Paul
Stephen
Paul

The first test of Prophecy is found in their testimony and/or in their writings. For example **Peter** in Acts Chapter 2 during the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the hundred and twenty, stood up and prophesied:

*“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:
‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,
Your old men shall dream dreams...’*

Then Peter declared:

*“For the promise is to you and to your children,
and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*

Peter predicted the birth of the Church of God in Christ Jesus and that the Holy Spirit was not given just to them, but to everyone. And it is as he spoke even to this day 2000 years later. There are millions who have become born again through the Holy Spirit.

Peter also predict that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying,

*“Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep,
all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”* (2 Peter 3:3, 4)

For example **Paul** wrote the Letters to the Thessalonians and in it he speaks of the last days and the great apostasy:

*“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless
the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of
perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or
that is worshiped, so that he sits as God n the temple of God, showing
himself that he is God.”*

The great apostasy is taking place today across Europe and America concerning the mainline Churches. They are abandoning the scriptures in favor of modern interpretations, evolutionary ideas, human reasoning and experience, claiming that the Bible is not in touch with today’s science, information, technology, etc. This is one of the signs of the end times which also included rampant, aggressive, and provocative, homosexuality as in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah.

There are literally hundreds of examples of prophecy being spoken, written, and then coming true in history. This **IS** the reason the Church has embraced the Old and New Testament scriptures because of the validation of prophecy coming true 100 percent.

For more information on these and other proofs the following is a small bibliography:

- 1) Fast Facts on Defending Your Faith, John Ankerberg & John Weldon, Harvest House Publishers, Copyright 2002.
- 2) The Case for Christ, Lee Strobel, Zondervan Publishing House, Copyright 1998.
- 3) The Case for a Creator, Lee Strobel, Zondervan Publishing House, Copyright 2004.
- 4) The Signature of God, The Handwriting of God, Grant R. Jeffrey, Inspirational Press, Copyright 1996.
- 5) A Skeptic's Search for God, Ralph O. Muncaster, Harvest House Publishing, Copyright 2002.
- 6) Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Josh McDowell Here's Life Publishers, Copyright 1979.

Chapter VII

As astounding as the prophetic picture is there is still another proof. This one test would be enough but there is still another...

THE SECOND PROOF!

Signs, Wonders, and Miracles!

Jesus said, *"Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will be no means believe."* (John 4:48)

The book of Hebrews testifies that the Word of God, Jesus Christ was confirmed among us by:

"God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit..." (Heb. 2:4)

The second test is the signs, wonders, and miracles that Jesus performed. These proofs are validated not just by his followers but attested to by his enemies. Beyond the Biblical text there are extra Biblical confirmations and affirmations of Jesus' life, ministry, and miracles.

Josephus (born A.D. 37) a well known Jewish Historian wrote a lengthy piece about Jesus called *Testimonium Flavianum*:

"About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. **For he was one who wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly.** He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, upon hearing him accused by men of the highest standing among us, had condemned him to be crucified, those who had in the first place come to love him did not give up their affection for him. **On the third day he appeared to them restored to life, for the prophets of God had prophesied these and countless other marvelous things about him.** And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared." (Josephus, The Antiquities 18:63-Q64)

Tacitus a Roman Historian in A.D. 115 wrote:

"Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. **Christus**, for whom the name had its origin, **suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius** at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, **and a most mischievous superstition**, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the veil, but even in Rome...Accordingly, an

arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty: then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.” (Tacitus, Annals 15.44)

These are two prominent extra-biblical sources and there are many more. What is remarkable is that among the enemies of Christ Jesus and his apostle’s recording of the gospels, **is no where refuted** written testimony arguing to be false his miracles, signs, and wonders. There are no denials the Jesus performed these things, what is argued or claimed is the source of them.

BUT WHAT HE DID...

What Jesus did in his life in fulfilling hundreds of prophecies concerning the Messiah, what he taught is without question words of eternal life and value, **BUT WHAT HE DID**, also shows the glory of God among us. Jesus may have spent as much as 80 percent of his time healing, delivering, and showing signs of God’s glory. He healed the sick, made the lame to walk, the blind to see, and reconstructed missing or deformed limbs. He raised the dead, cast out demons, and restored the insane. He walked on water, made the winds and waves to calm down, and fed thousands with little available. These things alone are wonderful, but Jesus didn’t do anything without some purpose. He came to heal, to deliver, to show signs of God’s glory, but most importantly he came to minister! He said plainly that he didn’t come to be served, but to serve.

His ministry included:

He claimed to forgive sins and in proof healed a man sick of palsy (Matt. 9:6).

He came to place a choice before us that whosoever believes in him will have eternal life; but he who does not believe is condemned already (John 3:16, 17).

He came to show signs and wonders that we might believe:

Even the winds and waves obey him (Matt. 8:27).

“Go and show John (the Baptist) again those things which you do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” (Matt. 11:4, 5)

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing ever sickness and ever disease among the people.” (Matt. 9:35)

He came to fulfill the prophets and the promise...

“When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of Isaias the prophet, saying, ‘Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.’” (Matt. 8:16, 17)

“And many of the people believed on Him, and said, ‘When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?’” (John 7:30).

He came to convince...

“Then Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.” (John 4:48)

“Then the chief priests and Pharisees gathered a council and said, ‘What shall we do? For this man works many signs.’” (John 11:47)

“If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.” (John 15:22)

“But I have a greater witness than John’s (The Baptist) for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of me, that the Father has sent Me.” (John 5:36)

His ministry was prophesied:

“I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old...” (Psalm 78:2)

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hearts, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” (Isaiah 35:5, 6)

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,” (Isaiah 61:1,2)

IN CASE YOU ARE WONDERING:

The foundation for signs, wonders, and miracles was established by God in the Old Testament. Only God can intervene in the natural course of the physical world and perform miracles. A miracle is anything that is contrary to natural causes. Miracles interrupt the natural laws by overriding them, changing, putting them on hold, erasing the consequence, changing the outcome contrary to it’s natural result.

The fundamental truth: THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD and that being defined in reference to divine (god) powers is signs, wonders, and miracles.

God is thus SOVEREIGN.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows that he will also reap.” (Gal. 6:7) [I include this verse to show that no other (God can) being can change the sowing and reaping process, there by definition performing a miracle.]

“The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.” (I Cor. 15:56) [the power behind sin is not the devil it’s God’s laws.]

*‘Now see that I, even I, am he, **and there is no god besides Me**; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.’ (Deut. 32:39) [God being defined as being able to prophecy and perform signs, wonders, and miracles.]*

*“You are My witnesses,” says the Lord, And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am he. **Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me.**” (Isaiah 43:10)*

*I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior. I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; Therefore you are my witnesses,” says the Lord, **“that I am God. Indeed before the day***

was, I am he; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?” (Isaiah 43:11-13)

“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the Fist and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’” (Isaiah 44:6)

It is God who established signs, wonders, and miracles as proof of God’s involvement. God validated his prophets by these signs. **It is what made the man Moses like god before Israel and Pharaoh of Egypt** in the time of their deliverance. What established Moses before the people, before Egypt and the whole world were God’s **miraculous signs:**

*“So the Lord said to Moses: ‘See, I have made you **as God to Pharaoh**, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you. And Aaron your brother shall tell Pharaoh to send the children of Israel out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, **and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt.**” (Exodus 7:1-3)*

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ANYONE WHO CLAIMS TO SPEAK FOR GOD?

Examine any prophet in history from any religion, from any founding sect, from any one claiming to speak for God, then see if they have any signs, wonders, and miracles to support their claims.

As you may well know, anyone can claim truth, can claim to know God, and can claim to teach in God’s name; however, **no one can manifest signs, wonders, and miracles without God.**

The following examples are so-called prophets, founders, people who claim to speak for God and neither **Prophecy nor Miracles** are present in their lives or teaching to substantiate their claims that God sent them, or spoke through them therefore by application they are false prophets (especially when their prophecies didn’t come true):

Muhammad, the founder of Islam

Confucius, the founder of Confucianism

Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science

Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of Armstrongism, The Church of God

Charles Taze Russell, founder of Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Watch Tower Society.

Chapter VIII

Have you ever wondered why God sent Jesus so late? Or why didn’t He send Him now with all of the technology He could have been seen by everyone? Why the cross? Why did God’s Son have to die?

Hebrews 1: 1,2 says *“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 worlds;...”*

Galatians 4:4, *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His son born of a woman born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*

I certainly do not know the answer to God’s timing. Yet, I would share some applicable points that can bring some answers to such questions.

FULLNESS OF TIME...WHAT IS GOING ON?

For prophecy to be established and witnessed by more than one, time was needed. Since God has used such immense time of centuries not days it becomes absolutely impossible that any human effort could fulfill the prophecies surrounding the Messiah. Prophecy makes it impossible for counterfeiting and the standard of one hundred percent accuracy also eliminates human efforts to manufacture them. That would leave the demonic but this order of beings can’t do either future telling or miracles, so it also paralyzes their efforts to destroy the two proofs. **The fullness of time then indicates the impossibility of being able to forge, copy, manufacture, the prophetic picture of the one to come.** The quotation from **Blaise Pascal** in regards to the Messiah bears repeating for I think it surmises the point succinctly:

“If one man alone had made a book of predictions about Jesus Christ, as to the time and the manner, and Jesus Christ had come in conformity to these prophesies, this fact would have infinite weight. But there is much more here. Here is a succession of men during four thousand years, who, consequently and without variation, come, one after another, to foretell this same event.”

THE BIBLICAL TIME PERIOD

We learn from the Book of Daniel chapter 9:24-26 God’s time period for the Messiah to come and then be “cut off, but not for Himself”

“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy.

“Know therefore and understand, *That* from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, **There shall be seven weeks and sixty–two weeks**; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.

And after the sixty–two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself;”

Israel was held captive in Babylon when this prophecy was given somewhere between 530-465 B.C. The decree to rebuild the Temple and the city was given by King Artaxerxes in the month of Nisan, in his twentieth year. (Nehemiah 2:1)

-Artaxerxes accession was 465 BC

-The actual date is understood to be Nisan, 1, 444 BC

-By our corresponding calendar the date would be: March 5, 444 BC for the decree.

-It took 49 years to restore the city that accounts for the seven weeks.

-The remaining 62 weeks plus the seven equals 483 years.

-Jesus was crucified 33 A.D.

This prophecy can actually be figured to the precise day. **Furthermore the fullness of time included the building of the second Temple.** The first had been destroyed by the Babylonians in fulfillment of God's prophetic punishment of the disobedient Israelites. The second Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. fulfilling Jesus' prediction found in Matt. 24:1, 2:

"Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple.

And Jesus said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'

The time of the Messiah's arrival included the genealogies found in Matthew and Luke. There are two lineages described that are the same until David then they diverge one representing Joseph's line the other Mary's. There is balance as well for it seems that everything God does has beauty for as it says in Matthew chapter 1: 17:

"All the generations, therefore, from Abraham to David *were* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away of Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the carrying away of Babylon unto the Christ, fourteen generations."

WHY DIDN'T GOD WAIT UNTIL MODERN TIMES?

The illusion is that modern times would have occurred without Christ's first coming. The world we know today with all of its technologies, advanced sciences, mathematics, the increase in transportation, information, medicine, etc. didn't just happen. I love Dr. D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe's book, "**What if Jesus had never been born?**" Listen to this quick overview of the first chapter of their book entitled "Christ and Civilization,"

"Despite its humble origins, the Church has made more changes on earth for the good than any other movement of force in history. To get an overview of some of the positive contributions Christianity has made through the centuries, here are a few highlights:

- *Hospitals, which essentially began during the Middle Ages.
- *Universities, which also began during the Middle Ages. In addition, most of the world's greatest universities were started by Christians for Christian purposes.
- * Literacy and education for the masses.
- * Capitalism and free enterprise.
- * Representative government, particularly as it has been seen in the American experiment.
- * The separation of political powers.
- *Civil liberties.
- *The abolition of slavery, both in antiquity and in more modern times.
- * Modern science.
- * The discovery of the New World by Columbus.
- *The elevation of women.
- *Benevolence and charity; the good Samaritan ethic.
- * Higher standards of justice.
- * The elevation of the common man.

*The condemnation of adultery, homosexuality, and other sexual perversions. This has helped to preserve the human race, and it has spared many from heartache.

*High regard for human life.

*The civilizing of many barbarian and primitive cultures.

*The codifying and setting to writing of many of the world's languages.

* Greater development of art and music. The inspiration for the greatest works of art.

*The countless changed lives transformed from liabilities into assets to society because of the gospel.

*The eternal salvation of countless souls.

Modern science has its roots in Protestantism and many Christian scientists are the founders of the various disciplines. This may be hard to believe but modern science has been usurped by atheistic evolution. For further inquiry in this matter pick up the book and see for yourself the documentations.

The point being made here is that if Jesus had waited the world would have been in a miserable estate. It is because of the gospel that the world we know exists. The knowledge of witty inventions comes from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, this fact has been covered up by the more famous saying, "Necessity is the mother of invention." If that were true there would be no backward primitive tribes, nations or peoples because the need is very great there and inventions do not progress. Jesus came into the world at God's time. If he'd waited most likely the world wouldn't have progressed much further than the third world nations today. I'm not including the western influence on these nations which is Christian. **The truth of the matter is that false religions keep people in darkness, superstitions, inferiority, doubt, fear, ignorance, slavery, bondage, degradation, and depravity.** Many of the modern influences on false religions today come from Christianity.

The fullness of time for the Messiah's coming included a brutal, horrible, and agonizingly slow form of capital punishment called crucifixion.

CRUCIFIXION PREDICTED IN THE PSALMS!

Another pertinent issue is the form of death the Messiah was to suffer. Crucifixion did not come into practice until a hundred years before Christ when the Romans instituted it. The death by crucifixion is described by David in Psalm 22 almost a thousand years before it began to be used. **The connection with this type of death seems chosen by God.** The scourging, the beating, the rejection, the trial, and then the crucifixion, all fit much of what the prophet Isaiah wrote about in chapter 53. God seemed to choose the death for His Son out of all the types of death the world had to offer.

The cross also reflects what took place in Moses' day when vipers were biting the rebellious children of Israel in the wilderness. God told Moses to make a bronze snake and hang it on a post. When the people looked upon it, by faith, they would survive the snake bite. **The terminology of Christ being lifted up on the cross refers to this event of the serpent being lifted up on a post in the assembly.** Again, it seems that the death God chose for His Son has great significance to Him.

The Passover has great significance when the children of Israel were finally delivered from Egypt. The pharaoh's first born son as with all the firstborn of Egypt were destroyed by the angel of death. It was the blood of lamb that was slain that night when painted on the lintel and door posts, that the death angel would pass over. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." The blood is important because the Law of Moses said: "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." It is also Jesus who is the first born son of Mary who is offered in our place...

GOD CHOSE THE TYPE OF DEATH BECAUSE IT MATTERS.

It matters that Jesus was scourged and beaten. For these things represent the wrath of God upon all manner of sin.

It matters that Jesus blood was shed because the wrath of God's judgment would not be satisfied without it. The life of any living thing is in the blood. His blood meant His life for ours.

It matters because God's wrath on sin would not be satisfied with just any sacrifice. It had to be the first born. It had to be a human being, fully substituting for the human life of the world; it had to be sinless, spotless, like the Passover lamb. It had to be a cross because of the pain, the suffering, and being lifted up between heaven and earth.

WHO CRUCIFIED JESUS?

When we think about it who crucified Jesus? We can say the Romans did. We can say that the Jews made it happen. We can say that our sins placed Him there. We can say the Satan wanted to destroy Him. **But we must remember that the main reason Jesus was crucified was because God ordained it. God crucified His own Son to destroy the works of sin, to satisfy the law, all of which are demanded by God's Holiness.** God is His law and His Holiness. The only one that has to be satisfied in the cross was God.

For God's wrath to be satisfied with this world's sin it would take the cruelest death known to man. Crucifixion is unmatched when accompanied by scourging. Why this death? It was the only one that satisfies a Holy God.

Can you imagine another form of death? How about Jesus being electrocuted for our sins? How about Jesus having His head cut-off for our transgressions? How about Jesus being hung by a noose until dead, for our afflictions? Can you imagine that the Messiah was burned at the stake for the iniquities of us all? Gruesome they all may be, but thorough, punishing, brutal, completely humiliating, they are not.

The combinations of being judged by the Jewish leaders and legally condemned to death by execution under Roman law were also a part of God's atonement. It had to be public, it had to be legal, it had to be witnessed, it had to be a court of law, it had to be the Jewish Priesthood, it had to be human government that destroyed Him.

Jesus could not satisfy God's judgment of man's sins by being beaten and killed by robbers on a journey. If Jesus had died by some errant stone, knife, arrow, or run over by oxen, these types of deaths would not satisfy all that God required for atonement. **The Messiah isn't to just die,** He must suffer, be beaten, His beard plucked, mocked, rejected, humiliated, scourged, striped, displayed, pierced, hung, bled, left to

disgrace...**the chastisement of our peace was upon Him!** In other words, for God's wrath to be satisfied concerning our rebellion and sin, **it must be complete.**

IT MUST BE COMPLETE—SATISFYING A HOLY GOD.

Psalm 85:10 "Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed."

This obscure verse in the Psalms has volumes to say concerning the completeness of the atonement for sin. Let me explain.

First there is the concept of **mercy**. Mercy is defined as not getting what one deserves. In a court of Law once a man or woman in trouble casts him/her self on the "mercy" of the court, he/she is appealing to the judge for leniency. This man or woman knows they are guilty and judgment is coming. They have surrendered and confessed adding to their plea heart felt sorrow; they are hoping not to get the maximum sentence prescribed by law. They are hoping that the judge will show mercy and give them a lighter punishment. **Mercy** then is something that no one can earn it is a gift that one is looking to receive *even though they don't deserve it.*

Second, there is the concept of **truth or justice**. The truth in the matter of a convicted and confessed criminal is the consequence. We must realize that if there are no consequences for our actions then it doesn't matter what we do. People in general do not want to receive the consequences of their actions because all of us do wrong things. We'd like to believe that we can "get away" with wrong things and not receive the outcome of what we've done. The **truth** in any matter is that all actions, deeds, sins, have consequences. If I throw a rock into the water it will splash and form ripples or waves. The consequences are not eliminated just because we ask for them to be. The Law of God concerning life in this world revolves around two fundamental principles.

TWO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES FROM GENESIS

The first is "The law of Genesis" in that "everything reproduces after its own kind (Gen. 1:24)." This means that everything is tied to its origins, source, seed, birth, or beginnings. The second law is very similar, "Whatsoever we sow; that shall we also reap."

Galatians 6:7, 8 "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."

Along with this is the principle given to Noah after the flood in Gen. 7:22:

"Henceforth, all the days of the earth, seed *time* and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."

From these three verses we understand how everything under the sun is governed. God's sovereignty is manifest in that everything has a consequence. If we sow and do good things we will reap the benefit of it; if we sow and do bad things we'll reap the curse from it. The time span from what is done until it is reaped can be likened to the phrase, "seed, time, and harvest." As with the physical world of plants and the time it

takes to harvest, so it will relate to actions, decisions, good or bad to produce the fruit of it.

What is at the center of all of this is God's **justice**. We were given dominion and with that the right to choose. With choosing however, comes the truth or consequence of those decisions. **Truth and justice** operate together and the Biblical definition of justice is:

Ex 21:24 "...eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot..."

Le 24:20 "...breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him."

De 19:21 "And thine eye shall not spare: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

If we understand then the true meaning of justice it is simply *getting what one deserves*.

THE DILEMMA

Here's the dilemma: Mercy is NOT getting what one deserves because of compassion; Justice IS getting what one deserves from truth, faithfulness, integrity, and tough love.

How does God satisfy His mercy and His truth/justice concerning sinful humanity? God's mercy longs to forgive and set us free from the consequences we have sowed in our lives. God's truth/justice fueled by His Holiness, faithfulness, character, and righteousness must be fulfilled and satisfied too. **There is no true lasting peace when truth and justice are ignored, denied, and repressed.**

These two holy concepts that reside in the nature of God are at war concerning sinful humanity; both eternally need satisfaction and peace. If God shows mercy to everyone by not imputing their sins against them; not allowing the honest harvest of sinful deeds their produce, then God's truth and justice are unsettled, disgruntled, and find no peace. If God then turns it around and gives to everyone what is truth and just; then no one will live in His presence because sin cannot be in God's holiness. If mercy is satisfied; justice is not. If Justice is satisfied; then mercy is not—it is an eternal dilemma!

THERE IS NO ANSWER EXCEPT ONE!

No other source, religion, teaching, solves this problem. Only the cross of Christ brings mercy and truth/justice together that they "kiss" representing complete satisfaction and peace. In the cross where Christ is sacrificed for the sins of the world the scriptures testify that God's chastisement for our peace was upon Him:

Isaiah 53: 4, 5 "Surely he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows; and we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

We understand through His "Substitutionary" atonement that God's wrath and the righteous judgment of the Law against us is satisfied.

2Co 5:21 "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Then, when Jesus dies and descends into Hell, on the third day God raised Him from the grave and he ascended to sit at the Father's right hand. Jesus said,

John 14:19 "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also."

Now, Jesus Christ has become the first fruits from the dead of all who are being saved. To anyone who understands, who calls upon the name of the Lord, he/she shall be saved. Salvation is offered to us as a gift, which no one can earn, it is by grace through faith that we are saved (Eph 2:8 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God.") In other words, **mercy** is offered to all who repent of their sins, turn to Christ, receive him, and are born again (John 3:3).

God's mercy and justice; God's mercy and truth meet and kiss each other ONLY in the cross of Christ, ONLY in the person of Christ.

Chapter IX

Is God angry with us? Is God punishing us? Is God out to get us? Is the suffering of this world something God is allowing? Why do good people suffer? If God is sovereign and all-powerful why doesn't he do something? If God is love how can this world exist? What loving God would sit by and watch "24/7" the things that go on here? There must not be a God...what is going on?

Is God angry with us?

SEPARATING SIN FROM THE SINNER

God is angry, righteously so, at sin and how it steals, kills, and destroys lives. God commands everyone everywhere to repent. The wrath of God will be poured out on unrepentant sinners. Everyone will be judged according to their works for what each one has done. God judges sin and will judge sinners at the Great White Throne of Judgment in Revelations Chapter 20. Contrast this with John 3:16,

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

God loves people and sent His Son into the world to save sinners. Jesus didn't come to condemn the world, for the world is already condemned in sin. God's love is depicted as looking for lost sheep, a lost coin, yearning for a prodigal son, seeking that which is lost to Him. His love is seen in the physician seeking to heal the sick, the lame, the blind, and deformed. Jesus said, "I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Time and time again God's love is seen in the warnings given by the many prophets and then finally His own Son. The value of every living soul is determined by the cost spent to redeem it. In our case, it is the sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God.

Then the word also says in I John 3: 15, 16,

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world."

God's love does not love the world, its system, its ways, its selfishness, and rebellion. We must make the choice Jesus presented to us Mt 16:25

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

The world is passing away but those who repent and call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. **God is angry at sin and judges sin**; those who turn to Christ escape condemnation and judgment passing from death to life.

Is God punishing us?

JUDGMENTS ARE LIKE PROGRAMMING

God's judgments are in the earth Ps 105:7,

"He *is* the LORD our God; His judgments *are* in all the earth."

This means that sowing and reaping, true consequences are already manifesting in this world. The large portion of suffering that people experience comes from sinful man choosing poorly. Is God punishing us when our own decisions lead to suffering? Listen to Deut. 30:19,

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;"

God's mercy restrains many of the curses that sinful man has wrought in the world. There were times when God spoke to rebellious Israel and judged them by simply allowing them to reap what they'd sowed.

So at one level we are all experiencing judgment from God's created laws. There are physical laws like gravity, sowing and reaping; there are psychological laws such as mental and emotional abuse, insecurity, lack of self esteem; there are spiritual laws such as sinful darkness, dirty conscience, not being right with God. These laws operate like a video game program in the world, which God programmed, we are given freedom to chose and make decisions the consequences come from the programming—it's in the game!

TWO JUDGMENTS AFTER LIFE

The Bible speaks about two other Judgments. The first judgment I refer to is the **judgment of God for the saints**. This judgment is about fruit, produce, AND treasures in heaven. The saints, those who have given their lives to Christ will only be judged according to the things done in faith. This is the judgment where we are looking to hear, "Well done thou good and faithful servant!"

I Cor. 3:11-15 "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.

If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

This judgment isn't about the wrongs, sins, mistakes, or to determine whether or not we'll be saved. **This judgment is about rewards** for faithfulness, for obedience, for being led and filled with the Spirit, for doing what pleases the Lord with our time on the earth.

Jesus said it this way in Mt 6:20 "but lay up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."

These treasures have to do with winning souls, or God moments in our life, or the times when we were used by God to glorify Him. In essence they are the memories of walking with God on the earth that will be celebrated before Him and in Him.

The second Judgment referred to in the Bible is for the wicked. This is the Judgment Seat of Christ where all the dead will be presented before him. Revelations 20:11-15,

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

This judgment isn't about rewards it is about eternal punishment, condemnation, **THE SECOND DEATH!** This judgment corresponds to the parable Jesus taught about the sheep and the goats from Matthew 25: 31-46,

"But when the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit down upon his throne of glory,

and all the nations shall be gathered before him; and he shall separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

and he will set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on *his* left.

Then shall the King say to those on his right hand, Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from *the* world's foundation:

for I hungered, and ye gave me to eat; I thirsted, and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in;

naked, and ye clothed me; I was ill, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came to me.

Then shall the righteous answer him saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungering, and nourished thee; or thirsting, and gave thee to drink?

and when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked, and clothed thee?

and when saw we thee ill, or in prison, and came to thee?

And the King answering shall say to them, Verily, I say to you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me.

Then shall he say also to those on the left, **Go from me, cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**

for I hungered, and ye gave me not to eat; I thirsted, and ye gave me not to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye did not clothe me; ill, and in prison, and ye did not visit me.

Then shall *they* also answer saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungering, or thirsting, or a stranger, or naked, or ill, or in prison, and have not ministered to thee?

Then shall he answer them saying, Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye have not done it to one of these least, neither have ye done it to me.

And these shall go away into eternal punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.

I highlighted where Jesus taught that the cursed will enter into “eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” God is not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance. 2Pe 3:9,

“The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

The second death is the one Jesus meant when He taught the fear of God listen to Lu 12:5.

"But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!"

Is God out to get us?

TO GET US BACK!

He is in deed; but not as so many complain, He is not out to get us as in vengeance, to repay evil, to get us back for our wrongs. God is out to get us “saved.” God is out to win our souls from damnation. God is out to forgive us in Christ Jesus. Salvation is God’s initiative; no one can come to the Father unless the Holy Spirit draws him/her (John 6:44). God is out to love us, show us the way, bring us to Himself; He has gone to great lengths to show us the truth. Jesus said, “No greater love has anyone than to lay down their life for a friend.” (John 15:13). God didn’t send some third party for that one to lay down his life for the world on God’s behalf; no, **He came Himself**, to show us what great love He has for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us!

The devil is the one out to get us, listen, 1Pe 5:8,

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

And from John 10:10,

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly."

The deceptions of the world, the demonic and ungodly people want to present God as an evil task master, someone who is angry at us, and out to get us. *The truth is the opposite*, sin, the devils, and the ungodly are out to devour; while God is seeking to save

the lost. 1Ti 1:15 **“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...”**

He is out to get us back!

THE GUILT ISSUE

The problem personally is that many are burdened with guilt. People interpret guilt as if God is angry at them. The truth is that guilt is a tool that God uses to awake us to our need. Guilt usually remains because we are guilty. We are guilty of lying, stealing, cheating, and a great number of other sins. What God wants us to do with our guilt is come to Him, confess our sins, and receive mercy. Many simply want to ignore their guilt and pass it off as something cultural or some misguided sense of right or wrong.

Some claim that the guilt is wrong, a foul burden placed in our conscience by an unjust God. The way to peace isn't to deny, refuse, or rebel against our guilt but realize its importance in our lives. First, it shows us that we are alive and sensitive to what is wrong. Second, it shows us that we are aware of a superior way to live. Third, it shows us that we belong to God and not ourselves. Our guilt only reinforces our need to repent and come clean before our Maker.

Let guilt be our guide to God. God does not relieve us of our guilt until we acknowledge sin and repent of it. We won't find peace from our guilt until we find rest for our souls in Jesus Christ. The guilt is **a constant beacon** driving us to seek the answers our spirits are looking for. Guilt brings us to the truth that we are not like God, we are falling far short of His nature and character; and that we don't know God.

If someone claims that they no longer feel guilt and yet, have never surrendered to Christ, **they have repressed the truth**. That person has hardened their heart toward God. Guilt is meant to lead us to salvation and freedom from it in Jesus. If someone is living their life as if they have no guilt they have seared, burned, hardened, dulled, their conscience to the truth—they are in great danger of hell fire.

The great benefit of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that there is no sin that God will not forgive. There is no condemnation to anyone who yields to the saving grace found in the Savior. The only unforgivable sin is the rejection of Christ as Lord.

Is the suffering of this world something God is allowing? If God is sovereign and all-powerful why doesn't he do something?

GOD CANNOT LIE

Number 23:19, “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither a son of man, that he should repent. Shall he say and not do? And shall he speak and not make it good?”

And from Titus 1:2

“...in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began...”

It is not that God is allowing this world to suffer it is that He cannot stop it. God is on the outside of our world since the fall when Adam and Eve kicked God out. For God to get access in the earth he had to know someone, have a connection, have a relationship, be invited. John 10 says it this way,

“Most assuredly I say to you he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.”

This is talking **about being born into the world—the door**. The sheepfold is the world, and someone coming in some other way are thieves, robbers, invaders, aliens—the demonic. Jesus is talking about his own entrance coming into the world as a human being. **God through Jesus gained direct access into the world**. Before then, it was through his covenants, his promises, his prophets, depending upon human beings to speak, to obey, to follow through, all the while still on the outside looking in, **until Jesus**.

Now, that Jesus has come and gone, the Holy Spirit can now be sent into the hearts of anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord. This call however is more than just an agreement it is a covenant between God and the Believer.

God was limited with prophets, priests, and kings, before Jesus; after Jesus, His Spirit can come into the hearts of millions (Heb. 1:1-3). God's access went from limited to unlimited...for God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (II Pet.3:9).

However, even with this new arrangement the dominion given to man has not changed. The legal right of authority on this earth still belongs to human beings until the lease runs out. That lease runs out when Jesus returns that is the meaning of the parable the landowner and the wicked vinedressers of Matthew 21:33-40.

Things (this world and its suffering) are in the hands of human beings, sinners, vinedressers, etc. God's Spirit can now save anyone, fill them, redeem them, **yet none of these things will happen unless someone calls upon his name**. The gospel is in the hands of people. Angels cannot declare it, God cannot declare it, and the demons declare deceptions, why? You have to be human to preach here, to speak here, to declare here, and to operate here. If you are not human, you have no right. The demons violate that right, but God will not and the angels dare not.

So where does that leave God? It leaves Him working through his people, the body of Christ. We are called the body of Christ because quite simply one must have a body to live here. A body means we are legally human and have a right to live here. When we lose our body, when our body dies, we must leave. That's why we call death: passing on, departing souls...

GOD IS IN A DIFFICULT PLACE

God is in a difficult place. He must depend upon his people to preach, to make disciples, to make the kingdom of God a priority so that others may hear. Did you notice that someone with a body, talked to you about Jesus? Someone got the message to you through human efforts of a book, magazine, track, e-mail, letter, phone call, etc. The gospel is transmitted through all kinds of communications, all of which are legal because they are human sourced.

God is dependent upon human beings to go, to preach, to share, to witness, to testify, to reach out, and our responsibility to be available to God, not just as individuals, but as a body of believers. God is in a difficult place because He must work through human beings to effect **good in the earth!**

A MISUNDERSTOOD TRUTH—GOD IS SOVEREIGN BUT HE IS NOT IN CONTROL!

So many have been told that God's Sovereignty means that He controls everything that happens to **us**; **furthermore that everything that happens to us** has some divine reason. We've been told that God's sovereignty means that for the most part we have lives that are predetermined; therefore, God is allowing this world to do evil, to wreck havoc, and pain.

Not so, God has given humanity freewill and with it true consequences. It's our consequences that wreck havoc, evil and pain. God will not stop what man wants to do with it. God's intervention is the word of God and especially the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God is not in Control of the people of this world! Does that surprise you? I cringe whenever someone says, "God is in control" when things have been out of control ever since the fall of mankind.

God's will **is not being done**, because people are not under God's dominion. People are willfully, or ignorantly, doing everything but God's will. **The world's present state rests with us, this includes responsibility for all of the suffering going on!**

God gave humanity a legitimate choice and a real responsibility. With it heaven could have been lived on earth; but hell exists instead. Deuteronomy 30:19,

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life *that both you and your descendants may live.*"

God didn't take it all back when we decided to use dominion for evil. We were meant to reign in life with Him. Instead we have thrown Him out and created chaos. Gal. 6:7,

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."

Remember level one on page 22? **THE RESULTS OF THE CURSE: SUFFERING INSTEAD OF BLESSING** *Breaking it down: Why is there suffering in the World?*

At one level: The world is like many of us standing around a lake and throwing rocks into the waters. Each rock creates waves amid ripples flowing into the ripples of other rocks. With so many ripples converging, crossing, and mingling, we don't even know which came from which now. Then we raise our fists toward God and blame Him for the confusion and the mess.

QUESTION: If god is all-powerful, surely He could intervene? The answer is yes He is, **but He cannot break His Word**—He cannot lie. He gave the world to us for a time to make or break and we have chosen to break it. (Jesus described it as an earth lease in the parable of the vinedressers from Matthew 21:33-39.)

It is wrong to accuse God for the suffering in the world. It's also mistaken to believe He will stop it. If we choose, we can do what we will—even if it leads to death. God will not He violate our will.

NOT THE END OF THE STORY

Now, I have said that God will not stop what people will do; but that is not the end of the story. There is another **Covenant** that God will establish with anyone through Jesus Christ. If we understand the dilemma we're in, and seek to find a way out of the curse and the fall, we can come to Christ, surrender our will and become one with Him. **This gives God the right to intervene** on our behalf; He will protect, guide, provide, save, and heal us. This legal arrangement is through the blood of Christ—through the Atonement. It is established and maintained through His promises, His Word, His Spirit, **and our faith!**

God is Sovereign and is in control of the **overall picture**, but he **is not in control of people and what they do**--we have freewill. So it becomes important that we yield, obey, and surrender to his will so that He can be God in our (personal) world. **The importance of a right relationship with God through Christ and prayer cannot be overemphasized!**

The truth is, God would stop everything going on in the world right now; But God is not willing that anyone should perish **and is waiting for all who are being saved to come into His kingdom.** The moment He ends the earth lease, salvation ends because the time to decide is over. **The only way he can stop the suffering is to stop the earth lease!** Sin nature is causing the problems and suffering of this world.

GOD'S PLAN

God loves us and has a wonderful plan for our lives. However, all have sinned and fall short of God's glory, each of us wants to be in control of our lives. God demands our surrender and recognition of Jesus as Lord. Jesus came to be one of us, to offer a sacrifice to pay the penalty of our sins.

Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except by Me."* (John 14:6); ultimately, we must **authorize God** to save us. We must invite Christ into our hearts. **God's not in control of our life until we give it to Him. It's that simple. Jesus said, "You must be born again; for that which is of the flesh is flesh, but that which is of the Spirit is Spirit."** (John 3)

Why do good people suffer?

SUFFERING: MAKING SENSE OF IT

The world is filled with suffering, everyone who is born will endure some kind of suffering, and some will suffer far more than others. Some will suffer unimaginable pains and losses. Some will live a relatively untouched life in comparison. Some will become sick often, some will become terminally ill, yet others will not experience much at all. Why is it unfair? Why do the "good" suffer as much or even more than the "bad?"

What is God's will concerning suffering? Is every experience of suffering ordained by God? Is it God's will for us to suffer?

The fact is that so many, if not all, suffer; some experience dramatic life changing sufferings which are forever imprinted upon their memories. With something that so changes our lives and affects everyone at some point, we need to address it, understand, and inquire into God's Word and what He says about it.

We need to know **what is going on?**

No other area of our life begs us to ask the question, “Why?” What I present here is an answer. There may be additions, expansions, and elaborations required to fill in gaps or make things more understandable; however, this answer covers the basic foundations from God’s Word about suffering.

We need to determine the origin and source of suffering. According to Genesis chapter 3 we find that the world before the fall of man was good, perfect, and whole, at peace. In other words, there was no suffering. Then according to Rev. Re 21:4,

"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."

From before the fall and then after God restores all things suffering will only exist in the in-between time—the time of the fall. **This strongly suggests that all suffering finds its source in sin, the curse, and rebellion towards God.**

Suffering is defined as (Pathema: Greek word for suffering): experiencing something undergone like hardship or pain; an emotion or influence of affliction. It is further understood to include maltreatment, adversity, torment, pressure, anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, or trouble.

The Biblical basis comes to us through the curse in Deut. 28 where God lists all of the suffering that Israel will experience if they do not keep the covenant through Moses. A short list includes: sickness, disease, death, loss, defeat, slavery, violence, fear, war, destruction, deception, ignorance, lying, adultery, divorce, accidents, failure, rejection, hate, racism, ridicule, mental illness...

Some of these are physical, some emotional, some spiritual, and some mental. All area of suffering known to man is intended in this list. This means that all suffering comes to us through the curse. This curse came to the earth when Adam and Eve sinned against the Lord and death ruled (Gen. 3).

When we consider all of the areas of suffering we might not realize how much of it we are experiencing. Why then, if God cursed the earth because of sin, didn’t he remove it when Jesus died to take away sin?

Jesus said that he came not to do away with the law but to fulfill it Mt 5:17,

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

And, Mt 5:18,

"For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

The world is passing away and when it does the curse will also pass away; but the law will be eternal because the law is God. The law is perfect and holy and meant for spiritual people. For the law and the prophets are fulfilled if one loves the Lord God with all their heart, soul, and mind; and loves their neighbor as thyself. Everyone born into the world therefore is born under the law and according to scripture must obey it completely or be cursed listen to **Galatians 3:10**,

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." {#Deut. 27:26}

It doesn't matter who we are rich or poor, powerful or not, strong or weak, good or bad, male or female; no one is able to keep the law. Romans 3:20,

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

And Galatians 3:11,

“But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” {#Hab 2:4}

And Romans 3:10 “As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one...”

The point being made is that no one born in this world is out from under the curse that is in the earth. We are all subject to it religious or not, good or bad, Jew or Gentile. When Christ died on the cross it was to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law against sinners, Roman 6:23 “For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Although Galatians 3:13 says,

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree”), {#De 21:23}

We still live in this world in our mortal body in the flesh or sinful nature. We are saved in Spirit, renewed in our minds according to the Word of God, and our bodies are healed; yet, **the full completion of this redemption** will not be realized until we die, the rapture of the Church, or the second Coming of Jesus Christ.

NO ONE WILL EVER GROW IN THIS WORLD TO THE COMPLETION OF CHRIST

Then it should be realized that no one will escape the curse that is in the earth. We can however walk by faith; receive the promises of God, pressing on toward the mark of the high calling which is in Christ Jesus. In essence, if we walk after the Spirit we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). There is no one who is without the flesh or sin nature; there is no one who can say, “I’m without sin” (I John 1:10). We will have our sinful bodies and nature until we die. There will never come a time when we don’t need grace, forgiveness of our sins, and arrive at perfection, completion, or entire sanctification in this life. We will always struggle, suffering in the fellowship of Christ in denying our flesh, resisting temptation, and learning obedience to God’s Word. **I say this to say that the reason “good” people suffer is because they are people.**

We consider someone “good” based upon human comparisons with other human beings; this is relative and falls far short of the law of God. As Rom. 3:23,

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”

So why do good people suffer? Because according to the law no one is righteous and no one is considered “good” for all have sinned and all are under the law—and therefore cursed. We are all vulnerable to the same weakness of man in body, soul, and spirit. We live in the flesh and experience the same temptations, the same struggles, the same issues, what is common to all. Our individual experiences will vary but all experiences fall under the umbrella of human life. We all have pride, we all have ego, we all believe that what we think is best, we all want to have things our own way, we all struggle with surrendering or will to God. We all decide things with our own interests at

heart and our selfishness will manifest in suffering in some way for some one. Sin is selfishness at the core and the law of God cannot be fulfilled by sin.

If God is love how can this world exist? What loving God would sit by and watch “24/7” the things that go on here? There must not be a God...what is going on?