

The Three Pillars of Revelation

Pillar 1: The Nature of God

Pillar 2: The Plan of God

Pillar 3: The Way of God

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God is spirit ... God is light ... In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

(John 4:24a, 1 John 1:5bα, John 1:4 ESV)

For from the rising of the sun to its setting **my name will be great among the nations** ...

(Malachi 1:11a ESV)

Then God said, “**Let us make man in our image**, after our likeness. ...” **male** and **female** he created them.

(Genesis 1:26a, 27b ESV)

... **we are children of God**, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and **fellow heirs with Christ** ...

(Romans 8:16b-17a ESV)

... **according to the Way** ... I worship the God of our fathers ... (Acts 24:14 ESV)

... your **Teacher** will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your **Teacher**. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “**This is the way, walk in it**” ... (Isaiah 30:20b-21a ESV)

God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4:16b ESV)

The Bible is the revelation by the Creator God of himself to his most important creation – human beings. This revelation is centered around three main themes:

- The **Nature of God** – who and what is God? Where is God? What is God like?
- The **Plan of God** – what is God’s purpose for human beings? How is God accomplishing this purpose?
- The **Way of God** – what does God require of human beings? How can we fulfill our part to accomplish his purpose?

This paper, “**Third Pillar - The Way of God**”, is the third part of a single document, “**The Three Pillars of Revelation**”. Due to size constraints, the document has been split in three papers for publishing. Please also see the other two parts, “**First Pillar - The Nature of God**” and “**Second Pillar - The Plan of God**”. These three papers analyze the three **Pillars of Revelation** and explore the questions around them. **These papers do NOT comprise a “philosophical” investigation.** The focus is always on what the Bible actually says. What God himself reveals to us in his inspired word.

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3 The Way of God

In the Garden of Eden were two trees:

The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, **and the tree** of knowledge of good and evil.
(Genesis 2:9b ESV)

In the Covenant of Life,¹ God holds out two options:

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today,
that **I have set before you life and death**, blessing and curse. **Therefore choose life** ...
(Deuteronomy 30:19 ESV)

God's purpose for human beings is to "choose life", to partake of "**the tree of life**", and, through the resurrection, join the God Family having been given the gift of eternal life. The other option is the choice of death – permanent eradication of all vestiges of existence. The later option is "**the way of the world**". This the option upon which Adam and Eve set humanity when they chose to take to themselves the prerogative of deciding what is right and what is wrong – the ate from "**the tree of knowledge of good and evil**".

To "**choose life**", a person must reject the way of the world and **learn the Way of God**. The Bible is a handbook on the Way of God. The Bible reveals God's teaching on how to live by the Way of God. **Living by the Way of God is a prerequisite to being considered a candidate for the gift of eternal life**. Refusal to learn the Way of God is, by default, a choice of death.

3.1 What is the Way of God?

After the inauguration of the New Testament Passover, the **Apostle John** reports a series of discourses given by Jesus to the Apostles. **Jesus commenced as follows:**

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many rooms.

If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself,
that where I am you may be also. And **you know the way to where I am going**."

Thomas said to him,

"Lord, we do not know where you are going. **How can we know the way?**"

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. ..."

(John 14:1-6 ESV)

¹ For a discussion of this covenant, see section **5. The Covenant of Life** in the paper "**Covenants of Grace**" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Jesus' words very quickly became an epithet for the Christian life, "**The Way**". The **Synoptist Luke** reports that the expression was already current by the time of Paul's conversion, a couple of years after Jesus' death:

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that **if he found any belonging to the Way**, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
(Acts 9:1-2 ESV)

Luke reports that later **Paul himself used the epithet**:

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, **educated at the feet of Gamaliel** according to the strict manner of the [nomos]² of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.
I persecuted this Way to the death binding and delivering to prison both men and women ...
But **this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect**, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the [nomos]³, (⁴), and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.
(Acts 22:3-4, 24:14-15 ESV)

Luke implies that the epithet became a known expression for "Christianity":

And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.
But when **some became stubborn** and continued in unbelief, **speaking evil of the Way** before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus.
About that time **there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way**.
But **Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way**, put them off ...
(Acts 19:8-9, 23, 24:22 ESV)

The **Greek** word translated "way" is ὁδός - **hodos**, a feminine noun, which carries two broad ranges of meaning. First, it can mean "road", "highway", "direction"; secondly, it can mean "**way of life**", "**way of acting**", "**conduct**".⁵ The word is frequently used in the New Testament in the former sense, but clearly it is the latter sense in which this paper is interested. The equivalent **Hebrew** word is דֶּרֶךְ - **derek**, a masculine noun, with approximately the same range of meaning as *hodos*.⁶ The Hebrew word אֹרֶחַ - **'orah**, "path", is frequently used more or less as a synonym for *derek*.⁷

To be clear on the meaning of these words, **consider some other uses of hodos**:

And they came and said to him,
"**Teacher**, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion.
For you are not swayed by appearances, but **truly teach the way (hodos) of God**. ..."
(Mark 12:14a ESV // Matthew 22:16, Luke 20:21)
Jesus said to them,
"Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you.
For **John came to you in the way (hodos) of righteousness**, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. ..."
(Matthew 21:31b-32a ESV)
And you, child, will be called **the prophet of the Most High**;
for **you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways (hodos)**,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

² Here, "nomos" means primarily Pharisaic teaching.

³ Here, "nomos" means primarily the teaching recorded in the Writings of Moses.

⁴ For a discussion of how "nomos" came to be used as a translation of "torah", see **Excursus 8 – torah and nomos** in the paper "**True Worship of the True God**"; for a discussion of the complexity of meaning of "nomos" see section **11.6 Paul and nomos** in the paper "**The Writings of Moses**"; both papers are located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

⁵ See GEL pages 556-557

⁶ See TWOT article 453a pages 196-197, BDB pages 202-204

⁷ See TWOT article 161a page 71, BDB page 73

to guide our feet into the way (hodos) of peace.

(Luke 1:76-79 ESV see also Romans 3:17)

You have made known to **me the paths (hodos) of life;**

you will make me full of gladness with your presence. (citing Psalm 16:11)

(Acts 2:28 ESV)

She followed Paul and us, crying out,

“These men are servants of the Most High God,

who proclaim to you the way (hodos) of salvation.”

(Acts 16:17 ESV)

Now a Jew named **Apollos**, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus.

He was an eloquent man, **competent in the Scriptures.**

He **had been instructed in the way (hodos) of the Lord.**

And being fervent in spirit, **he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus,**

though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue,

but when **Priscilla and Aquila** heard him, they took him aside and

explained to him the way (hodos) of God more accurately.

(Acts 18:24-26 ESV)

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are his judgments and **how inscrutable his ways (hodos)!**

(Romans 11:33 ESV see also 1 Corinthians 12:31)

And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them **the way (hodos) of truth** will be blasphemed.

... Forsaking **the right way (hodos)**, they have gone astray. ...

For it would have been better for them never to have known **the way (hodos) of righteousness** ...

(2 Peter 2:2, 15a, 21a ESV)

And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways (hodos), O King of the nations!

(Revelation 15:3 ESV)

Analysis of the meaning of the “Way of God”:

- The Way of God is fundamental to the gospel, Jesus did **“truly teach the way of God”**
- The Way of God is required for salvation, **“the way of salvation”, “the paths of life”**
- The Way of God is based on the “scriptures”, the Old Testament, **“competent in the Scriptures”, “instructed in the way of the Lord”, “the way of God more accurately”**
- The Way of God can only be understood through the Holy Spirit, **“how inscrutable his ways”**
- The Way of God is taught by his “prophets” as recorded in the Bible, **“the prophet of the Most High”, “prepare his ways”, “proclaim to you the way”**
- The Way of God satisfies all the aspirations of humanity, **“the way of peace”, “the right way”, “the way of truth”, “the way of righteousness”**
- The Way of God is a reflection of the Nature of God, **“just and true are your ways”**

When Jesus said, **“I am the way”**, he encapsulated the entire **purpose of the First Advent** and the entire **requirement placed on those persons called by God the Father** to become True Worshipers, hence, candidates for the gift of eternal life. The author of the **Book of Hebrews**⁸ makes the point very clearly:

By this the Holy Spirit indicates that **the way (hodos) into the holy places** is not yet opened as long as the first section [was] still standing (which is symbolic for the age then present). ...

Therefore, brothers, since **we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,**

by **the new and living way (hodos)** that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,

and since we have a great priest over the house of God,

let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,

with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

(Hebrews 9:8-9a, 10:19-22 ESV)

In the First Advent, **Jesus made possible the propitiation of sin** which allows God to account Christians as “truly holy”. In this state of “holiness”, **a Christian has immediate access to the throne room of God the Father in eternity.** There, Jesus Christ presides as our High Priest and Advocate. **Jesus’ intercession** is the only means by which any human being can live the Christian life, **the Way of God.** Truly, Jesus is **“The Way”**. Jesus’ life and work as recorded in the Gospels and explained in the Epistles of the New

⁸ See **Excursus 2 – The Book of Hebrews**

Testament are the essence of the Way of God. But **as with all the revelation of God, the real meat is in the Old Testament**. The entire revelation of God must be analyzed to come to an understanding of the Way of God.

3.1.1 Living by the Way of God

God began the working-out of the Plan of Salvation with the Patriarch Abram:

Now [YHWH] said to Abram,

“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ...”

So Abram went, as [YHWH] had told him ...

Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

After these things the word of [YHWH] came to Abram in a vision:

“Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” ...

And **[Abram] believed [YHWH]**, and **he counted it to him as righteousness**.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old [YHWH] appeared to Abram and said to him,

“I am God Almighty; walk before me, and **be blameless** ...

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but **your name shall be Abraham** ...”

And God said to Abraham,

“As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. ...”

(Genesis 12:1, 4, 15:1, 6, 17:1, 5a, 9 ESV)

Abram did what God told him to do, **“go from your country”**. YHWH enjoined faith on Abram, **“fear not”**, which Abram learned, **“he counted it to him as righteousness”**. Clearly, God gave Abram the instruction he required, **“walk before me”**, **“be blameless”**. **This is the essence of the Christian life, the Way of God**. Abram did “walk with God” and he learned what it means to be “blameless”; because of this, God changed his name to “Abraham”, foreshadowing his role as **“father of the faithful”** – ultimately all True Worshipers.⁹ God established the “Covenant of Promise”¹⁰ with Abraham and made it clear that adherence to the covenant was required of Abraham and his descendants. Abraham successfully carried out God’s requirements:

... **Abraham obeyed my voice** and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my [torah].¹¹ ...

For **I have chosen him**, that he may command his children and his household after him

to keep the way (derek) of [YHWH] by doing righteousness and justice,

so that [YHWH] may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.

(Genesis 26:5, 18:19 ESV)

Abraham successfully learned to live by the Way of God, he became a candidate for the gift of eternal life. And the New Testament affirms that God the Father has made a positive decision in regard to Abraham – he will participate in the First Resurrection:

I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table **with Abraham**, Isaac, and Jacob **in the kingdom of heaven** ...

And **as for the resurrection of the dead**, have you not read what was said to you by God:

“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?

He is not God of the dead, but of the living.

(Matthew 8:11, 22:31-32 ESV // Mark 12:26-27, Luke 20:37-38)

Abram was enjoined to **“walk before me”**. The Way of God is repeatedly characterized as a “walk”. This metaphor emphasizes **the nature of the Way of God as requiring action**: head knowledge is NOT good enough; good words are NOT good enough; good intentions are NOT good enough; a life filled with good deeds is NOT good enough –all these things are necessary, but they are NOT sufficient. **To “walk with God” requires doing what God says**, learning to **“live by the Way of God”**. Some examples are:

You shall be careful therefore to **do as [YHWH] your God has commanded you**.

You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

You shall **walk in all the way (derek)** that [YHWH] your God has commanded you,

⁹ For a more detailed discussion of the promises to Abraham, see section [3.1 The Two Promises](#) in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹⁰ See section [3. The Covenant of Promise](#) in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹¹ “torah” means “teaching”, “instruction”, “direction” – it should NEVER be translated by the English word “law”.

See the discussion in [Excursus 3 – torah](#) in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

that you may live, and that it may go well with you ...
(Deuteronomy 5:32-33a ESV see also 8:6, 26:17)

And now, Israel, **what does [YHWH] your God require of you**, but to fear [YHWH] your God, **to walk in all his ways (derek)**, to love him, to serve [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your [being],¹² and to keep the commandments and statutes of [YHWH], which I am commanding you today for your good?
(Deuteronomy 10:12-13 ESV see also 11:22, 19:9)

[YHWH] will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of [YHWH] your God and **walk in his ways (derek)**. And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of [YHWH] ...
(Deuteronomy 28:9-10a ESV see also 30:15-16)

Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the [torah] that Moses the servant of [YHWH] commanded you, to **love [YHWH] your God**, and to **walk in all his ways (derek)** and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your [being].
(Joshua 22:5 ESV)

When **David's time to die drew near**, he commanded Solomon his son, saying, "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man, and **keep the charge of [YHWH] your God, walking in his ways (derek)** and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his [mish^epatim],¹³ and his testimonies ('eduth), as it is written in the [torah] of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, **that [YHWH] may establish his word** that he spoke concerning me ..."
(1 Kings 2:1-4a ESV see also 3:14, 8:57-58, 2 Chronicles 6:30-31)

The metaphor of "walking" is taken up many times in the New Testament:

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named **Zechariah**, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was **Elizabeth**. And they were both **righteous before God, walking blamelessly** in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.
(Luke 1:5-6 ESV)

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And **walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit**, it multiplied.
(Acts 9:31 ESV)

Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus** were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might **walk in newness of life**.
(Romans 6:3-4 ESV)

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling** to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to **maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**.
(Ephesians 4:1-3 ESV see also Colossians 1:9-10, 1 Thessalonians 2:11-12, 4:10b-12)

Therefore, **as you received Christ Jesus the Lord**, so **walk in him**, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.
(Colossians 2:6-7 ESV see also 1 John 2:5-6)

As a child, Jesus Christ was nurtured among a community of True Worshipers, exemplified by Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist. These True Worshipers are affirmed to have **"walked blamelessly before God"**, as Abram had done. At its inception, the New Testament Church is affirmed to have **"walked in the fear of God"**. Individual Christians, once baptised, are enjoined to **"walk in newness of life"**, **"in a manner worthy of the calling"**. To be a Christian, one must accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to provide propitiation of sin; one must **"receive Christ Jesus the Lord"**. Being a Christian requires a person to **"walk in him"**, to **live by the Way of God**.

¹² The Hebrew word "*nephesh*" is commonly translated as "soul"; but the word "soul" has been corrupted to mean "immortal soul", a rank pagan concept. See the discussion in *Excursus 2 – נַפְשׁ and ψυχή* in the paper "*The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle*" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹³ *mish^epatim* is the godly understanding, wisdom, and discernment that come from a lifetime of living by the Way of God; see the discussion in sub-section *חֶסֶד - hesed and מִשְׁפָּט - mish^epat* in the section *1.4.3 Attributes of God's Character* of the paper "*First Pillar - The Nature of God*" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

The following are **some characteristics of the Christian walk**:

But I say, **walk by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
(Galatians 5:16 ESV)

For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**,
which God prepared beforehand, that we should **walk in them**.
(Ephesians 2:10 ESV)

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,
making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.
(Ephesians 5:15-16 ESV see also Colossians 4:5)

Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus,
that as you received from us how you ought to **walk and to please God** ...
(1 Thessalonians 4:1a ESV)

I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children **walking in the truth**,
just as we were commanded by the Father.
(2 John 4 ESV see also 3 John 3-4)

And **walk in love**, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
(Ephesians 5:2 ESV)

And **this is love**, that **we walk according to his commandments**;
this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that **you should walk in it**.
(2 John 6 ESV)

To walk with God requires a lifetime of learning and commitment. This is the reason God has given us a short sampling of life in these physical bodies. God needs to know who chooses life and who does not. Only those persons who actively make the choice to live by the Way of God are candidates for the gift of eternal life. **God will NOT force anyone to choose life.** That is the essence of free moral agency. Human beings can choose the Way of God, or the way of death. All are given this same brief human life to make the choice. **Jesus summarized the choice very succinctly:**

Enter by the narrow gate.

For the gate is wide and **the way (hodos) is easy that leads to destruction**,
and those who enter by it are many.

For the gate is narrow and **the way (hodos) is hard that leads to life**, and those who find it are few.
(Matthew 7:13-14 ESV)

The **“wide gate”**, the **“easy way”**, is the way of the world, the way of sin and death. To choose life, to live by the Way of God, **a person must understand the way of the world and actively reject it.**

3.1.2 Rejecting the Way of the World

This is the world of Satan the Devil. Adam and Eve did not make the choice of sin and death on their own:

Now **the serpent** was more crafty than any other beast of the field that [YHWH] God had made.
He said to the woman, **“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”**

And the woman said to the serpent,

“We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but **God said,**
‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden,
neither shall you touch it, **lest you die.**”

But **the serpent said to the woman**,

“You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it **your eyes will be opened**, and
you will be like God, **knowing good and evil.**”

(Genesis 3:1-5 ESV)

The “serpent” was, of course, Satan the Devil:

And the great dragon was thrown down, **that ancient serpent**,
who is called **the devil and Satan**, the **deceiver of the whole world** ...
(Revelation 12:9a ESV)

But I am afraid that as **the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning** ...
(2 Corinthians 11:3a ESV)

Satan seduced Adam and Eve with the big lie, **“you will not surely die”**. Satan made his way, the way of evil, the way of death, look desirable, **“your eyes will be opened”**. Satan made that which is inherently

wrong look right, “**knowing good and evil**”. Satan is the father of lies. This world, his world, is based on lies. Satan will be removed at the Second Advent and the world will be taught “truth”:

You are of your father **the devil**, and your will is to do your father’s desires.

He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth**, because **there is no truth in him**. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for **he is a liar and the father of lies**.
(John 8:44 ESV)

I will no longer talk much with you, for **the ruler of this world is coming**. He has no claim on me ...
Now is the judgment of this world; **now will the ruler of this world be cast out**.
(John 14:30, 12:31 ESV)

Then I saw **an angel** coming down from heaven,
holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.
And he **seized the dragon, that ancient serpent**, who is **the devil and Satan**,
and bound him for a thousand years, and **threw him into the pit**, and shut it and sealed it over him,
so that he might not deceive the nations any longer ...
(Revelation 20:1-3a ESV)

So **Jesus said** to the Jews who had believed him,
“If you **abide in my word**, you are truly my disciples,
and you will **know the truth**, and **the truth will set you free**.”
(John 8:31-32 ESV)

Until Satan is confined, **True Worshipers must learn to live by the Way of God in this world**, the world of Satan the Devil. Living by the Way of God requires **discernment** of how and why this world has been made evil. Living by the Way of God requires **understanding** of the difference between the way of the world and the Way of God and rejecting the way of the world in all its aspect. Living by the Way of God requires developing **the wisdom to ensure that the evils of this world can never be repeated again**. The Christian life is a daily battle with Satan and his world. The war can only be won through the power of the Holy Spirit. Each battle requires actively identifying the way of Satan and **rejecting the way of the world**. Next, we consider some aspect of the way of the world.

3.1.2.1 The Way of Cain

In the Epistle we know as “**Ephesians**”, the **Apostle Paul** reminds his recipients about their **pre-conversion state**:

And you were **dead in the trespasses and sins** in which **you once walked**,
following **the course of this world**, following the prince of the power of the air,
the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived ...
Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must **no longer walk as the [unconverted]**¹⁴
do, in the futility of their minds.
(Ephesians 2:1-3a, 4:17 ESV)

The **Apostle John** affirms that **false teachers** had arisen and were attempting to draw Christians back to **the way of the world**:

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming,
so now **many antichrists have come**. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.
They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. ...
Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. ...
I write these things to you about **those who are trying to deceive you**.
(1 John 2:18-19, 24a, 26 ESV)

True Worshipers are called by God out of the world. Prior to conversion, all are “**dead in the trespasses and sins**”, living under the death sentence of Satan’s world. After conversion, Satan makes every effort to pull people back under his influence, “**many antichrists have come**”, “**those who are trying to deceive you**”. The brother of Jesus Christ, **Jude**, addresses this situation in his epistle:

For **certain people have crept in unnoticed** who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, **who pervert the grace of our God** into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. ...
Yet in like manner these people also, **relying on their dreams**, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. ...

¹⁴ The Greek word is ἔθνος - ethnos, “nation”, “people”, “Gentile”; see www.esv.org “Lexical Form”; Paul is using the word “metaphorically” for “unconverted persons”.

Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain ...
(Jude 4, 8, 11a ESV)

The choice was made by Adam and Eve; but, it was their son, **Cain**, who **set the pattern of development of the societies of this world**. The incident where Cain kills his brother, Abel, is well known.¹⁵ After the death of Abel, God worked through a “righteous line” from Seth,¹⁶ the third reported son of Adam and Eve. The “righteous line” culminated in Noah, and through Noah’s son, Shem, to Abraham. From there begins the story of “Salvation History”.¹⁷ **After the death of Abel, God cursed Cain:**

“... And **now you are cursed** from the ground,
which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.
When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength.
You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”

Cain said to [YHWH],

“My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, **you have driven me today away** from the ground, and **from your face I shall be hidden**.
I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

Then [YHWH] said to him, “Not so! **If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.**”
(Genesis 4:11-15a ESV)

There are three significant operatives in **the curse**: first, Cain and, by implication, Cain’s descendants, were cut off from God, **“you have driven me today away”**, **“from your face I shall be hidden”**; secondly, Cain and his descendants were cast adrift into a world under the control of Satan the Devil, **“you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth”**; thirdly, the world of Satan, the world in which Cain and his descendants would have to survive, would become ugly, **“if anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold”**. This is the beginning of human society cut off from God. The Bible briefly records **the founding of human society**, and it quickly got ugly:

Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch.

When **he built a city**, he called the name of the city after the name of his son, Enoch.

To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael,

and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech.

And **Lamech took two wives**. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.

Adah bore Jubal; he was the father of those who **dwelt in tents and have livestock**.

His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all **those who play the lyre and pipe**.

Zillah also bore Tubal-cain; he was the **forger of all instruments of bronze and iron**.

The sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

Lamech said to his wives:

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say:

I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me.

If Cain’s revenge is sevenfold, then **Lamech’s is seventy-sevenfold.**”

(Genesis 4:17-24 ESV)

Cut off from God, human beings, under the influence of Satan, continued to make their own decisions as to what is right and wrong. **This is the “way of Cain”**. This resulted in an unsustainable society that God had to destroy in the flood of Noah’s time.¹⁸ After the flood, Satan quickly influenced humanity to the **“way of Cain”** – this is exemplified by the corruption of Canaan,¹⁹ Noah’s grandson, and the Tower of Babel incident.²⁰ **The world today continues in the “way of Cain”**. The majority of humanity is cut off from God. Every imaginable religious, social, economic, philosophical, and governmental idea has been tried. All are failures. **All have been influenced by Satan the Devil and can only lead to death. Only the Way of God can bring peace, order, prosperity, good government, and freedom to humanity.**

¹⁵ See the narrative in Genesis 4:1-10

¹⁶ See Genesis 5:3-31; this is discussed briefly in section **2. The Plan of God** in the paper “**The Human Condition**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹⁷ See Genesis 11:10-26; this is discussed in section **2.3 Salvation History** in the paper “**Second Pillar - The Plan of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹⁸ See the narrative in Genesis chapters 6 and 7.

¹⁹ See the narrative in Genesis 9:20-27.

²⁰ See the narrative in Genesis 11:1-9

3.1.2.2 World City

Once he was cut off from God, **Cain immediately built a city**. After the flood, humanity attempted to coalesce into **a single society centered on a great city**. **This is Satan's way** – human beings crowded into cities are more easily controlled and manipulated. Many of the prophecies in the Bible focus on two ancient cities, **"Tyre"** and **"Babylon"**. These cities are **"types"** of human civilization, **"world city"**:

The oracle concerning Tyre.

Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for Tyre is laid waste, without house or harbor!

Who has purposed this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns,
whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the honored of the earth?

[YHWH] of hosts has purposed it, to defile the pompous pride of all glory,
to dishonor all the honored of the earth.

He has stretched out his hand over the sea; **he has shaken the kingdoms;**
(Isaiah 23:1a, 8-9, 11a ESV)

Thus says the Lord [YHWH] to Tyre: Will not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall ...
And they will raise a lamentation over you and say to you,

How you have perished, you who were inhabited from the seas,

O city renowned, who was mighty on the sea;

she and her inhabitants imposed their terror on all her inhabitants!

Now **the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall,**

and the coastlands that are on the sea are dismayed at your passing.

(Ezekiel 26:15a, 17-18 ESV)

In their wailing they raise a lamentation for you and lament over you:

Who is like Tyre, like one destroyed in the midst of the sea?

When your wares came from the seas, **you satisfied many peoples;**

with your abundant wealth and merchandise **you enriched the kings of the earth.**

Now you are wrecked by the seas, in the depths of the waters;

your merchandise and all your crew in your midst have sunk with you.

All the inhabitants of the coastlands are appalled at you,

and the hair of their kings bristles with horror; their faces are convulsed.

The merchants among the peoples hiss at you;

you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.

(Ezekiel 27:32-36 ESV)

The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

On a bare hill raise a signal; cry aloud to them;

wave the hand for them to enter the gates of the nobles.

I myself have commanded my consecrated ones,

and have summoned my mighty men to execute my anger, my proudly exulting ones.

The sound of a tumult is on the mountains as of a great multitude!

The sound of **an uproar of kingdoms, of nations gathering together!**

[YHWH] of hosts is mustering a host for battle.

They come from a distant land, from the end of the heavens,

[YHWH] and the weapons of his indignation, **to destroy the whole earth.**

Wail, for **the day of [YHWH] is near;** as destruction from the Almighty it will come!

(Isaiah 13:1-6 ESV)

... take up this taunt against the king of Babylon:

How the oppressor has ceased, the insolent fury ceased!

[YHWH] has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers,

that **struck the peoples** in wrath with unceasing blows,

that **ruled the nations** in anger with unrelenting persecution.

(Isaiah 14:4-6 ESV)

The word that [YHWH] spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet:

Declare among the nations and proclaim, set up a banner and proclaim,
conceal it not, and say: **"Babylon is taken ..."**

The noise of battle is in the [earth], and great destruction!

How **the hammer of the whole earth is cut down and broken!**

How Babylon has become a horror among the nations!

I set a snare for you and you were taken, O Babylon, and you did not know it;

you were found and caught, because **you opposed [YHWH].**

Behold, **I am against you**, O proud one, **declares the Lord [YHWH] of hosts,**
for your day has come, the time when **I will punish you.**

The proud one shall stumble and fall, with none to raise him up,
and **I will kindle a fire in his cities**, and it will devour all that is around him.
(Jeremiah 50:1-2a, 22-24, 31-32 ESV)

The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea.
As whirlwinds in the Negeb sweep on, it comes from the wilderness, from a terrible land.

Fallen, fallen is Babylon;

and all the carved images of her gods he has shattered to the ground.

(Isaiah 21:1, 9b ESV)

Another angel, a second, followed, saying,

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great,

she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality."

(Revelation 14:8 ESV)

Thus [YHWH], the God of Israel, said to me:

**"Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath,
and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.**

They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them."

... And **after them the king of Babylon shall drink.** ...

Thus says [YHWH] of hosts:

You must drink! ... You shall not go unpunished,

for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, declares [YHWH] of hosts.

(Jeremiah 25:15-16, 26b, 28b, 29b ESV)

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air,
and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, **"It is done!"** ...

The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell,

and **God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.**

(Revelation 16:17, 19 ESV)

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority,
and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice,

Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!

She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit,
a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.

For **all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality,**

and **the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her,**

and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.

... her sins are heaped high as heaven, and **God has remembered her iniquities.**

Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds;
mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.

As **she glorified herself** and lived in luxury,
so give her a like measure of torment and mourning,
since **in her heart she says,**

'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.'

For this reason **her plagues will come in a single day,** death and mourning and famine,
and she will be burned up with fire; for **mighty is the Lord God who has judged her.**

(Revelation 18:1-3, 5-8 ESV)

"World City", as exemplified by the ancient cities of Tyre and Babylon, is **the manifestation of everything evil in Satan's world.** Humanity has chosen to live cut off from God in a world under the control of Satan the Devil. Every effort of humanity to devise a functioning society has been doomed to failure because of the influence of Satan the Devil. **Only the Way of God works.** After the Second Advent, there will be no "world city"; all people in all nations over the whole world will learn the Way of God. **The way of the world will be eradicated never to be seen again!**

3.1.2.3 The Way of the World

The Bible is full of specifics on the "way of the world" and the details of its errors. The **Apostle Paul** provides the following summary of the "way of the world". He lists multiple character attributes and behaviours which are common, but which in fact are indicative of lack of conversion. Paul emphasizes that **in conversion a person is striving to change the inner being** so that the converted person, a True Worshipper, a Christian, does NOT reflect the way of the world:

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ...

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is **idolatry**.

On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.

But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have **put off the old self** with its practices

and have **put on the new self**, which is **being renewed in knowledge** after the image of its creator.

(Colossians 3:2, 5-10 ESV)

The ancient soothsayer, Bil^eam,²¹ is affirmed to have followed a **“perverse way”**:

And the angel of [YHWH] said to him,

“Why have you struck your donkey these three times?

Behold, I have come out to oppose you because **your way (derek) is perverse before me**. ...”

(Numbers 22:32 ESV)

The **Apostle Peter** affirms that Bil^eam’s error was related to **greed** for money which **Paul** affirms is a **“root of evil”**; but, Paul makes it clear that the real problem is **“lust”, uncontrolled desire for something physical**:

Forsaking the right way (hodos), they have gone astray.

They have followed **the way (hodos) of [Bil^eam]**, the son of Beor, **who loved gain** from wrongdoing ... (2 Peter 2:15 ESV)

But those who **desire to be rich** fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evils.

It is through **this craving** that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

(1 Timothy 6:9-10 ESV)

Bil^eam was a well-known soothsayer who **apparently had contact with God**, and **claimed to follow God’s instructions**:

And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done ...

So **Balak** the son of Zippor, who was **king of Moab** at that time,

sent messengers to [Bil^eam] the son of Beor at Pethor ...

“... Come now, curse this people for me, since they are too mighty for me.

Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land,

for **I know that he whom you bless is blessed**, and **he whom you curse is cursed**.”

So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand.

And they came to [Bil^eam] and gave him Balak’s message.

And he said to them,

“Lodge here tonight, and **I will bring back word to you, as [YHWH] speaks to me**.”

So the princes of Moab stayed with [Bil^eam].

And **God came to [Bil^eam] and said**, “Who are these men with you?”

But **[Bil^eam] answered and said to the servants of Balak**,

“Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold,

I could not go beyond the command of [YHWH] my God to do less or more. ...”

(Numbers 22:2, 4b-5a, 6, 7-9, 18 ESV)

The details of the incident are well known.²² God forces Bil^eam to bless Israel. Balak is furious with Bil^eam and they both depart for their homes. **The rest of the story is implicit**. Balak probably refused to pay Bil^eam, so **Bil^eam got back to Balak with a scheme**:

While Israel lived in Shittim, **the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab**.

These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

So **Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor**. And the anger of [YHWH] was kindled against Israel.

(Numbers 25:1-3 ESV)

²¹ The name is usually transliterated in English Bibles, incorrectly, as “Balaam”.

²² See the narrative in Numbers chapter 22, 23, and 24.

This corruption was apparently incited at the suggestion of Bil^eam. When Israelites take vengeance on Moab and Midian under the leadership of Phinehas, grandson of Aaron, Bil^eam is among the dead.

At first, all the women were allowed to live, but Moses is appalled because the women were the very instrument of Bil^eam's scheme:

[YHWH] spoke to Moses, saying, "**Avenge the people of Israel on the Midianites.** ..."

And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand from each tribe, together with **Phinehas** ...

They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian.

And **they also killed [Bil^eam]** the son of Beor with the sword.

Then **they brought the captives and the plunder and the spoil to Moses** ...

And Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had come from service in the war.

Moses said to them,

"Have you let all the women live?

Behold, **these, on [Bil^eam's] advice,**

caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against [YHWH] in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of [YHWH]. ..."

(Numbers 31:1-2a, 6a, 8, 12a, 14-16 ESV)

Analysis of Bil^eam's "**perverse way**":

- Bil^eam claimed to "know" God, "**as [YHWH] speaks to me**", "**I could not go beyond the command of [YHWH] my God to do less or more**"
- God was willing to work with Bil^eam, "**God came to Balaam and said**"
- Bil^eam desired wealth, "**the way of Balaam ... who loved gain**"
- Bil^eam deliberately went against God's will to try to satisfy his physical desire, "**these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously**"
- Bil^eam was rejected by God, "**they also killed Balaam**"

Bil^eam was someone who "believed in God", but when God actually reached out to him, "called him", **Bil^eam was more concerned with his physical life, his "way of life"**. He tried to ignore what God required him to do, and he tried to surreptitiously attain his physical desires. **Bil^eam was very much like Lot's wife**. God dragged Lot, his wife, and two daughters out of Sodom to save them from its destruction. **Lot's wife loved her "way of life" in Sodom**. As they were fleeing, she longingly looked back at the physical desire she had, and **she died a horrible death**:

So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, **[YHWH] being merciful to him**, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

And as they brought them out, one said, "**Escape for your life. Do not look back ...**"

But **Lot's wife**, behind him, **looked back**, and **she became a pillar of salt**.

(Genesis 19:16b-17a, 26 ESV)

Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it ...

(Luke 17:32-33a ESV)

Satan is very subtle. **Satan deceives by making evil look good**. The classic example of this was the **Pharisees** at the time of the First Advent. **Jesus had nothing good to say about** the way they had corrupted the teaching of the Bible and replaced it with their own traditions:

And the **Pharisees and the scribes asked him**,

"Why do **your disciples not walk according to the tradition** of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"

And he said to them,

"Well did Isaiah prophesy of **you hypocrites**, as it is written,

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;

in vain do they worship me, **teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**'

(citing Isaiah 29:13)

You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."

And he said to them,

"You have a fine way of **rejecting the commandment of God**

in order to establish **your tradition!** ..."

(Mark 7:5-9 ESV)

This is ever so true today also. **The majority of the teachings of mainstream “Christianity” are purely based on “tradition”, NOT the Bible.** Satan has deceived people to believe these “traditions” are good, that it is “okay” to worship God as each person sees fit as long as “your heart is right”. For a discussion of how God actually requires to be worshipped, see the paper **“True Worship of the True God”** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

The most dangerous attitude a person can have is a deep seated belief in his/her own “righteousness” – **self righteousness**. This is **Satan’s ultimate coup-de-grace** on a human being. When Satan convinces someone that he/she is “good with God”, in spite of the fact that the person is NOT living by the Way of God, but is in fact **living by their own way**, that person is in deep trouble:

He also told this parable to **some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous**, and treated others with contempt:

“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus:

‘God, **I thank you that I am not like other men**, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’

But **the tax collector**, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying,

‘God, **be merciful to me, a sinner!**’

I tell you, **this man went down to his house justified**, rather than the other.

For **everyone who exalts himself will be humbled**, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

(Luke 18:9-14 ESV)

And you, son of man, say to your people,

The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses,

and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and **the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins**.

Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet **if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice**, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done **he shall die**.

(Ezekiel 33:12-13 ESV)

Trusting in one’s own righteousness is the most dangerous sin a person can commit, because it is the ultimate deception. In fact, **self righteousness is the root cause of idolatry** which is the **mother of all sin**. A person who believes that he/she is righteous very easily sets his/her own ideas up the standard. This then becomes a form of “worship”, idolatry. This is what the Pharisees did. This is what the thought leaders of Western Civilization have done today. The **Prophet Isaiah** records God’s description of the attitude self righteousness:

Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and **shrewd in their own sight!**

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,
who put darkness for light and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

(Isaiah 5:21, 20 ESV)

It is **the tactic of Satan the Devil**: to make evil look good and to denigrate that which is actually good. **Jesus Christ uses the metaphor of “light” verses “darkness” to reiterate this point on several occasions**, and the **Apostles John** and **Paul** also repeat the metaphor:²³

Again **Jesus spoke** to them, saying,

“I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will **not walk in darkness**, but will have the **light of life**.”

Jesus answered,

“Are there not twelve hours in the day?

If anyone **walks in the day**, he does not stumble, because he sees **the light** of this world.

But if anyone **walks in the night**, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”

²³ For further discussion of this, see section **3.4.3.1 The Metaphor of “Light”**; see also section **1.1.2 God is Light** in the paper **“First Pillar - The Nature of God”**; as well as line 136 in the table in section **2.4.3 The Centrality of Jesus Christ** in the paper **“Second Pillar - The Plan of God”**; both papers are located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

So Jesus said to them,

“The light is among you for a little while longer.

Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you.

The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going.

While you have the light, **believe in the light**, that you may **become sons of light**.”

(John 8:12, 11:9-10, 12:35-36 ESV)

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that **God is light**, and **in him is no darkness at all**. If we say we have fellowship with him while we **walk in darkness**, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we **walk in the light**, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning.

The old commandment is the word that you have heard.

At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because **the darkness is passing away** and **the true light is already shining**.

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is **still in darkness**.

Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and **walks in the darkness**, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

(1 John 1:5-7, 2:7-11 ESV)

Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep.

For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The **night is far gone**; the **day is at hand**.

So then let us **cast off the works of darkness** and **put on the armor of light**.

Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness,

not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.

But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

(Romans 13:11-14 ESV)

Let no one deceive you with empty words,

for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Therefore do not become partners with them;

for **at one time you were darkness**, but **now you are light** in the Lord.

Walk as children of light (for **the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true**),

and try to **discern what is pleasing to the Lord**.

Take no part in the **unfruitful works of darkness**, but instead **expose them**.

(Ephesians 5:6-11 ESV)

The way of the world is clearly identified in the Bible. The Way of God is the antithesis of the way of the world. A True Worshipper of God, a True Christian, must actively **reject the way of the world** and pursue the Way of God. **The teaching of the entire Bible explains the Way of God**, but God has not left himself without a witness to humanity in general – **the creation speaks for Creator**.

3.2 General Revelation

During the re-creation of the surface of earth reported in the first chapter of Genesis, **the work was pronounced “good” on six occasions**:

And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And **God saw that the light was good**.²⁴

God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.

And **God saw that it was good**.

And God said,

“Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night.

And **let them be for signs and for seasons**, and for days and years,

and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth.”

And it was so. ... And **God saw that it was good**.

(Genesis 1:3-4a, 10, 14-15, 18b ESV see also verses 12, 21, and 25)

The physical universe, as recorded in the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis, had of course been created billions of years earlier. It was the rebellion of Satan which rendered the surface of the earth to

²⁴ For the scriptures demonstrating that it was Divine Being who became Jesus Christ that spoke these words, see line 1 in the table in section **2.4.3 The Centrality of Jesus Christ** in the paper “**Second Pillar - The Plan of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

a state of destruction.²⁵ **The re-creation of the surface of the earth was in preparation for the creation of human beings.** God pronounced the re-creation to be “good”. One reason for its being “good” is that from the surface of the earth, upon which humanity would live, there was perception of the vast physical universe, **“let there be lights in the expanse”**. God intended human beings to learn from the physical creation, **“let them be for signs and for seasons”**. **King David** looked up into the sky, he looked at human beings, he looked at the creation around him, and he **unmistakably recognized the hand of God:**

[YHWH], our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than [‘elohim]²⁶ and crowned him with glory and honor.

You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;

you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen,

and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens,

and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

(Psalm 8:1, 2-8 ESV)

David clearly saw the majesty of God reflected in the creation of the vast universe. He recognized that God had created all life on the planet. David mused at why human beings had been given such a special place. **This is General Revelation.** From the beginning, God intended that human beings would be able to look at the creation and know there had to be a Creator. God has revealed himself to all humanity, to each and every person, through the creation. **Sadly,** under the deception of Satan the Devil, **vast swaths of humanity have chosen to reject this revelation.** The **Apostle Paul** had harsh words for the philosophers of his day **who willingly suppressed the truth of God in favour of their own ideas,** words that are equally applicable to the thought leaders of Western Civilization today:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of **men,** who by their unrighteousness **suppress the truth.**

For **what can be known about God is plain to them,** because God has shown it to them.

For his invisible attributes, namely, **his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.**

So they are without excuse.

For **although they knew God,** they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images** resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity,

to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,

because **they exchanged the truth about God for a lie**

and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator ...

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God,

God gave them up to a debased mind ...

(Romans 1:18-25a, 28a ESV)

King David authored one of the most beautiful descriptions of General Revelation:

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours out speech, and **night to night reveals knowledge.**

There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.

Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,

and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.

Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them,

and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

(Psalm 19:1-6 ESV see also 65:5-13)

²⁵ For a discussion of these events, see section **1. The Foundation of the World** in the paper “**The Human Condition**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

²⁶ This is the “family name” of the God Family, see section **2.1.1. The Family Name** in the paper “**Second Pillar - The Plan of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Later Psalmists take up David's refrain:²⁷

Praise [YHWH]!

Praise [YHWH] from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts!

Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of [YHWH]!

For he commanded and they were created.

And he established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.

Praise [YHWH] from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps,

fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word!

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

Beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds!

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

(Psalm 148:1–11 ESV)

He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.

Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth;

he makes grass grow on the hills.

He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.

His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,

but [YHWH] takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his [hesed].

(Psalm 147:4-5, 8-11 ESV)

The Prophet Isaiah reports YHWH's own words establishing the basis of General Revelation:

To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these?

He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name;

by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.

Thus says God, [YHWH],

who created the heavens and stretched them out,

who spread out the earth and what comes from it,

who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: ...

I made the earth and created man on it;

it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,

and I commanded all their host.

For thus says [YHWH], who created the heavens (he is God!),

who formed the earth and made it

(he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!):

"I am [YHWH], and there is no other. ..."

Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called!

I am he; I am the first, and I am the last.

My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens;

when I call to them, they stand forth together.

(Isaiah 40:25-26, 42:5, 45:12, 18, 48:12-13 ESV see also Jeremiah 5:21-22)

The Apostle Paul uses a metaphor of the creation suffering until the Plan of God is accomplished at the First Resurrection and the "firstfruits" are granted the gift of eternal life:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the

glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it,

in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption

and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,

groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

(Romans 8:18-23 ESV)

²⁷ See also Psalms 33:6-9, 93:1-4, 95:3-5, 97:6, 104:1-30, 111:2-3, 119:89-91, 136:4-9

General revelation is just the beginning. No human being has an excuse for doubting the existence of the Creator, but to come to know the Creator requires his calling. Then, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a person can come into an **understanding of the Bible, Special Revelation.**

3.3 Special Revelation

We do NOT know how long Adam and Eve spent in an idyllic state in the Garden of Eden.

The brief record that we have is clear and specific that God spent time with them and taught them:

So **God created man in his own image**,
in the image of God he created him;
male and **female** he created them.

And **God blessed them**. And **God said to them**,
“**Be fruitful and multiply** and fill the earth and subdue it,
and **have dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens
and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

And **God said**,
“Behold, **I have given you every plant yielding seed** that is on the face of all the earth,
and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.
And **to every beast** of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps
on the earth, **everything that has the breath of life**, I have given every green plant for food.”

And the **[YHWH] God planted a garden** in Eden, in the east,
and **there he put the man** whom he had formed.
And out of the ground [YHWH] God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight
and good for food.

[YHWH] God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

And **[YHWH] God commanded the man**, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden ...”

And they heard the sound of the **[YHWH] God walking in the garden** in the cool of the day ...

But **[YHWH] God called to the man** and said to him, “Where are you?”

(Genesis 1:27-30, 2:8-9a, 15-16, 3:8a, 9 ESV)

God had a purpose for human beings, “**God created man in his own image**”. God bestowed his favour on Adam and Eve, “**God blessed them**”. God spent time talking with Adam and Eve, “**God said to them**”, “**God said**”. God gave Adam and Eve specific direction on what he required them to do, “**be fruitful and multiply**”, “**have dominion**”. God put Adam and Eve into a situation where they could succeed, “**God planted a garden**”, “**there he put the man**”. God gave Adam and Eve specific instructions as to what he required of them, “**in the garden ... work it and keep it**”, “**God commanded the man**”. God maintained an active relationship with Adam and Eve, “**God walking in the garden**”, “**God called to the man**”.

This is “Special Revelation” – the direct teaching of God given to human beings.

The entire Bible comprises “Special Revelation”. The Hebrew word for “Special Revelation” is

תּוֹרָה - torah, literally “**teaching**”, “**instruction**”, “**direction**”.²⁸ There are several other words which are used for specific aspects of Special Revelation:

- מִצְוָה - mitz'wah, “the ten commandments”, (see **TWOT** article 1887b pages 757-758)
- עֲדוּת - `eduth, more or less a synonym of *mitz'wah*, but it can have a somewhat broader range of meaning, (see **TWOT** article 1576f pages 649-650)
- חֹק - hoq, “statute”, a masculine noun, (see **TWOT** article 728 pages 316-318)
- חֻקָּה - huqqah, “statute”, a feminine noun, (see **TWOT** article 728 pages 316-318)
- פְּקוּדִים - piqqudim, “precept”, more or less a synonym of hoq and huqqah, but it can have a somewhat broader range of meaning, (see **TWOT** article 1802e page 732)
- מִשְׁמֶרֶת - mish'mereth, “charge”, “special instruction”, (see **TWOT** article 2414g page 940)

²⁸ For a discussion of *torah*, see **Excursus 3 – torah** and **Excursus 5 – torah and nomos** in the paper “**Covenants of Grace**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

The first instance of some of these words is in **Genesis 26:5** where God affirms that, as with Adam and Eve, **Abraham was given Special Revelation**. By the use of some of the specific words listed above, it also implies that Abraham was given instruction which was **more or less equivalent to the material that was later encapsulated in the Writings of Moses**:

... Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge (**mish^emereth**),
my commandments (**mitz^ewah**),
my statutes (**huqqah**); [**even²⁹ my torah**].
(Genesis 26:5 ESV)

God had previously expressed confidence in **Abraham's trustworthiness to teach the Way of God**:

[YHWH] said,
"Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,
seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation,
and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?
For **I have chosen him**, that he may **command his children** and his household after him
to keep the way (derek) of [YHWH] by **doing righteousness** and **justice**,
so that [YHWH] may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."
(Genesis 18:17-19 ESV)

The promises to Abraham are primarily fulfilled in Jesus Christ and the New Testament Church.³⁰ Most importantly, the **"blessing of all nations"** is **Jesus Christ**, and the **"multitude of nations"** is **all humanity** who will come to worship God and live by the **Way of God** under the Kingdom of God, and Abraham will indeed be the **"father of all the faithful"**:

Know then that it is **those of faith who are the sons of Abraham**.
And the Scripture, foreseeing that **God** would justify the Gentiles by faith,
preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying,
"In you shall all the nations be blessed."

So then, **those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham**, the man of faith.
(Galatians 3:7-9 ESV see also Romans 4:16, Hebrews 2:16-17, James 2:22-23)

Only in the Bible can we find the revelation of God. But **how do we know we can trust the Bible**? There are two aspect to the answer to this question, first to establish the **"authority"** of the Bible; and secondly, to establish that the Bible is in fact the **"inspired"** word of God.

3.3.1 Authority of the Bible³¹

Starting with the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, **the Bible claims to be the Word of God**:

In the beginning, **God created** the heavens and the earth. ... And **God said** ...
(Genesis 1:1, 3a ESV)

God spoke authoritatively to Abram:

Now **[YHWH] said to Abram**,
"**Go** from your country and your kindred and your father's house
to the land that I will show you. ..."
(Genesis 12:1 ESV)

When the time came to commission **Moses**, he **was told in no uncertain terms what he had to do**:

And the angel of **[YHWH] appeared to him** in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.
He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed.
And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."
When [YHWH] saw that he turned aside to see, **God called to him out of the bush**, "Moses, Moses!"
And he said, "Here I am."
Then he said,
"**Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet**,
for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."
And he said, "**I am the God of your father**, the God of **Abraham**, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."
And **Moses** hid his face, for he **was afraid to look at God**.

²⁹ The ׀ -"wah", is best taken as appositional here; it could be translated "that is, my torah".

³⁰ See the discussion in section 3. **The Covenant of Promise** in the paper **"Covenants of Grace"** and in section **11.2 Abraham and the Promises of God** in the paper **"The Writings of Moses"**; both papers are located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

³¹ For a discussion from a slightly different perspective, see **Excursus 1 – Revelation, Inspiration, and Authority** in the paper **"The Writings of Moses"** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Then [YHWH] said,

"I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians ... Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

(Exodus 3:2-8a, 10 ESV)

Egypt was the most advanced civilization of the ancient world. By the time of Moses, Egypt had been the number one nation on the earth for many hundreds of years. The mystique of Egyptian culture has remained until modern times. The paganism of Egypt was rampant – each major city had its own patron set of deities, but all worshipped the "Nile", and the Pharaoh was seen as the one who overarched everything. **When God pitted himself against Egypt, against Pharaoh, his purpose was clear:**

... on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am [YHWH].

But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you.

Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment.

The Egyptians shall know that I am [YHWH] ...

Then [YHWH] said to Moses,

"Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him,

'Thus says [YHWH], the God of the Hebrews,

"Let my people go, that they may serve me.

For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself,

and on your servants and your people,

so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth.

For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth.

But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power,

so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. ..."

(Exodus 12:12b, 7:3-5a, 9:13-16 ESV)

In order **to demonstrate his authority** over all the world, especially over Satan and his representatives, **God systematically destroyed the "gods of Egypt"**. God explicitly states that this demonstration was to be recorded and used as a basis **"to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth"**. We have the record of God's actions in the Bible, the authoritative Word of God. The **Apostle Paul** affirms that his preaching was to fulfill this purpose:

For **whatever was written in former days** was written **for our instruction**, that through endurance and through the encouragement of **the Scriptures** we might have hope. (Romans 15:4 ESV)

Now these things happened to them as an example, but **they were written down for our instruction**, on whom the end of the ages has come. (1 Corinthians 10:11 ESV)

But what does it say?

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"

(that is, **the word of faith that we proclaim**) ...

(Romans 10:8 ESV quoting Deuteronomy 30:14)

... **praying** at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, **making supplication** for all the saints, and also **for me**, that **words may be given to me** in opening my mouth boldly **to proclaim the mystery of the gospel** ... (Ephesians 6:18-19 ESV)

There are multiple explicit statements in the Bible demonstrating that the Word of God was to be written down and used authoritatively as instruction from God. For a discussion of many of these examples, see the paper "**The Writings of Moses**" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca. In particular, section **10. References to the Writings of Moses** discusses many allusions to the Writings of Moses in later Books of the Bible.

At his commissioning, **God revealed himself to the Prophet Isaiah very dramatically:**

In the year that King Uzziah died **I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up;** and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim.

Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is [YHWH] of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. **And I said:**

"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips,
and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;
for my eyes have seen the King, [YHWH] of hosts!"

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said:

"Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

And I heard **the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"**

Then I said, "Here I am! Send me."

And he said,

"Go, and say to this people:

'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'

Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes;

lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears,
and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

(Isaiah 6:1-10 ESV)

We don't know how long Isaiah had been active as a prophet prior to this revelation, but its impact on Isaiah was no doubt staggering. **Isaiah was given a glimpse into the very throne room of God in eternity.** There in awesome majesty sat YHWH. The Seraphim recount the Nature of God, **"holy, holy is YHWH of hosts"**, and the fact of General Revelation, **"the whole earth is full of his glory"**. Then Isaiah is told what he is to do to communicate God's Special Revelation, **"go, and say to this people"**. YHWH is the sovereign King of kings. **The Book of Isaiah contains authoritative communication from YHWH to True Worshipers of all ages.**

Isaiah was told that it was too late for the ancient nation of Isarel, both North and South. They, **"this people"**, had rejected their Creator and they would NOT respond to the preaching of Isaiah, **"lest they see with their eyes", "hear with their ears":**

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for [YHWH] has spoken:

"Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.

The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib,
but **Israel does not know, my people do not understand."**

Ah, **sinful nation,** a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly!

They have forsaken [YHWH], they have despised the Holy One of Israel,

they are utterly estranged.

(Isaiah 1:2-4 ESV)

Clearly, Isaiah's message was intended as a warning for his contemporaries, but in no uncertain terms **God required him to record it and pass it on as authoritative teaching** for True Worshipers down through the ages:

Bind up the testimony (t`uda),³² seal the teaching (torah) among my disciples.

To the teaching (torah) and to the testimony (t`uda)!

And now, go, **write it** before them on a tablet and **inscribe it in a book,**
that it may be **for the time to come as a witness forever.**

For they are a rebellious people, lying children,
children unwilling to hear the instruction (torah) of [YHWH];

(Isaiah 8:16, 20a, 30:8-9 ESV)

God is explicit that it is lies, the ideas of men, **taught as truth**, instead of the authoritative word of God from the Bible, which **caused the nation to fail:**

And the Lord said:

"Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips,
while their hearts are far from me,

and **their fear of me is a commandment (mitz`wah) taught by men ..."**

³² תְּעֻדָּה - t`uda, is a feminine synonym of `eduth (see TWOT 1576g pages 648-650); it occurs only in Isaiah 8:16, 20, and Ruth 4:7.

To whom will he teach (yarah)³³ knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message?

Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast?

**For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.**

For by people of strange lips and with a foreign tongue [YHWH] will speak to this people,
to whom he has said,

“This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose”;
yet they would not hear.

And the word of [YHWH] will be to them

precept upon precept, precept upon precept,

line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little,

that **they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.**

(Isaiah 29:13, 28:9-13 ESV)

The entire Bible is a complete authoritative package. The entire revelation must be considered in order to attain understanding, **“for it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.”** Yet without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it cannot be understood, **“they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken”.**

Jesus quoted Isaiah in explaining the purpose of parables to the disciples:

Then the disciples came and said to him, **“Why do you speak to them in parables?”**³⁴

And he answered them,

“To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven,
but **to them it has not been given.** ... This is why I speak to them in parables,
because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.
Indeed, in their case **the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled** that says:

‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.

For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear,

and their eyes they have closed,

lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears

and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ ...”

(citing Isaiah 6:9-10)

(Matthew 13:10-11, 13-15 ESV)

Because the “crowds” did NOT have the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they could NOT understand the parables. **The words of Jesus are authoritative.** Jesus dealt with the Patriarchs. Jesus talked with Moses. Jesus gave the prophets the words he required to be written. **Some of Jesus’ authoritative words are recorded in the New Testament:**

And they went into Capernaum,

and immediately **on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching.**

And **they were astonished at his teaching,**

for **he taught them as one who had authority,** and not as the scribes.

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with **an unclean spirit.** And he cried out,

“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?”

I know who you are—the Holy One of God.”

But **Jesus rebuked him,** saying, **“Be silent, and come out of him!”**

And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying,

“What is this? **A new teaching with authority!**

He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”

(Mark 1:21-27 ESV // Luke 4:31-36, see also Matthew 7:29)

Jesus’ words as recorded in the Old Testament and the New Testament comprise the complete revelation from God to man. Jesus, as YHWH, is the first-person speaker of much of the Old Testament. Much of the New Testament is quotation of Jesus’ spoken words. All of the Bible as revealed to its original authors and duly recorded is inspired by the Holy Spirit under the direction of Jesus Christ, YHWH, the spokesman for the Divine Family of God, representing God the Father. **The entire Bible is authoritative.** All parts of the Bible must be considered to understand the teaching of God. All

³³ יָרָה - yarah, is the root verb from which *torah* is derived (see TWOT article 910 pages 403-405).

³⁴ The first part of this saying of Jesus is paralleled in Mark 4:10-12 and Luke 8:9-10; only Matthew quotes Isaiah.

instructions in the Bible are there to teach those called by God so that we can understand his requirements and live by the Way of God.

3.3.2 Inspiration of the Bible

The seminal scripture on the subject of “inspiration” is from the Apostle Paul:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom³⁵ you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17 ESV)

The phrase “breathed out by God” is from θεόπνευστος - theopneustos, a feminine adjective. This is the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament. In secular usage, during New Testament times, “This word refers very generally to all wisdom as coming from God ...”.³⁶ B.B. Warfield has the best description of the meaning of *theopneustos*:

What it says of scripture is ... that it is breathed out by God. In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that Scriptures are a Divine product, without any indication how God has operated in producing them. No term could have been chosen, however, which would have more emphatically asserted the Divine production of Scripture ... The “breath of God” is in scripture just the symbol of his almighty power, the bearer of his creative word.

By the word of [YHWH] the heavens were made, and by the breath (ruach) of his mouth all their host. (citing Psalm 33:6 ESV)

And it is particularly where the operations of God are energetic that this term (weather רִיחַ - ruach, or רוּחַ שָׁמַיָּה - n^eshamah)³⁷ is employed to designate them – God’s breath is the irresistible outflow of his power.

When Paul declares, then, that “every scripture”, or “all scripture”, is the product of the Divine breath, “is God-breathed”, he asserts with as much energy as he could employ that scripture is the product of a specially Divine operation. (Warfield page 133)

3.3.2.1 Paul and Timothy

The Apostle Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy from Rome in the mid-sixties. Paul was facing imminent execution. The letter reads like a “farewell discourse” – Paul is passing the torch to Timothy. Paul encourages Timothy to be strong, remain faithful, and continue the work started by Paul and now being entrusted to Timothy:

I am reminded of your sincere faith ...

God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord ...

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ...

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men ...

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel ... Remind them of these things, and charge them before God ...

God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this seal:

“The Lord knows those who are his,” (citing Numbers 16:5) and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.” (possible alluding to Isaiah 26:13b or Psalm 20:7b)

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive ... having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. (2 Timothy 1:5a, 7-8a, 13, 2:1-2a, 14a, 19, 3:1-2a, 5 ESV)

³⁵ The Greek word is τίνων - tinōn, “Interrogative/Indefinite Pronoun: genitive plural masculine”; see www.esv.org, “Contextual Form”; the implication is that Paul acknowledged that Timothy had learned from multiple persons, NOT just himself.

³⁶ See TDNT volume VI page 453

³⁷ See the discussion of *ruach* and *n^eshamah* in section 2.1.2. *The Nature of Man* in the paper “*Second Pillar - The Plan of God*” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Paul had gone to central Asia Minor, to the region of Galatia, on his **First Journey** in 46AD or 47AD. On that journey, he visited **Lystra** and started a Church there.³⁸ Timothy's mother and grandmother were converted. On Paul's **Second Journey**, around 50AD he returned to **Lystra**. Now, Paul found **Timothy**, a **converted young man**, and he enlisted his services:

Paul came also to Derbe and **to Lystra**.

A disciple was there, named Timothy,

the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.

He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.

Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him ...

(Acts 16:1-3a ESV)

Timothy accompanied Paul to **Berea**, where he remained with Silas for a while,³⁹ then Timothy joined Paul in **Corinth**,⁴⁰ where he apparently remained for a period of time. A few years later, on his **Third Journey**, Paul arrived in **Ephesus**.⁴¹ At some point, Timothy also came to Ephesus from where Paul sent him back to **Macedonia**.⁴² Later Paul returned to Macedonia, from where he set off to Ephesus via **Troas** with a large retinue – Timothy was among the group.⁴³ The point of this is that **Timothy worked closely with Paul and with Paul's other associates for a period of at least ten years**. Paul acknowledges Timothy's presence with him in many of his letters.⁴⁴ **Timothy was clearly a trusted and beloved assistant of Paul**.

That is the background to Paul's "**farewell discourse**", his final letter to the person that perhaps he trusted the most, Timothy. The climax of this letter is of course the passage quoted above. In leading up to the seminal scripture, **Paul carefully sets the stage**:

You, however, **have followed my teaching**, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which **persecutions I endured**; yet **from them all the Lord rescued me**.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while **evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse**, deceiving and being deceived.

(2 Timothy 3:10-13 ESV)

Timothy was taught by Paul. Timothy worked with Paul. Timothy observed and no doubt participated in Paul's persecutions. Paul once more enjoins Timothy to faith, "**from them all the Lord rescued me**". Paul reminds Timothy, that this world cannot be changed, "**evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse**". Then Paul entrusts Timothy with what is perhaps **Paul's most profound statement**:

But as for you, **continue in what you have learned** and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood

you have been acquainted with the **sacred writings**,

which are able to make you **wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus**.

All Scripture is **breathed out by God** and **profitable** for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3:14-17 ESV)

Analysis of Paul's statement:

- Paul trusts Timothy to carry on the work of the Gospel, "**continue in what you have learned**"
- Timothy was educated in the "**sacred writings**" from his youth: the term "**sacred writings**" is from "ἱερὰ γράμματα" - hiera grammata, a phrase used only here in the New Testament; "ἱερὰ" is the accusative plural of ἱερός - hieros, an adjective meaning "sacred";⁴⁵ "γράμματα" is the accusative plural of γράμμα - gramma, a neuter noun meaning "letter", "writing", "bill".⁴⁶ On this phrase B.B. Warfield comments:

The expression, "sacred writings", here employed, is a technical one, not found elsewhere in the New Testament, it is true,

³⁸ See the narrative in Acts 14:1-23

³⁹ See the narrative in Acts 17:10-15

⁴⁰ See the narrative in Acts 18:1-5

⁴¹ See the narrative in Acts 19:1-10

⁴² See the narrative in Acts 19:21-22

⁴³ See the narrative in Acts 20:1-5

⁴⁴ See Romans 16:21, 1 Corinthians 4:17, 16:10, 2 Corinthians 1:1,19, Philippians 2:19,22, Colossians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 3:2,6,

2 Thessalonians 1:1, Philemon 1

⁴⁵ See www.esv.org "Lexical Form"

⁴⁶ Ibid.

but occurring in **Philo** and **Josephus** to designate that body of authoritative books which constituted the Jewish “Law”. (Warfield page 133)

Clearly, Paul intends the “Old Testament” as the meaning of “sacred writings”.

- The Old Testament contains the necessary information to make one “**wise for salvation**”, but only “**through faith in Christ Jesus**”
- Paul asserts that “**all Scripture** is **breathed out by God**”, “theopneustos”, “breathed out by God”, was discussed above; “all Scripture” is from “πᾶσα γραφή” - pasa graphe; “πᾶσα” is the “nominative singular feminine” of the very common adjective πᾶς - pas, which carries a range of meaning including “each”, “every”, “any”, “all”.⁴⁷ In the New Testament, “γραφή” - graphe, is used exclusively for “scripture”. In secular usage it generally means any “writing”.⁴⁸

Clearly Paul is asserting that “sacred writings” and “scripture” are one and the same.

- Paul asserts that “scripture”, “sacred writings”, are “**profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness**”, i.e. instruction in living by the Way of God.
- Paul’s final thought relates to the objective of living by the Way of God, to “**be complete, equipped for every good work**”

After the death of Paul, **the author of Hebrews alludes to an imprisonment of Timothy:**

You should know that our brother **Timothy has been released** ...
(Hebrews 13:23a ESV)

That is the last mention of Timothy in the New Testament. Eusebius reports that he became a “bishop” of Ephesus. **According a “Martyrdom of Timothy”, apparently authored by Polycrates, he was murdered in Ephesus.**⁴⁹

3.3.2.2 γράμμα, γραφή, and γράφω

Two of these terms were used by Paul in the seminal scripture. In the New Testament, the neuter noun, γράμμα - **gramma**, occurs 13 times, and the feminine noun, γραφή - **graphē**, occurs 50 times. The verb, γράφω - **graphō**, occurs 179 times. It is the ordinary word meaning “**to write**”.⁵⁰ A participle of **graphō**, “third singular perfect passive indicative”,⁵¹ γέγραπται - **gegraptai**, “**it is written**”, is used as a technical expression. In secular usage, it is used to introduce any quotation. In the New Testament it issued to introduce a quotation from the Old Testament. **Another participle of graphō** is also used a few times to introduce quotations from the Old Testament; γεγραμμένον – **gegrammenon**, “perfect passive participle, nominative singular neuter”⁵² As noted above, **graphē** in the New Testament always denotes “**scripture**”; **gramma** is often used more generally:

He said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’

He said to him, ‘**Take your bill (gramma)**, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’

Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’

He said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’

He said to him, ‘**Take your bill (gramma)**, and write eighty.’

(Luke 16:6-7 ESV)

And they said to him, “**We have received no letters (gramma)** from Judea about you ...

(Acts 28:21a ESV)

See with what **large letters (gramma)** I am writing to you with my own hand.

(Galatians 6:11 ESV)

In the following instances, **gramma implies education in general**, but specifically Pharisaic interpretations:

The Jews therefore marveled, saying,

“**How is it that this man has learning (gramma)**, when he has never studied?”

(John 7:15 ESV)

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See GEL page 165

⁴⁹ See article “**Timothy, apostle (apocryphal)**” in EAC volume III pages 792-793

⁵⁰ See GEL pages 165-166

⁵¹ See www.esv.org Lexical Form

⁵² Ibid.

And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice,
“Paul, you are out of your mind; **your great learning (gramma)** is driving you out of your mind.”
(Acts 26:24 ESV)

Paul uses *gramma* in a negative sense for the Writings of Moses to contrast the penalty for sin, death, with the promise of life made possible by the New Covenant:

Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the [nomos]⁵³ will condemn **you who have the written code (gramma)** and circumcision but break the [nomos].
For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.
But a Jew is one inwardly,
and circumcision is **a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter (gramma)**.
His praise is not from man but from God.

But now we are released from the [nomos],⁵⁴ having died to that which held us captive,
so that we serve in **the new way of the Spirit** and **not in the old way of the written code (gramma)**.
(Romans 2:27-29, 7:6 ESV)

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us,
but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be **ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter (gramma) but of the Spirit**. **For the letter (gramma) kills**, but **the Spirit gives life**.

Now if the ministry of death, **carved in letters (gramma) on stone**,
came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory,
which was being brought to an end, will **not the ministry of the Spirit** have even more glory?
(2 Corinthians 3:5-8 ESV)

Finally, Jesus bases his credibility on the Writings of Moses:

For **if you believed Moses, you would believe me**; for he wrote of me.
But **if you do not believe his writings (gramma), how will you believe my words?**
(John 5:46-47 ESV)

There are at least five distinct senses in which *graphē* is used in relation to the Old Testament:

1. A direct citation from the Old Testament:

Jesus said to them,

“Have you never read in the Scriptures (graphē):

‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? ...” (citing Psalm 118:22-23)

(Matthew 21:42 ESV // Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17, see also Acts 4:11, 1 Peter 2:6-7)

... Jesus stood up and cried out,

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, **as the Scripture (graphē) has said,**

‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”⁵⁵

(John 7:38 ESV see also 4:14)

I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen.

But **the Scripture (graphē) will be fulfilled,**

‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ (citing Psalm 41:9)

(John 13:18 ESV)

... so they said to one another,

“Let us not tear it, but **cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.**”

This was to **fulfill the Scripture (graphē)** which says,

“They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots”. (citing Psalm 22:18)

For these things took place that the **Scripture (graphē) might be fulfilled:**

“Not one of his bones will be broken.” (citing Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12)

And again **another Scripture (graphē) says,**

“They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

(citing Zechariah 12:10, see also Revelation 1:7)

(John 19:24, 36-37 ESV)

Now the **passage of the Scripture (graphē)** that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter

and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him.

⁵³ See footnote 4

⁵⁴ Paul means being released from the “penalty” of the *nomos*, death.

⁵⁵ See footnote 77

Who can describe his generation?
 For his life is taken away from the earth.” (citing Isaiah 53:7-8)
 (Acts 8:32 ESV see also Philippians 2:8)

For what does **the Scripture (graphē) say**?
 “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” (citing Genesis 15:6)

For **the Scripture (graphē) says** to Pharaoh,
 “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you,
 and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” (citing Exodus 9:16)

For **the Scripture (graphē) says**,
 “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” (citing Isaiah 28:16)

God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.
 Do you not know what **the Scripture (graphē) says** of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?
 “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars,
 and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” (citing 1 Kings 19:10, 14)
 (Romans 4:3, 9:17, 10:11, 11:2-3 ESV)

And **the Scripture (graphē)**, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **preached the gospel**
 beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.” (citing Genesis 12:3)

But **what does the Scripture (graphē) say**?
 “Cast out the slave woman and her son,
 for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.”
 (citing Genesis 21:10)
 (Galatians 3:8, 4:30 ESV)

For **the Scripture (graphē) says**,
 “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” (citing Deuteronomy 25:4)
 and, “The laborer deserves his wages.” (citing Leviticus 19:13, Deuteronomy 24:15)
 (1 Timothy 5:18 ESV)

If you really fulfill **the royal law according to the Scripture (graphē)**,
 “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” (citing Leviticus 19:18b)
 you are doing well.

You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;
 and **the Scripture (graphē) was fulfilled that says**,
 “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness” (citing Genesis 15:6)
 (James 2:8, 22-23a ESV)

2. **An allusion to prophecy from the Old Testament:**

“... Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me.
 But **let the Scriptures (graphē) be fulfilled.**” And **they all left him and fled.** (alluding to Psalm 88:8, 18)
 (Mark 14:49-50 ESV // Matthew 26:56)

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down.
 And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them,
 “**Today this Scripture (graphē) has been fulfilled in your hearing.**” (alluding to Isaiah 61:1-2a)
 (Luke 4:20-21 ESV)

“... **Has not the Scripture said** that the
Christ comes from the offspring of David, (alluding to Psalm 89:3-4)
 and comes **from Bethlehem**, (alluding to Micah 5:2) the village where David was?”
 (John 7:42 ESV)

While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me.
 I have guarded them, and **not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction**,
that the Scripture (graphē) might be fulfilled. (alluding to Psalm 109:8, see also Acts 1:16-20)
 (John 17:12 ESV)

After this, **Jesus**, knowing that all was now finished,
said (to fulfill the Scripture (graphē)), “I thirst.” (alluding to Psalm 69:21)
 (John 19:28 ESV)

Then Philip opened his mouth, and **beginning with this Scripture (graphē)**
 he told him the good news about Jesus. (alluding to Isaiah 53:7-8)
 (Acts 8:35 ESV)

The following references are NOT to any specific “prophecy”, but to prophecy in general which looks to Jesus Christ. For a compilation of these Old Testament scriptures referring to Jesus Christ, see the paper **“Jesus Christ in the Old Testament”** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca:

- And he said to them,
“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to **believe all that the prophets have spoken!**
Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”
And **beginning with Moses and all the Prophets**, he interpreted to them in **all the Scriptures (graphē)** the things concerning himself.
Then he said to them,
“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you,
that **everything written (graphō) about me in the [nomos]⁵⁶ of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**”
Then **he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (graphē)**, and said to them,
“**Thus it is written (graphō)**, that the Christ should suffer
and on the third day rise from the dead, ...”
(Luke 24:25-27, 44-46 ESV)
- **You search the Scriptures (graphē)** because you think that in them you have eternal life; and **it is they that bear witness about me**, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.
(John 5:39-40 ESV)
- And **Paul** went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he **reasoned with them from the Scriptures (graphē)**, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, **“This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”**
(Acts 17:2-3 ESV)
- When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, **showing by the Scriptures (graphē) that the Christ was Jesus.**
(Acts 18:27b-28 ESV)
- Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for **the gospel of God**, which he **promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures (graphē)**, concerning his Son ...
(Romans 1:1-2a ESV)
- Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to **my gospel** and the **preaching of Jesus Christ**, according to **the revelation of the mystery** that was kept secret for long ages but has **now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings (graphē)** has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.
(Romans 16:25-27 ESV)

3. **An allusion to events or statements from the Old Testament:**

Jesus said to them,
“Is this not the reason you are wrong,
because **you know neither the Scriptures (graphē)** nor the power of God?
(Mark 12:24 ESV // Matthew 22:29)

If **he called them gods** (alluding to Psalm 82:6) to whom the word of God came—and **Scripture (graphē) cannot be broken**—
do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world,
‘You are blaspheming,’
because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’?
(John 10:35-36 ESV)

You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and **the Scripture (graphē) was fulfilled that says**,
“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”
—and **he was called a friend of God**. (alluding to 2 Chronicles 20:7, Isaiah 41:8)
(James 2:22-23 ESV)

⁵⁶ Here, *nomos* refers to the Writings of Moses.
Sunday, December 1, 2024

4. A reference to the Old Testament in general:

They said to each other,

“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road,
while **he opened to us the Scriptures (graphē)?**”

(Luke 24:32 ESV)

The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to **Berea**,
and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

Now **these Jews** were more noble than those in Thessalonica;

they **received the word with all eagerness**,

examining the Scriptures (graphē) daily to see if these things were so.

(Acts 17:10-11 ESV)

Now a Jew named **Apollos**, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus.

He was an eloquent man, **competent in the Scriptures (graphē)**.

(Acts 18:24)

But **the Scripture (graphē) imprisoned everything under sin**,

so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

(Galatians 3:22 ESV)

5. A reference to New Testament documents in the light of the Old Testament:

But **how then should the Scriptures (graphē) be fulfilled**, that it must be so?

(Matthew 26:54 ESV see also Luke 18:31-34 // Mark 10:32-34,

Matthew 20:17-19; alluding to Isaiah 53:5, 8-9)

Jesus answered them,

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

The Jews then said,

“It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and **will you raise it up in three days?**”

(see Matthew 12:40, alluding to Jonah 1:17, 2:1-10, Hosea 6:2)

But he was speaking about **the temple of his body**.

(see Mark 8:31 // Matthew 16:21, Luke 9:22; Mark 9:31 // Matthew 17:22-23, Luke 9:44)

When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this,

and **they believed the Scripture (graphē)** (alluding to Psalm 16:10) and **the word that Jesus had spoken**.

(John 2:19-22 ESV)

Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;

for as yet **they did not understand the Scripture (graphē), that he must rise from the dead**.

(John 20:8-9 ESV see also Mark 9:9-10)

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:

that **Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures (graphē)**,

that he was buried, **that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (graphē)** ...

(1 Corinthians 15:3-4 ESV also see Luke 24:7, 46; Acts 2:24-26 citing Psalm 16:8-11)

Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that **the Scripture (graphē) says**,

“He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?

(James 4:5 ESV see also Romans 8:9-11, 1 Corinthians 6:19;

2 Corinthians 6:16-18 alluding to Leviticus 26:12, Isaiah 52:11, 2 Samuel 7:14a, Isaiah 43:6b)

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation,

just as our beloved brother **Paul also wrote (graphō) to you** according to the wisdom given him,

as he does **in all his letters** when he speaks in them of these matters.

There are some things in them that are hard to understand,

which **the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction**,

as they do the other Scriptures (graphē).

(2 Peter 3:15-16 ESV)

The verb form γέγραπται – *gegraptai* occurs 67 times in the New Testament. With a few slight variations it is nearly always translated “it is written”, and in the vast majority of instances a direct quotation from the Old Testament follows. **Consider a few examples:**⁵⁷

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written (gegraptai) in Isaiah the prophet,

Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, (citing Malachi 3:1)
the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths⁵⁸ straight ... (citing Isaiah 40:3)

(Mark 1 1-3 ESV // Matthew 3:1-3, Luke 3:3-4)

And he said to them,

“Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, **as it is written (gegraptai)**,

This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;

in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. ...”

(citing Isaiah 29:13)

(Mark 7:6-7 ESV // Matthew 15:7-9)

And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers,

this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus,

as also it is written (gegraptai) in the second Psalm,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” (citing Psalm 2:7)

(Acts 13:32-33 ESV)

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, **as it is written (gegraptai)**,

“The righteous shall live by faith.” (citing Habakkuk 2:4)

(Romans 1:17 ESV)

... as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, **since it is written (gegraptai)**,

“You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (citing Leviticus 11:44 see also 20:7, 26, 21:8)

(1 Peter 1:15-16 ESV)

There are a few instances where *gegraptai* is translated by “it is written”, but there is no quote, just an allusion to the Old Testament; consider some examples:⁵⁹

And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?”

And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things.

And **how is it written (gegraptai)** of the Son of Man

that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?

But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased,

as it is written (gegraptai) of him.”

(Mark 9:11-13 ESV // Matthew 17:10-13 alluding to 1 Kings 17:1, 19:2, 10, Malachi 4:5)

For it is written (gegraptai) that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman.

(Galatians 4:22 ESV alluding to Genesis 16:15-16, 21:1-3)

Consider some examples of *gegrammenon* to introduce quotations from the Old Testament:⁶⁰

For I tell you that **this Scripture (gegrammenon) must be fulfilled** in me:

‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’

(Luke 22:37a ESV citing Isaiah 53:12)

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

It is written (gegrammenon) in the Prophets,

‘And they will all be taught by God.’

Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me ...

(John 6:44-45 ESV citing Isaiah 54:13)

Since we have the same spirit of faith **according to what has been written (gegrammenon)**,

“I believed, and so I spoke,”

we also believe, and so we also speak ...

(2 Corinthians 4:13 ESV citing Psalm 116:10)

⁵⁷ See also **Matthew** 2:5, 4:4,6,7,10, 11:10, 21:13, 26:24,31, **Mark** 11:17, 14:27, **Luke** 2:23, 4:4,8,10, 7:27, 10:26, 19:46, 24:46, **Acts** 1:20, 7:42, 15:15, 23:5, **Romans** 2:24, 3:4,10, 8:36, 9:13,33, 10:15, 11:8,26, 12:19, 14:11, 15:3,9,21, **1 Corinthians** 1:19,31, 2:9, 3:19, 9:9, 10:7, 14:21, 15:45, **2 Corinthians** 8:15, 9:9, **Galatians** 3:10,13, 4:27

⁵⁸ The Greek word, τριβος - tribos, is used only in this citation; Isaiah 40:3 has *derek*.

⁵⁹ See also **Matthew** 26:24, **Mark** 14:21, **John** 8:17

⁶⁰ See also **Luke** 20:17, 22:37, **John** 2:17, 6:31, 10:34,12:14

The author of the **Book of Hebrews** cites a Davidic Psalm as the very words of Jesus, inspired as YHWH, using *gegraptai* to refer to the First Advent:

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Consequently, **when Christ came into the world, he said,**

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

Then I said,

‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,

as **it is written (*gegraptai*) of me** in the scroll of the book.’” (citing Psalm 40:6-8a)

(Hebrews 10:4-7 ESV)

All of these examples of the New Testament referring to the Old Testament make it clear that **the New Testament authors considered the Old Testament to be the authoritative, “inspired”, word of God**; and, on that basis, **the New Testament documents themselves were of the same status**.

3.3.2.3 “Inspiration” in the Old Testament

The vast majority of the Old Testament is presented as the very words of God. Phrases which attest this are encountered everywhere, for example:

- **“and God said ...”**, in the early parts of Genesis, God spoke directly to Adam, Eve, Noah, and others; direct communication continued with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; direct communication occurred again with Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and occasionally others
- **“the word of YHWH came to Abram in a vision”**, (Genesis 15:1), this is the first instance of God communicating through a “vision”
- **“the angel of YHWH called to him from heaven and said”**, (Genesis 22:11), “the angel of YHWH” is either a manifestation of YHWH himself, or an actual “angel” with a particular message or commission from YHWH⁶¹
- With Jacob, **God began to use “dreams”** to communicate:
Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran.
And he **came to a certain place and stayed there that night**, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. **And he dreamed**, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, **[YHWH] stood above it and said**,
“I am [YHWH], the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. ...”
(Genesis 28:10-13a ESV)
- With Joseph God began to use **“guidance by the Holy Spirit”**:
[YHWH] was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that [YHWH] was with him and that **[YHWH] caused all that he did to succeed** in his hands.
And Joseph said to them, **“Do not interpretations belong to God?** Please tell them to me.”
(Genesis 39:2-3, 40:8b ESV)
- The **“Urim”** and **“Thummim”** were part of the High Priests garment: they allowed the High Priest to make inquiry of specific questions from God (Exodus 28:30, Leviticus 8:8, Numbers 27:21)⁶²
- **Prophetic inspiration**:
“[YHWH] sent a prophet to the people of Israel.
And he said to them, **‘Thus says [YHWH]**, the God of Israel ...’”
(Judges 6:8 ESV)

The phrase “thus says YHWH” is known as the “messenger formula”⁶³ because it is followed by direct words from God. It occurs over 400 times. Similar phrases include **“the word of YHWH”**, which occurs nearly 300 times and **“declares YHWH”**, which occurs about 350 times. **All of these phrases express direct words from God which have been recorded in the Bible.** The question is “how did God communicate the words that are recorded”?

⁶¹ See the Bible study notes, “The Angel of YHWH” locate at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

⁶² When David wandering in the wilderness, he was joined by Abiathar the Priest, who apparently had the Urim and Thummim, because David frequently asked Abiathar specific questions, see 1 Samuel 23:1-12.

⁶³ See von Rad pages 18-21

Consider the example of the **Prophet Samuel**:

And in due time **Hannah conceived and bore a son**, and she called his name **Samuel**, for she said,
“I have asked for him from [YHWH]. ... **For this child I prayed**,
and [YHWH] has granted me my petition that I made to him.
Therefore I have lent him to [YHWH]. **As long as he lives, he is lent to [YHWH].**”

And **the boy was ministering to [YHWH] in the presence of Eli the priest**. ...

Now the boy **Samuel continued to grow** both in stature and in favor with [YHWH] and also with man. ...

Now the young man⁶⁴ Samuel was ministering to [YHWH] in the presence of Eli.

And **the word of [YHWH] was rare in those days**; there was no frequent vision.

And **[YHWH] came and stood, calling** as at other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”

And **Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant hears.”**

Then [YHWH] said to Samuel,

“Behold, **I am about to do a thing in Israel** at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. And **I declare to him** that I am about to punish his house ...”

Samuel lay until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of [YHWH].

And **Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli**. But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.”

And he said, “Here I am.”

And **Eli said**,

“What was it that he told you? **Do not hide it from me**.

May God do so to you and more also if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.”

So **Samuel told him everything** ...

And **Samuel grew**, and [YHWH] was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that **Samuel was established as a prophet of [YHWH]**.

(1 Samuel 1:20, 27-28a, 2:11b, 26, 3:1, 10-13a, 15-18a, 19-20 ESV)

Analysis of God’s preparation and commissioning of Samuel:⁶⁵

- Samuel’s birth was special, **“for this child I prayed”**
- Samuel was committed to life-long service, **“as long as he lives, he is lent to YHWH”**
- Samuel was trained by the presiding High Priest, **“ministering ... in the presence of Eli”**, **“Samuel continued to grow”**
- Israel had more or less lost contact with God, **“the word of YHWH was rare in those days”**
- YHWH personally appeared to Samuel and gave him a message, **“YHWH came and stood, calling”**, **“I am about to do a thing in Israel”**, **“I declare to him”**
- Samuel without hesitation responded to his commission, **“Samuel said, Speak, for your servant hears”**, **“Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli”**, **“Samuel told him everything”**
- God continued to work with Samuel, **“Samuel grew”**, **“Samuel was established as a prophet”**

This personal **“theophany”** gave Samuel the send-off he required to complete his life-long mission.

Other prophets also received personal **“theophanies”**: **Isaiah** was given a vision of the throne room of God in eternity;⁶⁶ **Jeremiah** was personally told by God what he was required to do, and two extremely vivid visions were used to impress the requirements upon his mind;⁶⁷ and, **Ezekiel** was exposed to a vision of a portable throne of God accompanied by a detailed explanation of his commission which included the eating of a scroll.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ This is the same word, נָעַר - na'ar, translated “boy”: it implies “a marriageable male while still single”, so a child through a young man, see Holladay page 241.

⁶⁵ For discussion of the prophetic institution in Israel and Samuel’s role in establishing “schools of prophets”, see sections **2.4 The Role of Prophecy**, **2.4.1 The Nature of Prophecy**, and **2.4.1.1 The Former Prophets** in the paper **“Second Pillar - The Plan of God”** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

⁶⁶ See Isaiah chapter six

⁶⁷ See Jeremiah chapter two

⁶⁸ See Ezekiel chapter one and two and verses 1 through 15 of chapter three

All the writing prophets record that they personally received the words they spoke and wrote directly from God – they all couch their spoken and written words with the formulae “thus says YHWH”, “the word of YHWH”, and “declares YHWH”. **Consider Amos’ description of his calling**:. Amos had been accosted by Amaziah the priest of Bethel – he is responding to the accusation:

Then **Amos answered and said to Amaziah**,

“I was no prophet, nor a prophet’s son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs.

But **[YHWH] took me from following the flock**, and **[YHWH] said to me**,

‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’

Now **therefore hear the word of [YHWH]**.

You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac.’

Therefore **thus says [YHWH]**:

‘Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city,
and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword,
and your land shall be divided up with a measuring line;
you yourself shall die in an unclean land,
and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.’”

(Amos 7:14-17 ESV)

The mechanism of God’s communication with the prophets is NOT always explicit. With Samuel it is clear that God appeared and spoke. Amos says simply that **“YHWH said to me”** – did he hear an audible voice? Did he hear the words only with his “inner ear”? Was he moved to speak the words by the urging of the Holy Spirit? Amos identifies his prophecy as **“the word of YHWH”** and he prefaces the words with the messenger formula, **“thus says [YHWH]”**. Amos goes on to use the messenger formula fourteen times.⁶⁹

Consider how Hosea similarly describes his revelation from God. Clearly, **Hosea is reporting the very words given to him by God**. Then, throughout his book, Hosea reports mostly first-person speeches from God:

The word of [YHWH] that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri ...

When **[YHWH] first spoke** through Hosea, **[YHWH] said** to Hosea ...

And **[YHWH] said** to him ...

(Hosea 1:1a, 2a, 4a ESV)

The **Prophet Isaiah** was a willing messenger of God’s word, but the **Prophet Jeremiah** had some trepidation. Both were given visionary experiences⁷⁰ accompanied by direct communication:

And **I heard the voice of the Lord saying**, **“Whom shall I send**, and who will go for us?”

Then I said, **“Here I am! Send me.”**

And he said, “Go, and say to this people: ...”

(Isaiah 6:8-9a ESV)

Now the word of [YHWH] came to me, saying,

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and **before you were born I consecrated you**;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Then I said, “Ah, Lord [YHWH]! Behold, **I do not know how to speak**, for **I am only a youth**.”

But **[YHWH] said to me**,

“Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’;
for **to all to whom I send you, you shall go**, and **whatever I command you, you shall speak**.
Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares [YHWH].”

(Jeremiah 1:4-8 ESV)

Jeremiah came to appreciate the words given to him by God, and **the Prophet Ezekiel reports a similar experience**:

[YHWH], you know;

remember me and visit me, stand take vengeance for me on my persecutors.

In your forbearance take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach.

Your words were found, and **I ate them**,

and **your words became to me a joy** and **the delight of my heart**,

⁶⁹ See Amos 1:3,6,9,11,13, 2:1,4,6, 3:11,12, 5:3,4,16, 7:17; Amos uses “declares YHWH” 21 times, see Amos 2:11,16, 3:10,13,15, 4:3,5,6,8,9,10,11, 6:8,14, 8:3,9,11, 9:7,8,12,13; and, “the word of YHWH” 3 times, see Amos 7:16, 8:11,12

⁷⁰ See Isaiah 6:1-7, Jeremiah 1:9-13

for I am called by your name, [YHWH], God of hosts.
(Jeremiah 15:15-16 ESV)

And [YHWH] said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.”

“But you, son of man, hear what I say to you.

Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.”

And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, **a scroll of a book** was in it. And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

And he said to me,

“Son of man, eat whatever you find here. **Eat this scroll**, and **go, speak to the house of Israel**.”

So I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat.

And he said to me,

“Son of man, **feed your belly with this scroll** that I give you and fill your stomach with it.”

Then **I ate it**, and **it was in my mouth as sweet as honey**.

(Ezekiel 2:1, 8-10, 3:1-3 ESV)

In all these theophanies, **the visionary aspects are just as real as the communicated words**. **The words were spoken directly to the prophet by God**. The prophets continued to receive verbal words from God, and we have the reporting of the words in their books.

The words received by a prophet from God were compelling – the prophet could not help but pass on his message:

For the Lord [YHWH] does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.

The lion has roared; who will not fear?

The Lord [YHWH] has spoken; who can but prophesy?”

(Amos 3:7-8 ESV)

But as for me, **I am filled with power, with the Spirit of [YHWH]**,

and with [justice] (mish^opat)⁷¹ and might,

to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.

(Micah 3:8 ESV)

The communication from God to each prophet is personal, but powerful and irresistible. This was a lesson Jonah had to learn:

Now **the word of [YHWH] came to Jonah** the son of Amittai, saying,

“Arise, **go to Nineveh**, that great city, and **call out against it**, for their evil has come up before me.”

But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of [YHWH].

He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish.

So he paid the fare and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish,

away from the presence of [YHWH].

So **they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea**, and the sea ceased from its raging.

Then Jonah prayed to [YHWH] his God ...

I called out to [YHWH], out of my distress, **and he answered me**;

out of the belly of **[death]**⁷² I cried, and you heard my voice.

The waters closed in over me **to take my life**; the deep surrounded me;

And [YHWH] spoke to **the fish**, and it **vomited Jonah out upon the dry land**.

Then **the word of [YHWH] came to Jonah the second time**, saying,

“Arise, **go to Nineveh**, that great city, and **call out against it the message that I tell you**.”

So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of [YHWH].

(Jonah 1:1-3, 15, 2:1a, 2, 5a, 10, 3:1-3a ESV)

The **Apostle Peter summarizes** the revelation of God through his words to the Prophets:

And we have **the prophetic word** more fully confirmed,

to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place,

until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

knowing this first of all,

that **no prophecy of Scripture (graphē)** comes from someone’s own interpretation.

⁷¹ When mish^opat refers to a **character attribute** of God, or a character attribute God requires of True Worshipers, the best translation is usually “**justice**”. When mish^opat is used in **a more abstract sense**, the best translation is usually “**justice**”.

⁷² The word מוֹתָּהוּ -sh^o’ol, means the “grave”; it is used here metaphorically for “death”.

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man,
but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
(2 Peter 1:19-21 ESV)

Even in the New Testament, God continued direct communication in special cases. In his conversion theophany, Saul, soon to become the **Apostle Paul**, recounts the words spoken to him, as reported by Luke. The revelation to Paul was personal. Others were aware that something was happening, but only Paul understood the words spoken to him:

But **Saul**, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,
went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus,
so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus,
and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.
And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him,
“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”

And he said, “Who are you, Lord?”

And he said,
“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”

The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.
(Acts 9:1-7 ESV)

As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus,
about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me.
And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me,
‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’

And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’

Now those who were with me saw the light
but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me.
(Acts 22:6-9 ESV)

God spoke directly to many of the Old Testament authors. Others were given visions accompanied by “the word of YHWH”. Others simply report “the word of YHWH”. Where there is no direct indication how the author received inspiration, the Holy Spirit clearly worked with author’s faculties. The efficacy of the Holy Spirit in directing human cognitive processes is directly affirmed by Jesus Christ. It was under this compelling direction of the Holy Spirit that the New Testament documents were produced:

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.
But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, [which] the Father will send in my name,
[it] will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. ...
I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.
When the Spirit of truth comes, [it] will guide you into all the truth,
for [it] will not speak on his own authority, but whatever [it] hears [it] will speak,
and [it] will declare to you the things that are to come.
(John 14:25-26, 16:12-13 ESV)

Similarly, the **Apostle Paul affirms** that the teaching of God can only be understood through the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God
with lofty speech or wisdom. ... and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom,
but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom,
although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.
But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ...
But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him” (citing Isaiah 6:4)

– these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.
For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ...
So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit [which] is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.**
And **we impart this in words** not taught by human wisdom
but **taught by the Spirit**, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.
(1 Corinthians 2:1, 4-7, 9-10, 11b-13 ESV)

Given the inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit for all scripture, and the assured guidance of God through the Holy Spirit to understand the written word, **True Worshipers can have absolute confidence in the contents of the entire Bible.**

3.3.2.4 Textual Criticism

The Bible was written over a period of many hundreds of years by many different people living under very diverse circumstances. The **miracle of the Bible** is that from these original authors God has seen to it that the text has come down to us in a form from which we can create modern language translations and **understand the revelation from God which he intended.** The question in this process is **“Where is inspiration operative?”** Clearly, God, through the Holy Spirit, ensured that **the original autograph of any Biblical document said exactly and precisely what God intended.** And, clearly, God has NOT just thrown the text out there and let whatever may happen to it. **The Bible is the written Word of God.** It is God’s revelation of himself to human beings. It contains the vital information human beings requires to know God, to understand the Plan of God, and to live by the Way of God. God has clearly seen to it that this revelation is complete and understandable for us today as we approach the time of the end.

The objective of the “science” of “textual criticism” is to analyze ancient manuscripts and determine as closely as possible what was the text of the original autograph. Textual criticism can be used with any ancient manuscripts. **The oldest complete manuscripts of the Old Testament are contained in the Masoretic Text produced around 1000AD.** With the discoveries of the last hundred years of ancient texts in the Judean Dessert, many fragmentary manuscripts which are about a thousand years older have been found. There are also several ancient translations of the Old Testament which provide another witness to the original text. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into further details concerning the manuscripts or the versions; **for more information on the Old Testament text,** see **Tov, Würthwein,** and **Barr.**

The New Testament documents were all written in the First Century. They were very quickly proliferated throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. Many early translations were made. There are more manuscripts of the New Testament documents than any other ancient text, but we still do not have any of the original autographs. The oldest complete manuscripts are from the Fourth Century, with many fragmentary witnesses going back even into the Second Century. Based on all of this manuscript evidence it is possible to construct **“eclectic texts”** which attempt to identify the original text. Modern translations are based on eclectic texts. **For more information on the New Testament text,** see **Metzger (TC), Finegan,** and **Comfort.**

All original autographs were “handwritten”, as were all ancient manuscripts. Any duplication of a document required copying from a previous instance of the document. This process is called **“transmission of the text”**. This process is where discrepancies in copies arise – hand copying is inherently prone to error. Where copies of copies are used, errors proliferate. This is the challenge of textual criticism - **based on copies of copies to determine what was the original text.**

It is clear that many of the Old Testament documents used written source material. The question is what was inspired – the source material or the use of the source material by the Biblical author? This question cannot be answered in detail, but clearly the final product of the Biblical author was inspired. For a discussion of **source materials used by Moses,** see the paper **“The Writings of Moses”**, and for brief discussion of the **sources of Kings and Chronicles,** see section **2.4.1.1 The Former Prophets** in the paper **“Second Pillar - The Plan of God”**, both papers are located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca. It is very clear that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke used previously written source material; Luke explicitly affirms it:

Inasmuch as **many have undertaken to compile a narrative**
of the things that have been accomplished among us,

just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us,
it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past,
to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,
that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.
(Luke 1:1-4 ESV)

While the “science” of “textual criticism” is useful and helpful, **there is no major teaching of the Bible which is affected by any problem in the text.** In constructing the Bible, God has built into it enough redundancy that **all teaching can be discerned by analyzing the complete text.** A vital rule of exegesis is to never use an obscure text to contradict a clear text. A corollary of this is that where one or more clear tests exist, the clear texts should be used to interpret an obscure text. **This is the miracle of the Bible** and the reflection of the mind of God through the Holy Spirit to ensure that **the revelation from God is complete and clear.**

3.3.3 The Role of the Holy Spirit

From earliest times the Bible records that the **Holy Spirit** is the **efficacious power of God** and it has been **a vehicle through which God communicates with human beings:**

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.

And **the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.**

Then [YHWH] said, **“My Spirit shall not abide in man forever ...”**

(Genesis 1:2, 6:3a ESV)

Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit continues to be active and efficacious in revealing the will of God as recorded in the Bible.

3.3.3.1 In the Old Testament

As discussed in section **3.3.2.3 “Inspiration” in the Old Testament**, in patriarchal times, God spoke directly to many people. **By the time of Moses**, God began to communicate directly with some people through the Holy Spirit:

Then [YHWH] said to Moses,

“Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel,
whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them,
and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.
And I will come down and talk with you there.

And **I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them,**
and they shall bear the burden of the people with you,
so that you may not bear it yourself alone. ...”

So Moses went out and told the people the words of [YHWH].

And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent.

Then [YHWH] came down in the cloud and spoke to him,

and **took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders.**

And as soon as **the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied.** But they did not continue doing it.

(Numbers 11:16-17, 24-25 ESV)

There is no indication of the content of prophesying of the seventy, but **whatever they said to the people was from God through the Holy Spirit** – it was NOT knowledge or understanding derived from their own minds. The **Governor Nehemiah** notes that the purpose of the prophesying was to provide instruction:

You gave your good Spirit to instruct them

and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst.

(Nehemiah 9:20 ESV)

Similarly on two occasions, **King Saul is reported to have been filled with the Holy Spirit and thus induced to prophesy:**

... as soon as you come to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying.

Then **the Spirit of [YHWH] will rush upon you**, and **you will prophesy with them ...**

When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him,

and **the Spirit of God rushed upon him**, and **he prophesied among them.**

And he went there to Naioth in Ramah.
And **the Spirit of God came upon him** also,
and as he went **he prophesied** until he came to Naioth in Ramah.
And he too stripped off his clothes,
and **he too prophesied** before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night.
Thus it is said, **“Is Saul also among the prophets?”**
(1 Samuel 10:5b-6a, 10, 19:23-24 ESV)

On many occasions, **the ability to prophesy is specifically attributed to the agency of the Holy Spirit:**

The Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him,

“Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: [YHWH] is with you while you are with him.
If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. ...”

(2 Chronicles 15:1-2 ESV)

And **the Spirit of [YHWH] came upon Jahaziel** the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel,
son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. **And he said,**

“Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat:

Thus says [YHWH] to you ...”

(2 Chronicles 20:14-15a ESV)

Then **the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah** the son of Jehoiada the priest,
and **he stood above the people, and said to them,**

“Thus says God,

**‘Why do you break the commandments of [YHWH], so that you cannot prosper?
Because you have forsaken [YHWH], he has forsaken you.’”**

(2 Chronicles 24:20 ESV)

Many years you bore with them and **warned them by your Spirit through your prophets.**

Yet they would not give ear. Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands.

(Nehemiah 9:30 ESV)

King David was filled with the Holy Spirit from the time of his anointing by Samuel, and he was aware
that it was **through the Holy Spirit he had contact with God** and **spoke words from God:**

Then **Samuel** took the horn of oil and **anointed him** in the midst of his brothers.

And **the Spirit of [YHWH] rushed upon David from that day forward.**

(1 Samuel 16:13a ESV)

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

(Psalm 139:7 ESV)

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God!

Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!

(Psalm 143:10 ESV)

The Spirit of [YHWH] speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.

(2 Samuel 23:2 ESV)

The **Synoptist Luke** reports that **the early Church affirmed the role of the Holy Spirit** in the **inspiration of the Psalms** and **David’s role** in particular:

And when they heard it, **they lifted their voices together to God** and said,

**“Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them,
who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,**

‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?

**The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’ — (citing Psalm 2:1-2)⁷³**

**for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus,
whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles
and the peoples of Israel,**

to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ...”

(Acts 4:24-28 ESV see also Hebrews 3:7-14 citing Psalm 95:7b-11)

True wisdom comes only from God through the Holy Spirit. A proverb personifies “wisdom” speaking
on behalf of God:

The **fear of [YHWH] is the beginning of knowledge;** fools despise **wisdom** and **instruction.**

Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice;

at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

If you turn at my reproof, behold, **I will pour out my spirit to you;**

⁷³ Note that in our Psalter, Psalm 2 is NOT ascribed to David.

I will make my words known to you.
(Proverbs 1:7, 20-21, 23 ESV)

The **Prophet Isaiah** reports in a famous Messianic prophecy **the nature of the Holy Spirit**:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
And the **Spirit of [YHWH]** shall rest upon him,
the **Spirit of wisdom and understanding**,
the **Spirit of counsel and might**,
the **Spirit of knowledge and the fear of [YHWH]**.
(Isaiah 11:1-2 ESV)

In the **First Servant Song**, Isaiah reports God's assessment of the **role of the Holy Spirit** in accomplishing the work of The Servant, and in the **Fifth Servant Song**, The Servant himself reiterates **the impact of the Holy Spirit**:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my [being] delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth **justice to the nations**.
The **Spirit of the Lord [YHWH] is upon me**, because [YHWH] has anointed me
to **bring good news to the poor**;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to **proclaim liberty** to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to **those who are bound**;
(Isaiah 42:1, 61:1 ESV)

In a **prophecy of the New Israel in the World Tomorrow**, God identifies **the Holy Spirit as the operative agency** by which the New Israel will accomplish its purpose:

"And as for me, this is **my covenant** with them," says [YHWH]:
"My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth,
shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring,
or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,"
says [YHWH], **"from this time forth and forevermore."**
(Isaiah 59:21 ESV)

In **warning his contemporaries NOT to look to Egypt** for help, but rather to trust God for deliverance, the **Prophet Isaiah** is specific that it is only **through the Holy Spirit that God will provide deliverance**:

"Ah, **stubborn children**," declares [YHWH],
"who **carry out a plan**, but not mine, and who **make an alliance**, but **not of my Spirit**,
that they may add sin to sin;
who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction,
to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! ..."

For the palace is forsaken, the populous city deserted;
the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever,
a joy of wild donkeys, a pasture of flocks;
until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,
and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.

Seek and read from the book of [YHWH]:
Not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate.
For **the mouth of [YHWH] has commanded**, and **his Spirit has gathered** them.
(Isaiah 30:1-2, 32:14-15, 34:16 ESV)

The **Prophet Ezekiel** is specific on many occasions that the **visions and revelations** given to him were the **direct result of the Holy Spirit**:

And he said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and **I will speak with you**."
And as he spoke to me, **the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet**,
and I heard him speaking to me. ...
"But you, son of man, **hear what I say** to you.
Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and **eat what I give you**."
(Ezekiel 2:1-2, 8 ESV)

The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of [YHWH], which faces east. ...
And **the Spirit of [YHWH] fell upon me**, and [it] said to me,
"Say, **Thus says [YHWH]**: So you think, O house of Israel.
For I know the things that come into your mind.
You have multiplied your slain in this city and have filled its streets with the slain. ..."

You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel,
and **you shall know that I am [YHWH]. ...**
(Ezekiel 11:1a, 5-6, 10 ESV)

The hand of [YHWH] was upon me, and **he brought me out in the Spirit of [YHWH]**
and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones.

And he led me around among them, and behold,
there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry.

And he said to me, **“Son of man, can these bones live?”**

And I answered, “O Lord [YHWH], you know.”

Then he said to me,

“Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of [YHWH]. ...”
(Ezekiel 37:1-4 ESV)

The **Prophet Joel** reports God’s promise that revelation in the form of dreams and visions will be made available through the Holy Spirit:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that **I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;**

your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

your old men shall dream **dreams**, and your young men shall see **visions**.

Even on the male and female servants in those days **I will pour out my Spirit.**

(Joel 2:28-29 ESV see also Acts 2:16-18)

The **Prophet Micah** affirms that his preaching is through the power of the Holy Spirit:

But as for me, **I am filled with power, with the Spirit of [YHWH],**

and with justice and might,

to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.

(Micah 3:8 ESV)

In the Old Testament, the primary activity of God through the Holy Spirit was to lead people to the Way of God. The New Testament expands on this role by emphasizing the **“indwelling” of the Holy Spirit in True Worshipers.**

3.3.3.2 In the New Testament

On three different occasions, **Jesus is reported to have specifically instructed the disciples NOT to prepare a defense when called to witness,** but instead to **trust in inspiration from the Holy Spirit:**

When they deliver you over, **do not be anxious how you are to speak** or what you are to say,
for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.

For **it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.**

(Matthew 10:19-20 ESV)

And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities,

do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say,

for **the Holy Spirit will teach you** in that very hour what you ought to say.

(Luke 12:11-12 ESV)

And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, **do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say,**
but say whatever is given you in that hour, for **it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.**

(Mark 13:11 ESV // Luke 21:14-15)

Near the beginning of the Great Galilean Ministry, **Jesus quotes the Fifth Servant Song.** The clear implication to the people was that **the Holy Spirit was the inspiration of his message and his work:**

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom,

he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.

And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me **to proclaim good news to the poor.**

He has sent me **to proclaim liberty** to the captives and **recovering of sight** to the blind,

to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

(citing Isaiah 61:1-2a)

(Luke 4:16-19 ESV)

During the Great Galilean Ministry, **Jesus performed many miracles** near the Sea of Galilee. **The Apostle Matthew quotes the First Servant Song attributing Jesus' power to the Holy Spirit.** The **Apostle Paul** affirms that **Jesus' power was through the Holy Spirit:**

Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and **he healed them all and ordered them not to make him known.**

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

“Behold, **my servant whom I have chosen**, my beloved with whom my [being] is well pleased.

I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. ...” (citing Isaiah 42:1)

(Matthew 12:15-18 ESV)

Great indeed, we confess, is **the mystery of godliness:**

He was manifested in the flesh,

vindicated by the Spirit,

seen by angels,

proclaimed among the nations,

believed on in the world,

taken up in glory.

(1 Timothy 3:16 ESV)

The father of John the Baptist, **Zechariah**, was **filled with the Holy Spirit to prophesize** the role of John the Baptist:

And his father **Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied**, saying,

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up **a horn of salvation** for us **in the house of his servant David**, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old ...

the oath that he swore to our father Abraham ...

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; ...”

(Luke 1:67-70, 73, 76a ESV)

To the True Worshipper, **Simeon**, it had been **reveled through the Holy Spirit** that he would live to identify the Messiah:

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was **Simeon**, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and **the Holy Spirit was upon him.**

And it had been **revealed to him by the Holy Spirit**

that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

And **he came in the Spirit into the temple**, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the [nomos],⁷⁴

he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

for **my eyes have seen your salvation** that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

(Luke 2:25-32 ESV)

The **Synoptist Luke** begins the **Book of Acts** with its dominant theme, **the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation of the New Testament Church:**

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up,

after he **had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles** whom he had chosen.

(Acts 1:1–2 ESV)

In the **Book of Acts**, the Apostles and evangelists are regularly described as being **inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit**.⁷⁵

Then **Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them**,

“Rulers of the people and elders,

if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,

let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel

that **by the name of Jesus Christ** of Nazareth,

whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead

—by him this man is standing before you well. ...”

⁷⁴ Leviticus 12:1-8 contains the prescriptions for purification after childbirth. There is no requirement for the child to be presented. Therefore, *nomos*, here refers a secondary custom or tradition.

⁷⁵ See also Acts 10:19-20, 11:1-12,27-28, 16:6-7, 19:1-6, 21:4,10-11

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.

But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said,

“Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. (Acts 4:8-10, 31, 6:8-10, 13:1-2, 20:22-23 ESV)

The Apostle Paul is clear and specific that only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can True Worshipers maintain a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ:

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,

he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies

through his Spirit [which] dwells in you.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,

but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”

The Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God ...

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit [itself] intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

(Romans 8:9-11, 14-16, 26-27, 9:1-2 ESV)

The Apostle Paul is clear and specific that true wisdom comes only from God and that it is only available through the Holy Spirit:⁷⁶

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ...

But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”— (citing Isaiah 64:4)

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of [man], which is in him?

So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit [which] is from God,

that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

(1 Corinthians 2:7, 9-13 ESV see also 12:1-13)

The Apostle Paul affirms that Jesus divinity is attested by his resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord ...

(Romans 1:1-4 ESV)

⁷⁶ See also Ephesians 1:15-23, especially verse 17, 3:4-5
Sunday, December 1, 2024

The **Apostle Paul** asserts that his **preaching is through the power of the Holy Spirit** and that its effect is **manifest in the hearts** of the Corinthian Christians through the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the **understanding of the Way of God is only possible through the Holy Spirit** which reveals **the mind of Christ**:

Since **we have the same spirit of faith** according to what has been written,

“I believed, and so I spoke,” (citing Psalm 116:10a)

we also believe, and so we also speak ...

You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all.

And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us,

written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God,

not on tablets of stone but **on tablets of human hearts.**

The natural person does not accept **the things of the Spirit of God**, for they are folly to him,

and he is not able to understand them because they **are spiritually discerned.**

The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

“For **who has understood the mind of the Lord** so as to instruct him?” (citing Isaiah 40:13)

But we have the mind of Christ.

(2 Corinthians 4:13, 3:2-3, 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 ESV)

The **Apostle Peter** explains that **the ancient prophets were given understanding through the Holy Spirit**, but **the complete understanding of salvation is only available through the Holy Spirit in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ**:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours **searched and inquired carefully**, inquiring what person or time **the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating** when [it] predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.

It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you,

in the things that have now been announced to you through

those who **preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit**

sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

(1 Peter 1:10-12 ESV)

And **we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed**, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that **no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.**

For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man,

but **men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

(2 Peter 1:19-21 ESV)

For **the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**

(Revelation 19:10b ESV)

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit defines a True Worshipper. Jesus goes on to explain that **only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is eternal life possible.**

[3.3.3.3 Jesus' Definitive Teaching](#)

The **Apostle John** reports **Jesus' words which make plain the role of the Holy Spirit** in the life of a True Worshipper of God the Father and Jesus Christ our Saviour:

When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”

But **Jesus**, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, **said to them**,

“Do you take offense at this? ... **It is the Spirit [which] gives life**; the flesh is no help at all.

The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ...”

So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?”

Simon Peter answered him,

“Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have the words of eternal life**, and we have believed,

and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

(John 6:60-61, 63, 67-69 ESV)

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And I will ask the Father, and **he will give you another Helper**, to be with you forever,

even **the Spirit of truth**, [which] the world cannot receive, because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it].

You know [it], for [it] dwells with you and will be in you.

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.

But **the Helper, the Holy Spirit**, [which] the Father will send in my name,

[it] **will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.**

But when **the Helper** comes, [which] I will send to you from the Father, **the Spirit of truth**, [which] proceeds from the Father, [it] **will bear witness about me**. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Nevertheless, **I tell you the truth**: it is to your advantage that I go away, for **if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you**. But if I go, **I will send [it] to you**. And when [it] comes, [it] will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

I still have many things to say to you, but **you cannot bear them now**. **When the Spirit of truth comes, [it] will guide you into all the truth**, for [it] will not speak on [its] own authority, but whatever [it] hears [it] will speak, and **[it] will declare to you the things that are to come**. **[It] will glorify me**, for [it] will take **what is mine** and **declare it to you**. (John 14:15-17, 25-26, 15:26-27, 16:7-15 ESV)

Analysis of Jesus' teaching:

- Salvation, eternal life, is only available through the Holy Spirit, **"it is the Spirit which gives life"**
- Jesus words are "inspired", they reveal the Holy Spirit and the way to eternal life, **"the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life"**, **"you have the words of eternal life"**
- Jesus requires the love of True Worshipers, demonstrated by living by the Way of God, **"if you love me, you will keep my commandments"**
- Only those who love Jesus can receive the Holy Spirit, **"he will give you another Helper"**, **"the Spirit of truth"**, **"the Holy Spirit"**
- The Holy Spirit will provide knowledge and understanding, **"it will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you"**
- The Holy Spirit will confirm in faith the life, work, and teaching of Jesus, **"it will bear witness about me"**, **"I tell you the truth"**
- Jesus' death and resurrection are required before the Holy Spirit can be made available, **"if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you"**, **"I will send it to you"**
- Jesus' teaching comprises the entire Bible, only through the Holy Spirit is it possible to understand the teaching, **"I still have many things to say to you"**, **"you cannot bear them now"**, **"when the Spirit of truth comes, it will guide you into all the truth"**
- Understanding of the unfolding of the Plan of God is only possible through the Holy Spirit, **"it will declare to you the things that are to come"**
- The work of the Holy Spirit through the Church will glorify Jesus because it will reflect Jesus' mind, **"it will glorify me"**, **"what is mine"**, **"declare it to you"**

In the final recorded messages of Jesus Christ to the New Testament Church, **Jesus is explicit that only through the Holy Spirit can his words be understood:**

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
(Revelation 2:7a, 11a, 17a, 29, 3:6, 13, 22 ESV)

Jesus' last messages to the Churches, i.e. the entire New Testament Church, the True Church, down through the centuries until now as we approach the end-time, **revolves around living by the Way of God** as a **prerequisite to being considered as a candidate for eternal life**. The understanding of Jesus' messages is only possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:

To the Church in Ephesus

I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and **bearing up for my name's sake**, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent**, and **do the works you did at first**.

To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.' (Revelation 2:2-5a, 7b ESV)

To the Church in Smyrna

I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. **Do not fear** what you are about to suffer. Behold, the

devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that **you may be tested**, and for ten days you will have tribulation. **Be faithful unto death**, and **I will give you the crown of life**.

The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.

(Revelation 2:9-10, 11b ESV)

To the Church in Pergamum

I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet **you hold fast my name**, and **you did not deny my faith** ... But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam ... So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. **Therefore repent**. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and **I will give him** a white stone, with **a new name** written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.

(Revelation 2:13a, 14a, 15-16, 17b ESV)

To the Church in Thyatira

I know your works, **your love and faith and service and patient endurance**, and that your latter works exceed the first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel ... Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, and I will strike her children dead. And **all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart**, and I will give to each of you according to your works. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. Only **hold fast what you have until I come**.

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him **I will give authority over the nations**, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star.

(Revelation 2:19-20a, 22-28 ESV)

To the Church in Sardis

I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. **Wake up**, and **strengthen what remains** and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.

Remember, then, **what you received and heard**. **Keep it**, and **repent**. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

(Revelation 3:1b-5 ESV)

To the Church in Philadelphia

I know your works. Behold, **I have set before you an open door**, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet **you have kept my word** and have **not denied my name**. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that **I have loved you**. **Because you have kept my word** about patient endurance, **I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world**, to try those who dwell on the earth. I am coming soon. **Hold fast what you have**, so that no one may seize your crown.

The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

(Revelation 3:8-12 ESV)

To the Church in Laodicea

I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

I counsel you to **buy from me gold refined by fire**, so that you may be rich, and **white garments so that you may clothe yourself** and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. **Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline**, so **be zealous and repent**. Behold, **I stand at the door and knock**. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

(Revelation 3:15-21 ESV)

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Temple, **Jesus expressed his desire that all people would come to him, learn the Way of God and attain candidacy for the gift of eternal life** – all made possible **by the Holy Spirit**:

On the last day of the feast, the great day, **Jesus stood up and cried out,**

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,

‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”⁷⁷

Now this he said about the Spirit ...

(John 7:37-39a ESV)

The Holy Spirit is the Power of God through which he has worked out the Plan of Salvation. The **Old Testament** is a record of God’s working with the nation of Israel and with individuals through the Holy Spirit. In the **New Testament**, the Holy Spirit becomes even more prominent in the life and work of Jesus Christ; and especially, in the creation of the New Testament Church and the promulgation of the Gospel. **Jesus definitive teaching** on the Holy Spirit makes plain its centrality to the success of True Worshipers in living by the Way of God and in attaining candidacy for the gift of eternal life. **The Bible is the product of God through the Holy Spirit’s working with human beings to record the revelation of God.** The Bible is **“Special Revelation”**.

3.3.4 Progressive Revelation

Because the Bible was inspired by God through the Holy Spirit, it requires God’s direction through the Holy Spirit to properly understand it. Many very intelligent human beings have attempted to understand the Bible based on their own set of preconceptions – this approach cannot succeed. Popular teaching as well as scholarly literature are full of incorrect analysis based on this approach.

The **Prophet Isaiah** made this point very clearly:

To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message?

Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast.

**For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little.**

This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose; **yet they would not hear.**

And **the word of [YHWH] will be to them** precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little,

that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

(Isaiah 28:9-10, 12b-13 ESV)

This section presents a detailed example of how God has revealed the truth progressively throughout the Bible. **The concept of the Resurrection of the Dead**⁷⁸ is examined from the earliest references to the end of the Old Testament. For similar analysis of two other concepts see section **4.1 The Sacrificial System** and section **4.2 The Sabbath** in the paper **“The Human Condition”** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca. A single snapshot at any one time does not give the complete teaching. **The entire progression of revelation from start to finish must be considered to understand the teaching of God.**

3.3.4.1 Early Allusions to the Resurrection

The concept of “eternal life” was clearly made know to Adam and Eve:

And [YHWH] God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

And out of the ground [YHWH] God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

The tree of life was in the midst of the garden ... [YHWH] God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And [YHWH] God commanded the man, saying,

“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden ...”

⁷⁷ Jesus is alluding to such scriptures as Isaiah 58:11, Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13, Proverbs 4:23, 18:4, Psalms 36:8-9, 46:4, and the whole concept of the **River of Life** – see Ezekiel 47:1-12, Zechariah 14:8, Revelation 22:1-2.

⁷⁸ See section **2.1.3 The Resurrection of the Dead** in the paper **“Second Pillar - The Plan of God”** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Then [YHWH] God said,
"Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.
Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" (Genesis 2:8-9bα, 15-16, 3:22 ESV)

A corollary of this is that Adam and Eve had to know that a change from physical flesh to immortal spirit was required in order to "live forever". If God had NOT already explained this to them, the knowledge would have been required if they had chosen "life" rather than "death".

That Abraham understood the concept of a "dead" person's being restored to life, is affirmed by the author of the Book of Hebrews:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." (citing Genesis 21:12)

He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. (Hebrews 11:17-19)

All three synoptists report Jesus' affirmation that the theophany to Moses at the burning bush was harbinger of the resurrection:

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the [back] side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of [YHWH] appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.

He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned."

When [YHWH] saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (Exodus 3:1-6 ESV)

And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?

He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong. (Mark 12:26-27 ESV)

And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?

He is not God of the dead, but of the living. (Matthew 22:31-32 ESV)

But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him. (Luke 20:37-38 ESV)

The whole concept of the "firstborn" is a harbinger of Jesus' life and sacrifice making possible the resurrection of the dead. God chose the "firstborn" out of Israel to be consecrated, made holy, to himself. The "firstborn" of Israel are "type" of True Worshipper called to conversion, especially New Testament Christians. Jesus Christ is "The Firstborn", the first physical human being to be transformed into an eternal spiritual being. Jesus' transformation is the demonstration and proof of God's ability to perform a "resurrection" from perishable physical existence into immortal eternal existence. Those persons to whom God sees fit to grant the gift of eternal life in the First Resurrection, are the "firstborn" children of God:

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says [YHWH], Israel is my firstborn son ...'

Consecrate to me all the firstborn.

Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.

All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem.

(Exodus 4:22, 13:2, 34:20bα ESV)

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to **be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be **the firstborn among many brothers**.

(Romans 8:29 ESV)

He is the image of the invisible God, **the firstborn of all creation**. ...

And he **is the head of the body, the church**. He is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead**, that in everything he might be preeminent.

(Colossians 1:15, 18 ESV)

But you have come to Mount Zion and to **the city of the living God**,⁷⁹ the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to **the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven**, and to God, the judge of all, and to **the spirits of the righteous made perfect**, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant ...

(Hebrews 12:22-24a ESV)

John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from **Jesus Christ** the faithful witness, **the firstborn of the dead**, and the ruler of kings on earth.

(Revelation 1:4-5 ESV)

When Moses presented his final teaching to the Israelites in the Plains of Moab, he clearly looked beyond this physical life to **God's promise of eternal life** which **implies the need for the resurrection**.⁸⁰

And [YHWH] commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear [YHWH] our God, **for our good always**, that **he might preserve us alive**, as we are this day. And **it will be righteousness**⁸¹ for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before [YHWH] our God, as he has commanded us.

The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, **that you may live** ... that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but **man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of [YHWH]**.⁸²

(Deuteronomy 6:24-25, 8:1a, 3b ESV)

Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

This is **the bread that comes down from heaven**, so that **one may eat of it and not die**.

I am the living bread⁸³ that came down from heaven. **If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever**.

And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

(John 6:49–51 ESV)

At the end Moses' speeches to the people in the Plains of Moab, God, through Moses, presented the people with a new covenant, **the Covenant of Life**.⁸⁴ **This covenant opens up the way to the choice of life over the choice of death**, which had been closed by the choice of Adam. God implores all human beings, beginning with those few called out of the ancient Nation of Israel, to **"choose life"** and **live forever through the resurrection of the dead**:

These are **the words of the covenant** that [YHWH] commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, **besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb**.

The secret things belong to [YHWH] our God,⁸⁵ but the **things that are revealed** belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this [torah].

... return⁸⁶ **to [YHWH] your God**, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your [being],⁸⁷ **then [YHWH] your God will** restore your fortunes and **have mercy on you** ...

And [YHWH] your God will **circumcise your heart**⁸⁸ and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your [being], **that you may live**.

⁷⁹ This is a metaphor for the Kingdom of God, see Hebrews 11:10,16, 13:14, Revelation 3:12, 21:2,10, 22:14,19.

⁸⁰ See also Deuteronomy 4:1, 5:29,33, 16:20

⁸¹ To be truly "righteous" implies being "holy", which human beings cannot be. Human beings can only be made "holy" through the resurrection.

⁸² Jesus used these words to defeat Satan the Devil, see Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4.

⁸³ Jesus Christ is the living Word of God. Jesus' teaching, the whole Bible, comprises "the words of eternal life". The metaphor of Jesus as the "bread" implies internalizing all of the Way of God.

⁸⁴ For a discussion of this covenant, see section 5. *The Covenant of Life* in the paper "Covenants of Grace" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

⁸⁵ The "secret" of the resurrection of the dead was only revealed fully with the New Testament documents.

⁸⁶ The Hebrew word is שׁוּב - shuv, the normal word for repentance, see TWOT article 2340 page 909.

⁸⁷ See footnote 12

See, **I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.**

If you obey the commandments of [YHWH] your God that I command you today,
by loving [YHWH] your God, by **walking in his ways,**
and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his [mish^epatim],⁸⁹ **then you shall live ...**

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that **I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse.** Therefore **choose life,** that **you and your offspring may live,**
loving [YHWH] your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for **he is your life ...**
(Deuteronomy 29:1, 29, 30:2-3a, 6, 15-16a, 19-20a ESV)

The **Song of Moses** reports the first person words of YHWH specifically referring to his ability to raise the dead with the implication of eternal, spiritual, existence:

See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me;
I kill and **I make alive,**⁹⁰ I wound and I heal;
and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.
For I lift up my hand to heaven and swear, **As I live forever ...**
(Deuteronomy 32:39-40 ESV)

Hannah, the mother of Samuel, the Prophet and Judge of Israel, also specifically refers to God's ability to raise the dead and grant them positions of service in the Kingdom of God:

And **Hannah prayed and said,**
My heart exults in [YHWH]; my horn is exalted in [YHWH].
[YHWH] kills and brings to life; he brings down to [death] and **raises up.**
He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap
to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.
[YHWH] will judge the ends of the earth;
he will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed.
(1 Samuel 2:1a, 6, 8a, 10b ESV)

Just before his death, **Bathsheba** prophetically enjoins **King David to "live forever"**, which of course implies the **"resurrection of the dead"**:

Now **King David was old and advanced in years.** ...
Then **King David answered, "Call Bathsheba to me."**
So she came into the king's presence and stood before the king. And the king swore, saying,
"As [YHWH] lives, who has redeemed my [life] out of every adversity,
as I swore to you by [YHWH], the God of Israel, saying,
'**Solomon your son shall reign after me,** and he shall sit on my throne in my place,'
even so will I do this day."
Then **Bathsheba bowed** with her face to the ground and paid homage to the king **and said,**
"May my lord King David live forever!"
(1 Kings 1:1a, 28-31 ESV)

While this phrase is used perfunctorily for kings in general,⁹¹ **in the case of David, it is clearly prophetic:**

These are the words that [YHWH] spoke concerning **Israel** and **Judah:** ...
But they **shall serve [YHWH] their God** and **David their king, whom I will raise up for them.**
(Jeremiah 30:4, 9 ESV)
I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep.
And I will set up over them **one shepherd, my servant David,** and he shall feed them:
he shall feed them and be their shepherd.
And I, [YHWH], will be their God, and **my servant David shall be prince among them.**
I am [YHWH]; I have spoken.
(Ezekiel 34:22-24 ESV)
Son of man, take a stick and write on it, 'For **Judah,** and the **people of Israel** associated with him';
then take another stick and write on it,
'For **Joseph** (the stick of Ephraim) and all **the house of Israel** associated with him.'
And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand.
My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd.
They shall walk in my [mish^epatim]⁹² and be careful to obey my statutes.

⁸⁸ This is a metaphor for conversion, see Romans 2:28-29, Philippians 3:3, Colossians 2:11, Deuteronomy 10:15-16, Jeremiah 4:1-4, 31:33, 32:39, Ezekiel 11:19, 36:25-27.

⁸⁹ See footnote 13

⁹⁰ See also 2 Kings 5:7

⁹¹ See Nehemiah 2:3, Daniel 2:4, 3:9, 5:10, 6:6,21

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They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and **David my servant shall be their prince forever.**
(Ezekiel 37:16-17, 24-25 ESV)

For **the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king** or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or household gods. Afterward **the children of Israel shall return and seek [YHWH] their God,** and **David their king,** and they shall come in fear to [YHWH] and to his goodness in the latter days.
(Hosea 3:4-5 ESV)

Both **Elijah** and **Elisha** performed miracles of restoring dead persons to physical life. **Jesus similarly restored Lazarus to physical life as an explicit type of his ability to perform the resurrection of the dead:**

After this **the son of the woman,** the mistress of the house, **became ill.** And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. And **she said to Elijah,**
"What have you against me, O man of God?
You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause **the death of my son!**"

And he said to her, "Give me your son."
And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. And he cried to [YHWH],
"[YHWH] my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?"

Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to [YHWH],
"[YHWH] my God, let this child's life come into him again."
And [YHWH] listened to the voice of Elijah. And **the life of the child came into him again,** and he revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, **your son lives.**"

And the woman said to Elijah,
"Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of [YHWH] in your mouth is truth."
(1 Kings 17:17–24 ESV)

When **Elisha came into the house,** he saw **the child lying dead on his bed.** So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and **prayed to [YHWH].** Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, **the flesh of the child became warm.** Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. **The child sneezed** seven times, and **the child opened his eyes.**

Then he summoned Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite."
So he called her. And when she came to him, he said, **"Pick up your son."**
(2 Kings 4:32–36 ESV see also 2 Kings 13:20-21)

Now **a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany,** the village of Mary and her sister Martha. After saying these things, he said to them, **"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him."** The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."
Now **Jesus had spoken of his death,** but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly,

"Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, **so that you may believe.** But **let us go to him."**

Martha said to Jesus,
"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.
But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha said to him, "I know that **he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.**"

Jesus said to her,
"I am the resurrection and the life.
Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,
and **everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.** Do you believe this?"

She said to him,
 “Yes, Lord; **I believe that you are the Christ**, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”
 Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?”
 So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said,
 “**Father, I thank you that you have heard me.**
 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around,
that they may believe that you sent me.”
 When he had said these things, **he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.”**
The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips,
 and his face wrapped with a cloth.
 Jesus said to them, “**Unbind him, and let him go.**”
 (John 11:1, 11-15, 21-27, 40-44 ESV)

3.3.4.2 Job Explores the Concept of the Resurrection

Beginning with his very first speech, **Job is obsessed with the inevitability of his own death**. Given his circumstances, this is understandable. This obsession leads Job into contemplation over the concept of the resurrection of the dead. First, Job’s obsession with death:

Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, ‘A man is conceived.’

Let that day be darkness!

May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it.

Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.

Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.

Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire?⁹³

Why did the knees receive me?

Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?

For then I would have lain down and been quiet;

I would have slept; then **I would have been at rest** ...

(Job 3:3-5, 11-13 ESV)

Oh that I might have my request, and that God would fulfill my hope,

that **it would please God to crush me**, that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!

Remember that **my life is a breath**; my eye will never again see good.

The eye of him who sees me will behold me no more; while your eyes are on me, **I shall be gone**.

As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to [the grave] does not come up;

For now **I shall lie in the earth**; **you will seek me**, but **I shall not be**.

(Job 6:8-9, 7:7-9, 21b ESV)

Note that Job accepts the metaphor of “sleep” for death, “**I would have slept**”, “**I would have been at rest**”. Job acknowledges that “life” and “death” are in God’s hands, “**it would please God to crush me**”. Job realizes that life is ephemeral, and death is final, “**my life is a breath**”, “**I shall lie in the earth**”, “**I shall not be**”. But, Job wonders if God will consider him after death, “**you will seek me**”. Still at this point, **the concept of living again does not appeal to Job**:

I loathe my life;⁹⁴

I would not live forever.

Leave me alone, for my days are a breath.

What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him,
 visit him every morning and test him every moment?

(Job 7:16-18 ESV)

Job recognizes that human beings are special to God, “**what is man**”, but at this point he wants no part of the Plan of God, “**leave me alone**”. In the light of this feeling, **Job considers his relationship with God**:

Remember that **you have made me like clay**; and will you return me to the dust?

Are not my days few?

Then cease, and leave me alone,

that **I may find a little cheer before I go**—and I shall not return—

to the land of darkness and deep shadow, the land of gloom like thick darkness,

like deep shadow without any order, where light is as thick darkness.

⁹³ See also 10:18-19

⁹⁴ See also 9:21, 10:1

My spirit is broken; my days are extinct; **the graveyard is ready for me**.
If I hope for [the grave] as my house, if I make my bed in darkness,
if I say to the pit, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother,' or 'My sister,'
where then is my hope?
Who will see my hope?
Will it go down to the bars of [the grave]?
Shall we descend together into the dust?
(Job 10:9, 20-22, 17:1, 13-16 ESV)

Job cannot ignore the fact that God has a purpose, **"you have made me like clay"**, but in his current circumstances, he only wants relief, before his death, **"I may find a little cheer before I go"**. Job is crushed, **"my spirit is broken"**, but he begins to wonder if there is remaining hope, **"where then is my hope"**. Along the way, **Job has considered the hope of the resurrection:**

For **there is hope for a tree**, if it be cut down, that **it will sprout again**, and that its shoots will not cease.
Though its root grow old in the earth, and its stump die in the soil,
yet at the scent of water it will bud and put out branches like a young plant.
But a **man dies and is laid low**; man breathes his last, and **where is he?**
As waters fail from a lake and a river wastes away and dries up,
so **a man lies down and rises not again**;
till the heavens are no more he will not awake or be roused out of his sleep.
Oh that you would hide me in [the grave], that you would conceal me until your wrath be past,
that you would **appoint me a set time**, and **remember me!**
If a man dies, shall he live again?
All the days of my service **I would wait, till my renewal should come**.
You would call, and **I would answer you**; you would long for the work of your hands.
(Job 14:7-15 ESV)

Job considers a tree that will regenerate, **"there is hope for a tree"**, **"it will sprout again"**. But he remains stuck in conventional wisdom – death is final, **"man dies and is laid low"**, **"a man lies down and rises not again"**. Then he expresses the hope, **"oh that you would hide me"**, **"remember me"**. Job explicitly asks the question, **"if a man dies, shall he live again"**, and answers his doubts **"I would wait, till my renewal should come"**, **"you would call"**, **"I would answer"**. Soon **Job reaches the climax of understanding** – he realizes only God can deliver him from his current circumstances; and, ultimately, he will see God, his Redeemer, face to face:

Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever!
For **I know that my Redeemer lives**, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been thus destroyed, **yet [away from]⁹⁵ my flesh I shall see God**,
whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me!
(Job 19:23-27 ESV)

As inspired by God, through the Holy Spirit, Job's words have been written. The designation of God as **"Redeemer"** occurs only here in the Book of Job, but it is used many times by Isaiah⁹⁶ clearly looking to the **Messiah, Jesus Christ**, who will **"stand upon the earth"** at the Second Advent when the resurrection of the dead occurs. Job's **"skin"** will indeed be destroyed physically as he rests in the grave awaiting the call to the resurrection. After the resurrection, Job, along with all other to whom God the Father sees fit to grant the gift of eternal life, will have a spiritual body, **"away from flesh"**, and he will **"see for himself"** his Redeemer. All who wait for this, rejoice with Job, **"my heart faints within me!"**

The exploration of the concept of the resurrection of the dead in the Book of Job is the most detailed treatment of the subject in the Old Testament. In the previous section, we saw many allusions to the concept of the resurrection of the dead, and in following sections the concept is assumed. This was as much as God saw fit to reveal until the First Advent had occurred.

⁹⁵ The preposition "min" is here best taken as partitive, "away from", NOT locational "from", "in".

⁹⁶ See Isaiah 41:14, 43:14, 44:6,24, 47:4, 48:17, 49:7,26, 54:5,8, 59:20, 60:16, 63:16 (some of these refer to Jesus Christ in his former role as YHWH; all foreshadow his Messianic role).

3.3.4.3 Allusions to the Resurrection in Wisdom Books

Psalms are perhaps the purest examples of Hebrew poetry in existence. As with all poetry, they use many literary devices and figures of speech. Poetry can be understood at “**face value**” – **what do the words say?** But, **very often the poet tries to imply a deeper or symbolic meaning**, which is often lost in translation, this makes understanding Hebrew poetry that much harder. Finally, with the **Psalms**, because they **are inspired by God**, there is occasionally a still **deeper meaning which the psalmist may not have even understood**, but which can be determined based on other information in the Bible. This is particularly true for allusions to the resurrection of the dead.

David clearly understood the concept of eternal life – he was familiar with all the older scriptures reviewed in section **3.3.4.1 Early Allusions to the Resurrection**. He was guided by the Holy Spirit to understand the Plan of God. When **David uses terms which imply “eternity”**, he was certainly very sure of the meaning. The details of how a person would be transformed to dwell in eternity had not yet been revealed; but, in faith, **David trusted God to accomplish his purpose**. The Davidic Psalms clearly reflect this understanding:

- **The concept of “eternity”:**

[YHWH], in your strength the king rejoices, and **in your salvation how greatly he exults!**
He asked life of you; you gave it to him, **length of days forever and ever.**
His glory is great through your salvation; splendor and majesty you bestow on him.
For **you make him most blessed forever;** you make him glad with **the joy of your presence.**
(Psalm 21:1, 4-6 ESV)

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.
The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; **those who seek him** shall praise [YHWH]!
May your hearts live forever!
All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to [YHWH],
and all the families of the nations **shall worship before you.**
For kingship belongs to [YHWH], and he **rules over the nations.**
(Psalm 22:25-28 ESV)

David is clearly looking to the Messianic Kingdom, “**all the ends of the earth**”, “**shall worship before you**”, “**YHWH rules over the nations**”. David looks to being part of the Messianic Kingdom, “**my vows I will perform**”. David regularly use the term עֲנָן - ‘anaw, afflicted, for True Worshipers, “**those who seek him**”, who will participate in the Kingdom of God through the resurrection of the dead, whose “**hearts live forever**”!

Surely goodness and [hesed] shall follow me all the days of my life,
and **I shall dwell in the house of [YHWH] forever.**
(Psalm 23:6 ESV)
[YHWH] knows the days of **the blameless**, and their heritage **will remain forever;**
Turn away from evil and do good; so shall you **dwell forever.**
For [YHWH] loves justice; he will not forsake **his saints.**
They **are preserved forever**, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.
The righteous shall inherit the [earth] (‘eret⁹⁷) and dwell upon it forever.
(Psalm 37:18, 27-29 ESV)

Let me dwell in your tent forever!
Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings!
For you, O God, have heard my vows;
you have given me **the heritage of those who fear your name.**
Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure **to all generations!**
(Psalm 61:4-6 ESV)
I will extol you, my God and King, and **bless your name forever and ever.**
Every day I will bless you and **praise your name forever and ever.**
(Psalm 145:1-2 ESV)

⁹⁷ The word, עֵרֶץ - ‘eret, does carry a range of meaning including “land” and “earth”; in this context “earth” is better; see Matthew 5:5.

- **The need for “transformation”:**

Consider and answer me, [YHWH] my God; **light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,** lest **my enemy** say, “I have prevailed over him,” lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.⁹⁸
(Psalm 13:3-4 ESV)

The “**sleep of death**” is eternal death which “**the enemy**”, Satan the Devil, seeks for all True Worshipers. To “**light up my eyes**” implies to restore them from physical death.

I believe that **I shall look upon the goodness of [YHWH]** in the land of the living!
(Psalm 27:13 ESV)

This is the same confidence expressed by Job, “**yet away from my flesh I shall see God**”.

But you, [YHWH], **be gracious to me**, and **raise me up**, that I may repay them!

By this I know that you delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me.

But you have upheld me because of my integrity, and **set me in your presence forever**.
(Psalm 41:10-12 ESV)

Incline your ear, [YHWH], and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

Preserve my life, for I am godly; **save your servant**, who trusts in you—you are my God.

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day.

Teach me your way, [YHWH], that I may walk in your truth; **unite my heart to fear your name**.

I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and **I will glorify your name forever**.

For great is your [hesed] toward me; **you have delivered my [life] from the depths of [the grave]**.
(Psalm 86:1-3, 11-13 ESV)

Bless [YHWH], O my [being],⁹⁹ and forget not all his benefits,

who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,

who **redeems your life from the pit**, who crowns you with [hesed] and mercy,

who satisfies you with good so that **your youth is renewed** like the eagle's.

(Psalm 103:2-5 ESV)

It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!

For there **[YHWH] has commanded the blessing, life forevermore**.

(Psalm 133:3 ESV)

- **The need for reversal of “death”:**

Turn, [YHWH], **deliver my life**; save me for the sake of your [hesed].

For **in death there is no remembrance** of you; in [the grave] who will give you praise?

(Psalm 6:4-5 ESV)

[YHWH], you have brought up my [life] from [the grave];

you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit?

Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;

you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,

that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.

[YHWH] my God, **I will give thanks to you forever!**

(Psalm 30:3, 9-12 ESV)

Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; **God is our salvation**.

Our God is a God of salvation, and to [YHWH], the Lord, belong **deliverances from death**.

(Psalm 68:19-20 ESV)

- **Trust in God to accomplish his Plan:**

How precious is your [hesed], O God!

The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

They feast on the abundance of your house,

and you give them drink from **the river of your delights**.

For with you is **the fountain of life**; in your light do we see light.

(Psalm 36:7-9 ESV)

⁹⁸ The word נָמַט - `emmot, is niphal form of נָמַט mot, “shake”, “totter”, “slip”; see TWOT article 1158 pages 493-494. The niphal form carries the range of “be made to stagger”, “be made to stumble”; see Holladay page 185. David uses the niphal form of the word in this sense also in Psalms 16:8, 30:6, 62:2,6. The strategy of Satan the Devil to deceive True Worshipers is to make them unstable in the Way of God, “to shake them”, “to make them stumble”.

⁹⁹ See footnote 12

Jesus alludes to **“the river of your delights”, “the fountain of life”**, applying them to the gift of the Holy Spirit:

Jesus answered her,

“If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you **living water**.” ...

Jesus said to her,

“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,
but whoever drinks of **the water that I will give** him will never be thirsty again.
The water that I will give him
will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

On the last day of the feast, the great day, **Jesus stood up and cried out**,

“If anyone thirsts, let him **come to me and drink**.
Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,
‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

Now this he said about the Spirit, [which] those who believed in him were to receive,
for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
(John 4:10, 13-14, 7:37-39 ESV)

But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God.

I trust in the [hesed] of God forever and ever.

I will thank you forever, because **you have done it**.

I will wait for your name, for it is good, in the presence of the godly.
(Psalm 52:8-9 ESV)

For **you have delivered my [life] from death**, yes, my feet from falling,
that **I may walk before God in the light of life**.
(Psalm 56:13 ESV)

May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you!

May **those who love your salvation say evermore**, “God is great!”

But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God!

You are my help and my deliverer; [YHWH], do not delay!
(Psalm 70:4-5 ESV)

I give you thanks, [YHWH], with my whole heart;

before the [God Family] (‘elohim) I sing your praise;

[YHWH] will fulfill his purpose for me;

your [hesed], [YHWH], **endures forever**.

Do not forsake the work of your hands.

(Psalm 138:1, 8 ESV)

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

And see if there be any grievous way in me, and **lead me in the way everlasting**!

(Psalm 139:23-24 ESV)

I know that **[YHWH] will maintain the cause of the afflicted**,

and will execute justice for the needy.

Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name; **the upright shall dwell in your presence**.

(Psalm 140:12-13 ESV)

Later Psalmists largely pick up and reflect the themes established by David. But because we are dealing with multiple authors, many anonymous, there is not the same cohesion as in the Davidic Psalms. Psalm 89, ascribed to **Ethan the Ezrahite**, raises the issue of the dead rising, and Psalm 88, ascribed to **Heman the Ezrahite**, further explores the concept:

What man can live and never see death?

Who can deliver his [life] from the power of [the grave]?

(Psalm 89:48 ESV)

Do you work wonders for the dead? **Do the departed rise up** to praise you?

Is your [hesed] declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon?

Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

(Psalm 88:10-12 ESV)

Psalms 50 and 73 are ascribed to Asaph. Both Psalms look specifically to the resurrection of the dead.

Psalm 50 looks to **the returning of the Messiah**, the Second Advent, **with the gathering of the Saints**.

Psalm 73 expresses **the faith of a True Worshipper that God will perform the resurrection**:

The Mighty One, God, [YHWH], speaks and **summons the earth from** the rising of the sun to its setting.

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

Our God comes; he does not keep silence; before him is a devouring fire, around him a mighty tempest. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that **he may judge his people**:

"Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"

The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!

(Psalm 50:1-6 ESV)

Nevertheless, **I am continually with you**; you hold my right hand.

You guide me with your counsel, and afterward **you will receive me to glory**.

Whom have I in [eternity] (shamayim) but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

My flesh and my heart may fail, but **God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever**.

(Psalm 73:23-26 ESV)

Psalm 49 is ascribed to the Sons of Korah. The Psalmist considers the fact that **no "ransom" can deliver a person from death** – this of course foreshadows **the ransom paid by Jesus Christ**. The Psalmist goes on to recognize the inevitability of death for those who trust in themselves – in **the Second Resurrection** **"the morning"**, **"the upright"**, the resurrected Saints will be there to **"rule over them"**: teach them.

Finally, the Psalmist expresses confidence, that he, himself, **being a True Worshipper, will be ransomed**:

Truly **no man can ransom another,** or **give to God the price of his life,**

for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice,

that he should **live on forever** and **never see the pit**.

This is the path (derek) of **those who have foolish confidence**;

yet after them people approve of their boasts.

Like sheep **they are appointed for [the grave]**; **death** shall be their shepherd,

and **the upright shall rule over them in the morning**.

Their form shall be consumed in [the grave], with no place to dwell.

But **God will ransom my [life] from the power of [the grave]**, for **he will receive me**.

(Psalm 49:7-9, 13-15 ESV)

The majority of the non-Davidic Psalms are anonymous – they are NOT ascribed to anyone. The concepts of the **"resurrection"** and the resulting **"eternal life"** are explored in many of these Psalms:

Your righteousness, O God, reaches the high heavens.

You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?

You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will **revive me again**;

from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.

You will increase my greatness and **comfort me again**.

(Psalm 71:19-21 ESV)

O you who love [YHWH], hate evil!

He preserves the lives of his saints; he delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.

Rejoice in [YHWH], O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!

(Psalm 97:10-12 ESV)

Praise [YHWH]! Blessed is the man who fears [YHWH], who greatly delights in his commandments!

His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

Wealth and riches are in his house, and **his righteousness endures forever**.

Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

For the righteous will never be moved; **he will be remembered forever**.

He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;

his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.

(Psalm 112:1-4, 6, 9 ESV)

Who is like [YHWH] our God, who is seated on high,

who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?

He raises the poor from the dust and lifts **the needy from the ash heap**,

to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.

(Psalm 113:5-8 ESV)

The dead do not praise [YHWH], nor do any who go down into silence.

But **we will bless [YHWH] from this time forth and forevermore**. Praise [YHWH]!

(Psalm 115:17-18 ESV)

For **you have delivered my [life] from death**, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling;

I will walk before [YHWH] in the land of the living.

(Psalm 116:8-9 ESV)

I shall not die, but **I shall live**, and recount the deeds of [YHWH].

[YHWH] has disciplined me severely, but **he has not given me over to death**.

Open to me **the gates of righteousness**, that I may enter through them and give thanks to [YHWH].

This is the gate of [YHWH]; the righteous shall enter through it.
I thank you that **you have answered me and have become my salvation**.
(Psalm 118:17-21 ESV)

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a **light to my path**¹⁰⁰.
I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to keep your righteous [mish^epatim].¹⁰¹
I am severely afflicted; **give me life**, [YHWH], **according to your word**!
Accept my freewill offerings of praise, [YHWH], and teach me your [mish^epatim].
I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your [torah].¹⁰²
The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.
Your testimonies ('eduth) are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart.
I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.
(Psalm 119:105-112 ESV)
For [YHWH] takes pleasure in his people; **he adorns the humble with salvation**.
Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds.
(Psalm 149:4-5 ESV)

The Book of Proverbs personifies “wisdom” as a virtuous woman who speaks as a “teacher”.¹⁰³
However, **it is clear that “wisdom” comes from God**.¹⁰⁴ When “the woman wisdom” speaks she is presenting **teaching from God**:

Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice?

I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.

[YHWH] possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.

Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

When there were no depths **I was brought forth**,
when there were no springs abounding with water.

Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, **I was brought forth**,
before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world.

When he established the heavens, **I was there**; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then **I was beside him**, like a master workman,
and **I was daily his delight**, rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of man.
(Proverbs 8:1, 12, 22-31 ESV)

The “**tree of life**”, representing **eternal life** in the Garden of Eden, is used as a metaphor for “the woman wisdom” and as “fruit of righteousness”:

She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life ...
(Proverbs 3:18, 11:30a ESV)

The words of “the woman wisdom”, the teaching of the Bible, are the “**words of eternal life**”:

My son, do not lose sight of these—**keep sound wisdom and discretion**,
and **they will be life for your [being]** and adornment for your neck.

My son, be attentive to **my words**; incline your ear to my sayings.
Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.
For they **are life to those who find them**, and healing to all their flesh.
Keep your heart with all vigilance, for **from it flow the springs of life**.¹⁰⁵

Whoever pursues righteousness and [hesed] **will find life**, righteousness, and honor.
(Proverbs 3:21-22, 4:20-23, 21:21 ESV)

¹⁰⁰ The Hebrew word נִתְּנָהּ - n^ethivah, “path”, “crossroads”, is a less used synonym of ‘orah; see Holliday page 249.

¹⁰¹ See footnote 13

¹⁰² See footnote 11

¹⁰³ See Proverbs 1:20, 3:13-18, 4:9, 9:1, 31:26

¹⁰⁴ See Proverbs 2:6, 3:19, 9:10, 15:33

¹⁰⁵ See Psalm 36:8-9, quoted above ...

It **is the Spirit [which] gives life**; the flesh is no help at all.

The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ...

Simon Peter answered him,

“Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have the words of eternal life,**

and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”

(John 6:63, 68-69 ESV)

The Psalms and Proverbs contain many allusions to the concept of the resurrection. The Writing Prophets add much to the understanding of the resurrection, but await the full revelation in the New Testament documents:

Concerning this salvation,

the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours **searched and inquired carefully** ...

(1 Peter 1:10 ESV)

3.3.4.4 The Resurrection in the Writing Prophets

The earliest reference to the concept of the resurrection in the Writing Prophets is in the Book of Jonah.

The story of Jonah is well known: God called Jonah to warn Nineveh; Jonah attempted to flee on a ship; God sent a storm; Jonah was thrown overboard and drowned; his body was scooped up a large fish; after three days, he was restored to life and vomited onto land. **After his resurrection to physical life, while still in the fish, Jonah prayed:**

Then Jonah prayed to [YHWH] his God from the belly of the fish, saying,

“I called out to [YHWH], out of my distress, and he answered me;

out of the belly of [the grave] I cried, and you heard my voice.

For you cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas,
and **the flood surrounded me**; all your waves and your billows passed over me.

Then I said, ‘I am driven away from your sight; yet **I shall again look upon your holy temple.**’

The waters closed in over me to take my life;

the deep surrounded me; weeds were wrapped about my head at the roots of the mountains.

I went down to the land whose bars closed upon me forever;

yet **you brought up my life from the pit**, [YHWH] my God.

When my life was fainting away, I remembered [YHWH],

and **my prayer** came to you, into your holy temple:

Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of [hesed].

But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you;

what I have vowed I will pay. **Salvation belongs to [YHWH]!**”

(Jonah 2:1-9 ESV)

Jonah is specific that he died, **“the flood surrounded me”**, **“the waters closed in over me to take my life”**. While he was dying, he remembered God, **“when my life was fainting away, I remembered YHWH”**. Jonah expressed faith that God would provide salvation, **“I shall again look upon your holy temple”**. After he was restored to life, **“you brought up my life from the pit”**, Jonah prayed, **“out of the belly of the grave I cried”**.

Jesus alluded to Jonah’s resurrection as the one miraculous sign of his Messiahship – Jonah’s grave was the belly of the fish; Jesus’ grave was a tomb in the earth:

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, “Teacher, **we wish to see a sign from you.**”

But he answered them,

“An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign,

but **no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.**

For just as **Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish,**

so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ...”

(Matthew 12:38-40 ESV see also 16:4, Luke 11:29-30)

The **Prophet Amos** reports YHWH’s alluding to the **Covenant of Life**,¹⁰⁶ imploring the people of Israel to **“choose life”**:

For thus says [YHWH] to the house of Israel: **“Seek me and live; ...”**

Seek [YHWH] and live, ...

Seek good, and not evil, **that you may live;**

and so [YHWH], the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said.

(Amos 5:4, 6a, 14 ESV)

¹⁰⁶ See section 5. **The Covenant of Life** in the paper “**Covenants of Grace**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

The **Prophet Hosea** in no uncertain terms, throughout his book, decries **the sins of Israel** and the **commensurate certain destruction**. Finally, Hosea reports **YHWH's lament over their sorry state**, which is taken up by the **Apostle Paul** in his seminal scripture in the Resurrection of the Dead:

I shall¹⁰⁷ **ransom them from the power of [the grave]**; I shall **redeem them from Death**.

O Death, where are your plagues? O [grave], where is your sting?

Compassion is hidden from my eyes.

(Hosea 13:14 ESV)

When the **perishable puts on the imperishable**, and the **mortal puts on immortality**, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

(1 Corinthians 15:54-55 ESV)

The **Prophet Isaiah** reports **a promise from God** to all sinners, each and every person who has ever lived, that **repentance can led to spiritual cleansing**. Former sins can become as “white as snow”. The **Book of Revelation** greatly elaborates the metaphor, establishing the meaning as **being transformed through the resurrection of the dead**:

Come now, let us reason together, says [YHWH]:

though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;

though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

(Isaiah 1:18 ESV)

The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments,

and I will never blot his name out of the book of life.

I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

Then **they were each given a white robe** and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, **clothed in white robes**, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice,

“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying,

“Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?”

I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

And he said to me,

“These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ...”

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,

for **the marriage of the Lamb** has come, and **his Bride has made herself ready;**

it was granted her to **clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure**

—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the armies of heaven, **arrayed in fine linen, white and pure**, were following him on white horses.

(Revelation 3:5, 6:11, 7:9-10, 13-14, 19:7-8, 14 ESV)

The **Book of Isaiah** chapter 26 contains a song, presumably composed by Isaiah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. **The voice in the song is True Worshipers of God**. Some parts of the song look strongly to the **New Testament Church**. The focus of the song is “**salvation**” effected by **the Resurrection of the Dead**:

We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks.

Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

Trust in [YHWH] forever, for [YH, YHWH,] is an everlasting rock.

Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, [YHWH];

we were pregnant, we writhed, but **we have given birth to wind**.

We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.

¹⁰⁷ Note these phrases would probably be better translated as questions, “Shall I ...” – Israel was not fit to be ransomed/redeemed, but ultimately God’s mercy will see all persons given the opportunity to be ransomed/redeemed.

Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.

You who dwell in the dust, **awake** and sing for joy!

For your dew is a dew of light, and **the earth will give birth to the dead.**

Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you;

hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by.

(Isaiah 26:1b-4, 17-20 ESV)

The “**strong city**” is the **Kingdom of God**, the arrival of which “**sets up salvation**”. To “**open the gates**” implies that access is allowed:

Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?

Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment?

For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children.

“**Shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth?**” says [YHWH];

“shall I, who cause to bring forth, shut the womb?” says your God.

(Isaiah 66:8-9 ESV)

The resurrection from the dead will in one instant produce “**a nation**”, the Family of God. The “**gates**” to the **Kingdom of God** will be opened, and **all True Worshipper since Abel**, to whom God the Father see fit to grant the gift of eternal life, **will be transformed**. This is the “**hope of salvation**” upon which True Worshipers can, through faith, have “**trust in YHWH forever**”. When God is ready, it will occur, “**shall I bring to the point of birth and not cause to bring forth**”.

Because this is the world of Satan the Devil, True Worshipers have NOT been able to do anything to change the world, “**we have given birth to wind**”, “**we have accomplished no deliverance in the earth**”. This will change when the Kingdom of God arrives and the Resurrection of the Dead occurs, “**your dead shall live**”, “**their bodies shall rise**”, “**the earth will give birth to the dead**”. Until then, True Worshipers, the New Testament Church, must “**hide yourselves for a little while**”.

The **Prophet Isaiah** makes some comments on the nature the Resurrection of the Dead:

Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and **princes will rule in justice**.

Each will be like a hiding place from the wind, **a shelter** from the storm,
like **streams of water** in a dry place, like **the shade** of a great rock in a weary land.

Who among us can dwell with the **consuming fire**?

Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?

He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly,
who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe,
who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil,

he will dwell on the heights;

his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks;

his bread will be given him; his water will be sure.

Your eyes will behold the king in his beauty; **they will see a land that stretches afar**.

(Isaiah 32:1-2, 33:14b-17 ESV)

The resurrected saints will rule with Christ,¹⁰⁸ “**princes will rule in justice**”. Their rule will be one of serving and succoring, “**like a hiding place, a shelter, streams of water, the shade**”. The difference between mortal, physical existence, and immortal, spiritual existence, is like a “**consuming fire**” – “**who among us can dwell**” in a “**consuming fire**”? Isaiah goes on list some characteristics of living by the Way of God, “**he who walks righteously**”, “**will dwell on the heights**”, i.e., be granted the gift of eternal life. Only with eternal life can a once physical human being see God in spiritual glory, “**your eyes will behold the king in his beauty**”, and the dominion of the Kingdom of will be the whole earth, “**a land that stretches afar**”.

Isaiah further reports the **words of God** describing the Kingdom of God and promising True Worshipers eternal life to participate in the Kingdom of God:

Give attention to me, **my people**, and give ear to me, **my nation**;

for [torah] will go out from me,

and I will set **my [justness] (mish*pat)**¹⁰⁹ for a light to the peoples.

My righteousness draws near, **my salvation** has gone out,

and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.

¹⁰⁸ See Revelation 20:4,6

¹⁰⁹ See footnote 71

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment,
and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;
but **my salvation will be forever**, and my righteousness will never be dismayed.
(Isaiah 51:4-6 ESV)

The seminal scripture on the dwelling place of God, “eternity”,¹¹⁰ also alludes to the resurrection of the dead:

For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
“**I dwell** in the high and holy place,
and also **with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit**,
to revive the spirit of **the lowly**, and **to revive** the heart of **the contrite**. ...”
(Isaiah 57:15 ESV)

The phrase “**to revive**” is translated from הַחַיּוֹת - haḥayoth, “to make alive”, the hiphil, infinitive construct of the verb הָיָה - haya, “have life”.¹¹¹ God “dwells with converted persons”, “**him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit**”. This is clearly an allusion to living human beings with no need to be “made alive” physically. The terms “**the lowly**” and “**the contrite**” also identify True Worshipers. In order for there to be a need for them to be “made alive”, they must die. So clearly, **the promise “to revive”, “to make alive”**, is looking to **the resurrection of the dead** and the transformation from a physical body to a spiritual body.

The context of this verse clearly supports this understanding. Verses 1 and 2 of Isaiah chapter 57 allude to the death of a “righteous man”, likely **King Hezekiah**. Then verses 3 through 11a recount the deeds of an evil person, likely **King Manasseh**, Hezekiah’s son. Verse 13a summarizes **the fate of the evil one**, while verse 13b segues into remainder of the chapter:

When you cry out, **let your collection of idols deliver you!**
The wind will carry them all off, a breath will take them away.
But **he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land** and **shall inherit my holy mountain**.
(Isaiah 57:13 ESV)

Verse 14 introduces the subject of the remainder of the chapter: the **Second Exodus**, “**possess the land**”, and the **New Israel**, “**inherit my holy mountain**”, in the **World Tomorrow**:

And it shall be said,
“Build up, build up, **prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people’s way.**”
“... For **I will not contend forever**, nor will I always be angry;
for the spirit would grow faint before me, and the breath of life that I made.
I have seen his ways, but **I will heal him**;
I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips.
Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says [YHWH], “and I will heal him. ...”
(Isaiah 57:14, 16, 18-19 ESV)

At the Second Exodus, those called to the New Israel will return to the Land of Israel, “**remove every obstruction from my people’s way**”. God’s contention with Israel will be over, “**I will not contend forever**”. Israel will be “healed” from the ways of sin and death, “**I will heal him**”. The whole world will participate in the utopia of God, “**peace, peace, to the far and to the near**”. The key to making this all happen, is the resurrection of the dead discussed in verse 15b, “**to revive ... the lowly, to revive ... the contrite**”.

The **Prophets Micah and Habakkuk** make brief mention of **eternal salvation**:

... we will walk in the name of [YHWH] our God **forever and ever**.
(Micah 4:5b ESV)
... yet I will rejoice in [YHWH]; I will take joy in **the God of my salvation**.
(Habakkuk 3:18 ESV)

¹¹⁰ See section **1.3 Where is God?** in the paper “**First Pillar - The Nature of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹¹¹ See the discussion of this verb in section **2.1.2 The Nature of Man** in the paper “**Second Pillar - The Plan of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Twice in the **Book of Jeremiah**,¹¹² God is quoted promising “**shepherds**” to lead the New Israel in the World Tomorrow. These “**shepherds**” are of course one and the same as the “**princes**” referred to in **Isaiah chapter 32 verse one**, the **Resurrected Saints**:

And I will give you **shepherds after my own heart**,
who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.
I will set **shepherds over them who will care for them**,
and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed,
neither shall any be missing, declares [YHWH].
(Jeremiah 3:15, 23:4 ESV)

The **Book of Daniel** contains one of the most explicit prophecies of the **Resurrection of the Dead**:

At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people.
And there shall be **a time of trouble**, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.
But at that time your people shall be delivered,
everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.¹¹³
And **many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life**,
and some to shame and everlasting contempt.
And **those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky** above;
and **those who turn many to righteousness**, like the stars forever and ever.
But you, Daniel, **shut up the words and seal the book**, until the time of the end.
Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.
I heard, but **I did not understand**. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?”
He said,
“Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end.
Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white¹¹⁴ **and be refined**,
but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand,
but those who are wise shall understand. ...”
(Daniel 12:1-4, 8-10 ESV)

The **Prophet Ezekiel** was given **the vision of the Valley of Dry Bones** recorded in chapter 37 of his book. This vision provides a glimpse into the details of the **Second Resurrection** when all dead are restored to physical life. Once restored, they are given the opportunity to be converted, receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and **become a candidate for the gift of eternal life through the Resurrection of the Dead**. Please see the discussion of this vision in section **The Prophet Ezekiel** in the paper “**Second Pillar - The Plan of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

The **Prophet Haggai** reports the word from God promising **Zerubbabel** that he will participate in the **Resurrection of the Dead**:

The word of [YHWH] came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month,
“Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying,
I am about to shake the heavens and the earth,
and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms.
I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations,
and overthrow the chariots and their riders.
And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.
On that day, declares [YHWH] of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares [YHWH], and **make you like a signet ring**, for **I have chosen you**, declares [YHWH] of hosts.”
(Haggai 2:20-23 ESV)

The last prophetic book of the Old Testament, the **Book of Malachi**, ends with a promise from God that **True Worshipers** will participate in the **Resurrection of the Dead**:

Then **those who feared [YHWH]** spoke with one another. [YHWH] paid attention and heard them, and a **book of remembrance**¹¹⁵ was written before him of those who feared [YHWH] and esteemed his name.
“**They shall be mine**, says [YHWH] of hosts, **in the day when I make up my treasured possession**, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. ...”

¹¹² Jeremiah 30:9 also contains the prophecy of the **resurrection of David**, as discussed in section **3.3.4.1 Early Allusions to the Resurrection**.

¹¹³ See the discussion in section **9.5 The Book of Life** in the paper “**The Writings of Moses**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹¹⁴ See the discussion above about Isaiah 1:18.

¹¹⁵ See footnote 113

But **for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.**
You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked,
for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, **on the day when I act**, says [YHWH] of hosts.
(Malachi 3:16-17, 4:2-3 ESV)

The **concept of eternal life** and the **need for transformation** from a physical existence to a spiritual existence are **clear and explicit throughout the Old Testament**. The **Book of Job** explores the concepts most thoroughly, but **David** and **Isaiah** express a lot of understanding. Understanding of the concepts is implicit in many of the other references. However, the complete understanding of the **Resurrection of the Dead** is **only available from the New Testament documents**. For a discussion of the New Testament documents, please see section **2.1.3 The Resurrection of the Dead** in the paper “**Second Pillar - The Plan of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

3.4 The Three Great Periods of Revelation

From the previous section, it is clear that teaching of God, on any given topic, is NOT all revealed in one place in the Bible. **The entire Bible must be considered to understand God’s teaching – The Way of God.** Again, the **Prophet Isaiah** explains it best:

To whom will he teach knowledge, and to whom will he explain the message?

Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast.¹¹⁶

For it is precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
line upon line, line upon line, **here a little, there a little**.

... **[YHWH] will speak to this people**, to whom he has said,

“This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose”;

yet they would not hear.

And **the word of [YHWH] will be to them** precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little,

that they may go, and **fall backward**, and **be broken**, and **snared**, and **taken**.

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying,

“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

And he said,

“Go, and say to this people:

‘Keep on hearing, but **do not understand**; keep on seeing, but **do not perceive**.’

Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes;

lest they see with their eyes, and **hear** with their ears,

and **understand** with their hearts, and **turn and be healed**.”

(Isaiah 28:9-10, 11b-13, 6:8-10 ESV)

The **knowledge of The Way of God**, **“to whom will he teach knowledge”**, is only available from the whole Bible, **“here a little, there a little”**. God’s intention is to teach everyone, **“YHWH will speak to this people”**, but in Isaiah’s day, as today, the majority refuse to hear, **“yet they would not hear”**. Those who try to understand the Bible based on their own preconceptions, CANNOT understand – they end up **“broken, and snared, and taken”**. Isaiah was willing to take the message to his people, as the message is going out today, **“go, and say to this people”**, but the understanding can only come from God through the direction of the Holy Spirit, most **“do not understand”**, **“do not perceive”**. Only when any person is ready does God open up that person’s understanding, **“lest they see, hear, and understand”**. No person can be healed until that person is ready, **“turn and be healed”**.

Jesus used the parable of “Lazarus and the Rich Man” to make it clear that his life and work could only understood in the context of the teaching available from the Writings of Moses and the Prophets:

There was **a rich man** who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.

And at his gate was laid **a poor man named Lazarus**, covered with sores,
who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table.

Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.

The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side.¹¹⁷

The rich man also died and was buried, and in [the grave].

¹¹⁶ The ESV frames the first line as an interrogative, which is fine; but, the second line clearly answers the question.

¹¹⁷ This is a metaphoric allusion to the First Resurrection.

[Later]¹¹⁸ **being in torment**, he lifted up his eyes and saw **Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side**. And he called out,
'Father Abraham, have mercy on me,
and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue,
for I am in anguish in this flame.'

But **Abraham said**,
'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things,
and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.
And besides all this, **between us and you a great chasm has been fixed**,
in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able,
and none may cross from there to us.'

And he said,
'Then I beg you, father, to **send him to my father's house**—for I have five brothers—
so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'

But Abraham said, '**They have Moses and the Prophets**; let them hear them.'

And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but **if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent**.'

He said to him,
'**If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets,**
neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'

(Luke 16:19-31 ESV see also 24:27, 44, Acts 26:22, 28:23)

The **Writings of Moses** contain **the foundation of the Way of God**, the definition of what it means to be a True Worshipper of God. The **Prophets** refined the understanding in response to the apostasy of Israel, showing that in spite of Israel's failure, God would accomplish his purpose. This is all the revelation that was available to the people to whom Jesus presented this parable. Clearly, the understanding of God's revelation was governed by the principles specified by Isaiah. The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich man **assumes that the hearers have some understanding of both Moses and the Prophets**; but it also, **requires understanding which that would only become available as the New Testament documents were produced**. This is an example of Jesus' presenting people with information they had no way to understand, "**lest they see, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed**".

The Rich man's "**being in torment**", is clearly an allusion to the Lake of Fire.¹¹⁹ The presence of Abraham and Lazarus, "**between us and you a great chasm has been fixed**", is clearly an allusion to the Resurrection from the Dead¹²⁰ – they are eternal beings in the Family of God. The point of the parable is that **The Way of God is fully defined in Moses and the Prophets** – if the teaching there is rejected, **the life and work of Jesus Christ**, as demonstrated by his resurrection, **will also be rejected**.

The **Apostle John** reports Jesus' words putting it succinctly:

For **if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me**.

But **if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?**

(John 5:46-47 ESV)

The author of the **Book of Hebrews**¹²¹ is explicit that **the teaching of Moses and the Prophets is a precursor to the life and work of Jesus Christ**:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, **God spoke to our fathers by the prophets**,
but in these last days **he has spoken to us by his Son**, whom he appointed the heir of all things,
through whom also he created the world.

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling,
consider **Jesus**, the apostle and high priest of our confession,
who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.

For **Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses**—
as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.
(For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.)

Now **Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant,**
to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but **Christ is faithful over God's house as a son**.

¹¹⁸ This is NOT in the Greek text, nor the ESV; it is explanatory for temporality.

¹¹⁹ See Revelation 20:14-15, 21:8

¹²⁰ See Revelation 20:4-5

¹²¹ See **Excursus 2 – The Book of Hebrews**

And **we are his house**, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.
(Hebrews 1:1-2, 3:1-6 ESV)

The **Apostle John** further elaborates on **the relationship between Moses and Jesus**:

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory, glory as of **the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth**. ...
For from his fullness **we have all received, grace upon grace**.
For **the [nomos]¹²² was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ**.
(John 1:14, 17 ESV)

The initial teaching of God came through Moses, **“the teaching was given through Moses”**, but only in Jesus is propitiatory grace available, **“we have all received, grace upon grace”**. Jesus was also the author of the truth revealed through Moses,¹²³ **“the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth”**. The understanding revealed in the New Testament documents is only available through Jesus Christ, **“grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”**.

The **Apostle Paul** further elaborates on **the relationship of the revelation through Moses and the revelation through Jesus Christ** in the New Testament documents:

And you show that **you are a letter from Christ** delivered by us,
written not with ink but **with the Spirit of the living God**,
not on tablets of stone but **on tablets of human hearts**.
Such is the **confidence** that **we have through Christ toward God**.
Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us,
but our sufficiency is from God, **who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant**,
not of the letter but of the Spirit. For **the letter kills**, but **the Spirit gives life**.
Now if **the ministry of death**, carved in letters on stone,
came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory,
which was being brought to an end, **will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory?**
For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation,
the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.
Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all,
because of the glory that surpasses it.
For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, **much more will what is permanent have glory**.
Since **we have such a hope**, we are very bold, not like **Moses**, who would **put a veil over his face**
so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end.
But **their minds were hardened**. For to this day, **when they read the old [testament]**,¹²⁴
that same **veil remains unlifted**, because **only through Christ is it taken away**.
Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.
But **when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed**.
(2 Corinthians 3:3-16 ESV)

Analysis of Paul's statement:

- Paul asserts that conversion renders a person like **“a letter from Christ”** written **“with the Spirit of the living God”**
- Paul then alludes to the **prophecies of the New Covenant**:
For this is **the covenant that I will make** with the house of Israel after those days,
declares [YHWH]: I will put my [torah]¹²⁵ within them, and I will **write it on their hearts**.
And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
(Jeremiah 31:33 ESV see also 32:39-40, Isaiah 59:21)
And I will give them **one heart**, and **a new spirit** I will put within them.
I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh ...
And I will give you **a new heart**, and **a new spirit** I will put within you.
And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
And **I will put my Spirit within you**,
and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my [mish^epatim].¹²⁶
(Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26-27 see also 16:59)

¹²² Here, *nomos*, refers to the Writings of Moses.

¹²³ As YHWH, it was Jesus Christ who personally dealt with Moses.

¹²⁴ In this context, διαθήκη - diathēkē, is better translated “testament”; see GEL 182.

¹²⁵ See footnote 11

¹²⁶ See footnote 13

- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit provides **“confidence”** ... **“through Christ toward God”**
- Paul asserts himself and Timothy¹²⁷ to be **“ministers of a new covenant”**
- Then he contrasts the Old Covenant, **“the letter kills”**, **“the ministry of death”** with the New Covenant, **“the Spirit gives life”**
- Elsewhere Paul explains the phrase **“ministry of death”**:

Therefore, just as **sin came into the world through one man**, and **death through sin**, and so death spread to all men because all sinned ...

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, **you are slaves of the one whom you obey**, either of **sin**, which **leads to death**, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

But thanks be to God, that **you who were once slaves of sin** have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, **having been set free from sin**, have become slaves of righteousness.

For **when you were slaves of sin**, you were free in regard to righteousness.

But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For **the end of those things is death**.

But now that **you have been set free from sin** and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

For **the wages of sin is death**, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 5:12, 6:16-18, 20-23 ESV)

The **Apostle John** is explicit that **sin is defined by** the teaching of God, specifically **the Ten Commandments**:

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we **keep his commandments**.

Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar,

and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him.

And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit [which] he has given us. ...

By this we know that we love the children of God,

when we love God and **obey his commandments**.

For **this is the love of God**, that we **keep his commandments**.

And his commandments are not burdensome.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; **sin is lawlessness**.

(1 John 2:3-5a, 3:24, 5:2-3, 3:4 ESV see also Revelation 12:17, 14:12)

Paul concurs with John’s assessment. The teaching of God defines sin. The penalty for sin is death. **All who are living under the nomos**,¹²⁸ **“the ministry of death”**, **are under the death penalty**. Only the propitiating sacrifice of Jesus Christ can remove the penalty for sin:

But now we are released from the [nomos], having died to that which held us captive, so that we **serve in the new way of the Spirit** and not in the old way of the written code.

What then shall we say? That the [nomos] is sin? By no means!

Yet **if it had not been for the [nomos], I would not have known sin**.

So the [nomos] is holy, and **the commandment is holy and righteous and good**.

(Romans 7:6-7a, 12 ESV see also Acts 13:38-39)

- After his personal theophany on Mount Sinai, Moses’ face was left shining, **“with such glory”**:
When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that **the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God**.
And when Moses had finished speaking with them, **he put a veil over his face**.
(Exodus 34:29, 33 ESV)
- Pau asserts the revelation through the Holy Spirt recorded in the New Testament to be superior, **“will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory”**, **“we have such a hope”**
- The glory given to Moses was not permanent, so he hid it, **“put a veil over his face”**
- Like that veil,¹²⁹ the Israelites could not fully understand the teaching of God, the lack understanding continues, **“their minds were hardened”**, **“when they read the old testament”**, **“veil remains unlified”**

¹²⁷ See 2 Corinthians 1:1

¹²⁸ See footnote 4

- Only through Christ is the revelation of the teaching of God, the Way of God, understandable, **“only through Christ is it taken away”, “when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed”**

The revelation of God through Moses was correct, consistent, and complete. The foundation of the Teaching of God is the Writings of Moses. Israel was under covenantal agreement with YHWH to “obey my voice”. **The Writings of Moses were the voice of God** to which Israel had pledged obedience. Israel broke the Covenant. The **Writing Prophets** responded to the apostasy of Israel by cataloguing the details of their sin. To the Writing Prophets, **God elaborated the spiritual dimension of his teaching** – the attitude of the True Worshipper is more important the physical aspects of worship.

When the Messiah, **Jesus Christ**, came, he **revealed to true depths of God’s teaching**. Jesus unlocked the spiritual intent of the Writings of Moses. Jesus revealed that the promises to the patriarchs and much of what the Writing Prophets recorded looked to him. **Jesus’ sacrifice made possible the indwelling of the Holy Spirit** by those called by God to the New Testament Church. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit complete understanding of the Writings of Moses and the Writing Prophets is possible. The **New Testament Documents** record Jesus’ teaching which unlocks all previous revelation.

3.4.1 The Writings of Moses

The paper “**The Writings of Moses**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca contains detailed analysis of the provenance, contents, and usage of the Writings of Moses. The focus in this current paper is the contents of the Writings of Moses as **the fundamental revelation of the Way of God**.

3.4.1.1 The Sinai Covenant and the Ten Commandments

Moses assembled the **Book of Genesis** to provide the historical background of the Nation of Israel. The first nineteen chapters of **Book of Exodus** describe the creation of the Nation of Israel. **The Nation of Israel was created by the Sinai Covenant** which comprises three simple stipulations:

You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians,
and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.
Now therefore, if you will indeed **obey my voice** and **keep my covenant**,
you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples,
for all the earth is mine; and you shall **be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**.
(Exodus 19:4-6a ESV)

- obey my voice
- keep my covenant
- be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation

To “**obey my voice**” means to **learn to live by the Way of God**. When the Israelites entered into the Sinai Covenant, they had NOT yet received any instructions from God regarding how to live by his teachings. The first thing God did was provide the most important tenets of his teaching – **the Ten Commandments**. Many volumes have been written on the meaning and application of the Ten Commandments:¹³⁰

- I. I am [YHWH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
You shall have no other gods before me.
- II. You shall not make for yourself a carved image,
or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath,
or that is in the water under the earth.
You shall not bow down to them or serve them,
for I, [YHWH] your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me,
but **showing [hesed] to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.**
- III. **You shall not take the name of [YHWH] your God in vain,**
for [YHWH] will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
- IV. **Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.**
Six days you shall labor, and do all your work,

¹²⁹ **Paul uses Moses’ veil as symbolic of the veil in the Tabernacle and the Temple separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place symbolizing the separation of man from God;** see Exodus 26:31-34, 30:1-10, Leviticus chapter 16, Mark 15:38 // Matthew 27:51a // Luke 23:45b, Isaiah 25:6-8. Note that Solomon installed “doors” between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place; see 1 Kings 6:31-32. These must have been replaced by the veil in the second Temple and the veil retained in Herod’s Temple.

¹³⁰ See, for example, “**The Ten Commandments**” located at <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-study-aids/the-ten-commandments>

but the seventh day is a Sabbath to [YHWH] your God.
On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.
For in six days [YHWH] made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,
and rested on the seventh day.¹³¹ Therefore **[YHWH] blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.**

- V. **Honor your father and your mother,**
that your days may be long in the land that [YHWH] your God is giving you.
- VI. **You shall not murder.**
- VII. **You shall not commit adultery.**
- VIII. **You shall not steal.**
- IX. **You shall not bear false witness** against your neighbor.
- X. **You shall not covet** your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife,
or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey,
or anything that is your neighbor's.

(Exodus 20:2–17 ESV see also Deuteronomy 5:6-21)

Jesus elucidated the Ten Commandments by reducing them to the **two fundamental principles of “love”**. The first four Commandments define love towards God. The last six Commandments define love towards fellow human beings:

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the [nomos]?”¹³²

And he said to him,

**“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your [being] and with all your mind.**

This is the great and first commandment.

And a second is like it: **You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**

On these two commandments depend all the [nomos] and the Prophets.”

(Matthew 22:35-40 ESV)

The Ten Commandments are the basis and the foundation of all the teaching of God. The Way of God is summarized in the Ten Commandments. The rest of the teaching can be regarded as just elaboration and explanation of the Ten Commandments.

3.4.1.2 The Covenant Code and Other Statutes

The next teaching God provided to the Israelites was the **“Covenant Code”**.¹³³ The Covenant Code is the **first set of “statutes”** provide by God to Israel. Statutes are **specific prescriptions and proscriptions** which God required of Ancient Israel. The entire collection of statutes¹³⁴ in the Bible DOES NOT comprise a complete or consistent “legal system”. Each statute is designed to **provide insight into the mind of God** regarding some particular topic or situation. The **understanding derived from a statute** is intended to be used in similar or related matters. **In the modern world**, many of the statutes have no meaning in terms of being able to literally carry them out. However, the **obtaining of insight into the mind of God** remains the purpose of and the value of the statutes for True Worshipers of God. For a more detailed discussion of statutes, see **Excursus 4 – Statutes and Ancient Law Codes** in the paper “**The Writings of Moses**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Frequently, **Jesus alluded to a statute from the Writings of Moses** and elaborated it to bring out a **spiritual principle**, for example:

Again **you have heard that it was said to those of old,**

‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’

But I say to you,

Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth,
for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

(Matthew 5:33-37 ESV)

¹³¹ In Deuteronomy, Moses focuses on “**freedom**” as **the basis for the Sabbath**: “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and [YHWH] your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.” (Deuteronomy 5:15a ESV)

¹³² See footnote 4

¹³³ See Exodus 20:22-26, all of chapters 21, 22, and 23

¹³⁴ See also the “Holiness Code”, Leviticus chapters 12 through 15 and 17 through 27; and, Numbers chapters 5, 6, 15, 19, 30, 35, and 36; and, Deuteronomy chapters 13 through 25.

- You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am [YHWH]. (Leviticus 19:12 ESV)
- If a man vows a vow to [YHWH], or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. (Numbers 30:2 ESV)
- If you make a vow to [YHWH] your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for [YHWH] your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from vowing, you will not be guilty of sin. You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to [YHWH] your God what you have promised with your mouth. (Deuteronomy 23:21-23 ESV)

You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’

But I say to you,

Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, **turn to him the other also**. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, **let him have your cloak as well**. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, **go with him two miles**.

Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. (Matthew 5:38-42 ESV)

- If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him. (Leviticus 24:19-20 ESV)
- Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deuteronomy 19:21 ESV)

The Apostle Paul uses a statute to shame the Corinthian Church for their lack of physical support for the preaching of the Gospel. Around 50AD Paul had spent a year and a half in Corinth establishing the Church.¹³⁵ During this time he worked with **Aquila** in the tentmaking trade.¹³⁶ Some years later, Paul was in Ephesus and wrote the letter we have as “First Corinthians” indicating his plan to again visit Corinth.¹³⁷

Given this pending visit, **some in Corinth apparently questioned Paul in some way**:

This is my defense to those who would examine me.

(1 Corinthians 9:3 ESV)

Paul goes on to say that those who work preaching the Gospel have a right to live by the avails of their preaching:

Do we not have the right to eat and drink?

Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?

Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right **to refrain from working for a living**?

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?

Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit?

Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

(1 Corinthians 9:4-7 ESV)

To support his contention, **Paul appeals to an Old Testament statute** using it to demonstrate **a principle far removed from the literal intent** of the statute:

Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the [nomos]¹³⁸ say the same?

For it is written in the [nomos] of Moses,

“You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.”

Is it for oxen that God is concerned? **Does he not certainly speak for our sake?**

It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

¹³⁵ See Acts 18:1-11

¹³⁶ See Acts 18:1-3

¹³⁷ See 1 Corinthians 16:5-8, Acts 19:21

¹³⁸ See footnote 4

If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?
(1 Corinthians 9:8-11 ESV see also 1 Timothy 5:18)

- You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.
(Deuteronomy 25:4 ESV)

James, the brother of Jesus, appeals to a statute to extend its meaning to a very broad and important application:

My brothers, **show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ**, the Lord of glory.
For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention **to the one who wears the fine clothing and say**,
“You sit here in a good place,”

while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,”
have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges **with evil thoughts?**

If you really fulfill the royal [nomos] according to the Scripture,
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”

you are doing well.

But **if you show partiality, you are committing sin** and are convicted by the [nomos] as transgressors.
(James 2:1-4, 8-9 ESV)

- ... you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am [YHWH]. (Leviticus 19:18b ESV)

As reported in the Gospel of John,¹³⁹ **Jesus**, himself, makes clear **the ultimate purpose and use of the statutes:**

Early in the morning he came again to the temple.
All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.
The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery,
and placing her in the midst they said to him,
“Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.
Now in the [nomos], Moses commanded us to stone such women.

So what do you say?”

This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him.

Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them,

“Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”

And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground.

But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones,
and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? **Has no one condemned you?**”

She said, “No one, Lord.”

And Jesus said, **“Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”**
(John 8:2-11 ESV)

- If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor,
both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.
(Leviticus 20:10 ESV)
- If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die,
the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.
(Deuteronomy 22:22 ESV)

For Ancient Israel, the statutes were meant to be applied literally because in many cases they formed the backbone of normal societal relations. For a discussion of adultery in the ancient world and Jesus’ teaching on the subject, see section **5.8 Adultery** in the paper **“The Human Condition”** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca. Adultery in the ancient world was normally a capital crime, although there were exceptions. **Under the New Covenant, repentance is possible for all sin.** Jesus’ propitiating sacrifice is sufficient to cover all, **“neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”**

¹³⁹ This pericope is missing from all the oldest manuscripts of the Gospel of John. It is, however, included in many later manuscripts in various places; see the discussion in Metzger **TC** pages 219-223. Metzger’s summary seems most sensible: “... **the account has all the earmarks of historic veracity.** It is obviously a piece of oral tradition which circulated in certain parts of the Western Church and which was subsequently incorporated into various manuscripts at various places.” (pages 220-221)

3.4.1.3 The Sacrificial System and the Tabernacle

A significant component of the Writings of Moses is the provisions for the **Sacrificial System**.¹⁴⁰ Animal sacrifices were necessary for the people of Ancient Israel. In order **to have a relationship with God**, to come before God in worship or prayer, **a person must be accounted “holy” by God**.¹⁴¹ Anything that is “unclean”, i.e., “NOT holy”, must be destroyed if it comes into contact with that which is “holy”.¹⁴² A person became “unclean” through sin (and through various physical conditions). To be forgiven, to atone for the sin, blood must be shed:

If anyone of the common people sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by [YHWH’s] commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, **he shall bring for his offering a goat ...** And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and **kill the sin offering ...** And the **priest shall take some of its blood** with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar ... And the **priest shall make atonement for him**, and **he shall be forgiven**. (Leviticus 4:27-28a, 29a, 30, 31b ESV)
... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. (Hebrews 9:22b ESV)

The blood of animals does NOT remove the sin, **propitiate the sin**. The blood of animals can only cover the sin, **atone for the sin**. **Only the blood of Jesus Christ can propitiate sin**. That is why the whole sacrificial system looked to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and why the sacrificial system was rendered obsolete and done away with by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For further discussion on the meaning of sacrifices, see section **10. The Role of Sacrifices** in the paper “**True Worship of the True God**”, and section **4.1 The Sacrificial System** in the paper “**The Human Condition**”, both papers are located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Central to the establishment of the nation of Israel, was **the Tabernacle**. The instructions for constructing the Tabernacle and its accoutrements are recorded in Exodus chapters 25, 26, 27, and 30. The actual construction is recorded in Exodus chapters 35 through 38, and the consecration ceremony is reported in Exodus chapter 40 verses one through fifteen.

The **purpose of the Tabernacle** is explicitly stated:

[YHWH] said to Moses,
“Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution.
From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. ...
And let them **make me a sanctuary**, that **I may dwell in their midst**. ...”
(Exodus 25:1-2, 8 ESV)

Prior to the Exodus event, in giving Moses instructions to reassure the people of Israel, **God clearly states the objective of his actions towards the people**. Israel would be **delivered from Egypt** and be **redeemed as God’s people**. God’s primary requirement was that the people of Israel would **accept him as their God**:

God spoke to Moses and said to him,
“I am [YHWH]. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name [YHWH] **I did not make myself known to them**.
I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners.
Moreover, **I have heard the groaning of the people of Israel** whom the Egyptians hold as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the people of Israel,
‘I am [YHWH], and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and **I will deliver you from slavery to them**, and **I will redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.
I will take you to be my people, and **I will be your God**, and you shall know that I am [YHWH] your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

¹⁴⁰ See Leviticus chapter 1 through 7; Numbers 15:1-31, 19:1-10, and chapters 18, 28 and 29; and, Deuteronomy 26:1-15.

¹⁴¹ For a discussion of the concept of “holiness”, section **6. Holiness** in the paper “**To Be a Priest**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹⁴² For further discussion on this topic, see **Excursus 1 – Devoted to Destruction: haram**.

I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. **I am [YHWH].**”
(Exodus 6:2–8 ESV)

God desired a special relationship with Israel – more than God had shared with the Patriarchs, **“I did not make myself known to them”**. **The Tabernacle was the key to this relationship**. God dwelt with Israel in the Tabernacle. **The presence of God was always with Israel** above the “*kapporeth*”, the covering of the Ark of the Covenant, in the Most Holy Place. The presence of God was visible during the Wilderness Period as a pillar of Cloud or Fire.

The entire Tabernacle structure and service were designed to focus on God’s presence and the relationship implied by God’s presence. Moses spoke to God at will at the “**tent of meeting**”, the first room of the Tabernacle tent, the Holy Place. The Priests served daily in the Holy Place. Once a year, on **the Day of Atonement**, the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place, the second room of the Tabernacle tent, into the Presence of God, **foreshadowing the sacrifice of Jesus Christ**. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ allows all who are covered by the Blood of Christ to come at will into the Presence of God. For further discussion of the Tabernacle see section **5. The Tabernacle** in the paper “**The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

During the Wilderness Period, God continued to reveal his teaching to Moses. Moses documented the teaching revealing the Way of God. Much of this revelation occurred in the Tent of Meeting.

3.4.1.4 The Book of Deuteronomy

After the Wilderness Period, the Israelites reached **the Plains of Moab** where they camped for about six months in **preparation for entry to the Promised Land**. During the last month or so of this period, **Moses delivered as series of speeches with an explicit purpose:**

In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, **Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that [YHWH] had given him in commandment** to them ... Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, **Moses undertook to explain this [torah]**,¹⁴³ saying ... (Deuteronomy 1:3, 5 ESV)

Moses had been condemned to death so that he could NOT lead the people into the Promised Land.¹⁴⁴ The time of his death was approaching. **Moses’ speeches in the Plains of Moab were his last opportunity to teach the people all that God had delivered through him**. At this point, the teaching we have in the Books Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and the first twenty-one chapters of the Book of Numbers had been assembled by Moses.¹⁴⁵ Moses’ desire in his speeches was to ensure the people understood and internalized this teaching. Moses’ speeches were recorded and later, probably by Joshua, assembled into the Book of Deuteronomy.¹⁴⁶

The first twelve chapters of Deuteronomy are the explicit realization of Moses’ stated objective “**to explain this torah**”. This material is more or less equivalent to the Gospel Message of the New Testament.¹⁴⁷ The material starts out “**these are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel**”.¹⁴⁸ Similar words occur more than a dozen times.¹⁴⁹ These chapters of Deuteronomy are an extremely important representation of the teaching of God, **the Way of God**. They contain Moses’ heartfelt outpouring of love for the people of Israel. **This reflects God’s love for all humanity**.

¹⁴³ See footnote 11

¹⁴⁴ See Numbers 20:10-13, 27:12-14, Deuteronomy 1:37, 3:23-27, 31:2,14, 34:1-7

¹⁴⁵ For a discussion of this process, see the sections 1 through 7 of the paper “**The Writings of Moses**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹⁴⁶ For a discussion of the nature and structure of the Book of Deuteronomy, see section **8. The Book of Deuteronomy, Excursus 5 – Analysis of Deuteronomy Chapters 13-25**, and **Excursus 6 – The Perspective of the Jordan River** in the paper “**The Writings of Moses**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis and discussion of this material, see the paper “**The Words of Eternal Life**” and section **4.5 To Explain This torah** of the paper “**Covenants of Grace**”, both papers are located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹⁴⁸ See Deuteronomy 1:1

¹⁴⁹ See Deuteronomy 1:3,5,9, 3:18, 4:1, 5:1, 6:1, 8:1, 10:12, 11:1-2,8,13,18,26, 12:1,32

Briefly, the main points of these chapters follow:

- In **chapter one**, Moses recounts the initial approach to the Promised Land from the south, the negative report of the spies, the rebellion of the people, and the condemnation of all men of military age.
- In **chapters two and three**, Moses quickly passes over the Wilderness Period and describes the approach to the Promised Land from the east, including the acquisition of the lands east of the Jordan.
- The first three chapters serve as **an object lesson of God's ability to accomplish his purpose**.
- **Chapter four** begins the main teaching of Moses:

And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the [mish*patim]¹⁵⁰ that I am teaching you, and do them, **that you may live**, and go in and take possession of the land that [YHWH], the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may **keep the commandments of [YHWH] your God** that I command you. ... Only **take care**, and keep your [mind] diligently, **lest you forget** the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. **Make them known to your children and your children's children** ... (Deuteronomy 4:1–2, 9 ESV)

Moses emphasizes that **idolatry is the root of all sin**:

Then [YHWH] spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. **You heard the sound of words, but saw no form**; there was only a voice. ... Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. **Since you saw no form** on the day that [YHWH] spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, **beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image** for yourselves ... And **beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven**, and when you see **the sun** and **the moon** and **the stars**, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away **and bow down to them and serve them** ... **... if you act corruptly** by making a carved image in the form of anything, and by doing what is evil in the sight of [YHWH] your God, so as to provoke him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that **you will soon utterly perish** from the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess. You will not live long in it, but will be utterly destroyed. (Deuteronomy 4:12, 15-16a, 19a, 25b-26 ESV)

- **Chapter five** contains a review of the Ten Commandments.
- **Chapter six** begins to discuss **the basis of the relationship** that God desired with Israel – love.

Two important words are used for “love”: אָהַב - ‘ahav, and חֶסֶד - hesed. The English word “love” carries approximately the same range of meaning as “‘ahav”.¹⁵¹ Of course, “hesed” means “covenant love” – God’s unfailing commitment to maintain his side of a covenant agreement.¹⁵² Israel, and by extension, **all True Worshipers, are commanded to ‘ahav God**:

Hear, O Israel: [YHWH] is our God, [YHWH] alone.
You shall love (‘ahav) [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your [mind] and with all your might.
(Deuteronomy 6:4-5 ESV)

The **objective of loving God** is specified three times:

... that you may **fear [YHWH] your God** ...

It is [YHWH] your God you shall fear.

And [YHWH] commanded us to do all these statutes, **to fear [YHWH] our God**, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. (Deuteronomy 6:2a, 13a, 24 ESV)

The word “fear” is translated from יָרֵא - yare’, **with respect to God, it means “reverence”**.¹⁵³ For a True Worshiper, God should NEVER be “feared” in the sense of being afraid. God the

¹⁵⁰ See footnote 13

¹⁵¹ See Holladay page 5

¹⁵² See the discussion in section **1.4.3 Attributes of God's Character** in the paper “Pillar One - The Nature of God” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹⁵³ See Holladay page 142

Father and Jesus Christ love all humanity,¹⁵⁴ True Worshipers are called to learn to reciprocate that love. This learning can only happen with **a lifetime of living by the Way of God** – that is required to **“know God”** and be **“known by God”**. A person in that state cannot help but have **true reverence for God**.

The word *“hesed”* does not actually occur in chapter six. **God’s covenant love is explicitly demonstrated** in chapter six by references to the fulfillment of covenant promises:

And **when [YHWH] your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers**,
to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob ...
And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of [YHWH],
that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and
take possession of the good land that [YHWH] swore to give to your fathers ...
... then you shall say to your son,
‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt.
And **[YHWH] brought us out of Egypt** with a mighty hand.
And [YHWH] showed signs and wonders, great and grievous,
against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes.
And he brought us out from there,
that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. ...’
(Deuteronomy 6:10a, 18, 21-23 ESV)

- In **chapter seven**, Moses warns the people about **the insidious nature of sin**. The culture of Canaan was so corrupt and evil that its complete eradication was necessary:
When [YHWH] your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you, and when [YHWH] your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then **you must devote them to complete destruction (haram)**.¹⁵⁵
You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them.
(Deuteronomy 7:1-2 ESV)

Moses reiterates the promised benefit of the Sinai Covenant. Moses emphasizes that Israel’s election was not based on any merit of the nation or the people:

For you are a people holy to [YHWH] your God.
[YHWH] your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession,
out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.
It was not because you were more in number than any other people
that [YHWH] set his love (hashaq)¹⁵⁶ on you and chose you,
for you were the [least]¹⁵⁷ of all peoples,
but **it is because [YHWH] loves (‘ahavah)¹⁵⁸ you**
and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers,
that [YHWH] has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you
from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.
(Deuteronomy 7:6–8 ESV)

The culture of Canaan was alluring, as the culture of the world today is alluring:

If you say in your heart, **‘These nations are greater than I. How can I dispossess them?’**
(Deuteronomy 7:17 ESV)

Moses warned Israel to look to God’s calling and promises, the words speak loudly to all True Worshipers – **do NOT be enamoured by the glitter of sin**, but **be prepared to utterly eradicate sin**:

... you shall not be afraid of them
but **you shall remember** what [YHWH] your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. ...
You shall not be in dread of them,
for **[YHWH] your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God**.

¹⁵⁴ See John 3:16

¹⁵⁵ See *Excursus 1 – Devoted to Destruction: haram*

¹⁵⁶ The verb *חָשַׁק* - hashaq, is seldom used, but it is more or less synonymous with *‘ahav*; it emphasizes “attachment”; see *TWOT* article 773 page 332.

¹⁵⁷ The adjective *מָעַט* - m’at, carries a fairly broad range of meaning around “small” or “little”; see Holladay page 206, especially meaning 4. Israel was NOT necessarily the “fewest” numerically, but they were the “least” of the nations in that they were slaves.

¹⁵⁸ The feminine noun *אַהֲבָה* - ‘ahavah, is derived from *‘ahav*, it means “love”; see *TWOT* article 29 page 14.

You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to [YHWH] your God. And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become **devoted to destruction (herem)**¹⁵⁹ like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction (herem). (Deuteronomy 7:18, 21, 25b-26 ESV)

- **Chapter eight** identifies the wilderness experience as an object lesson from which God expected Israel to learn two things – “man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of YHWH”; and “when you have eaten and are full ... your heart be lifted up”:

The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that [YHWH] swore to give to your fathers.

And you shall remember the whole way (derek) that [YHWH] your God has led you these **forty years in the wilderness**, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of [YHWH]. (Deuteronomy 8:1-3 ESV)

Moses warns that self-satisfaction can lead to idolatry, the root of all sin:

Take care lest you forget [YHWH] your God by not keeping his commandments and his [mish^apatim] and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget [YHWH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery ... Beware lest you say in your heart,

‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’

And if you forget [YHWH] your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. (Deuteronomy 8:11–14, 17, 19a ESV)

- **Chapter nine** deals with The Plan of God and Election – Moses recounts some of the sins of the nation during the Wilderness Period to emphasize that the election of Israel is strictly a matter of God’s prerogative because of the promises made to the Patriarchs:

Do not say in your heart, after [YHWH] your God has thrust them out before you, ‘It is because of my righteousness that [YHWH] has brought me in to possess this land,’

whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that [YHWH] is driving them out before you.

Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations [YHWH] your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that [YHWH] swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. (Deuteronomy 9:4-5 ESV)

- In **chapter ten**, Moses briefly reviews the Ark of the Covenant because its contents, the tablets with the Ten Commandments, define The Way of God:

At that time [YHWH] said to me, ‘Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to me on the mountain and make an ark of wood.

And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.’

And now, Israel, what does [YHWH] your God require of you, but to fear [YHWH] your God, to walk in all his ways (derek), to love (‘ahav) him, to serve [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your [mind], and to keep the commandments and statutes of [YHWH], which I am commanding you today for your good?

¹⁵⁹ The masculine noun הֶרֶם - herem, is derived from *haram*; see [Excursus 1 – Devoted to Destruction: haram](#).
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Behold, to [YHWH] your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens,
the earth with all that is in it.
Yet **[YHWH] set his heart in love on your fathers** and chose their offspring after them,
you above all peoples, as you are this day.
Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.
(Deuteronomy 10:1-2, 12-16 ESV)

- In **chapter eleven**, Moses again alludes to certain events from the **Wilderness Period** and looks forward to conditions in the **Promised Land**; he implores the people to **internalize God's teaching** and pass it on from generation to generation:
You shall therefore **lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your [mind]**,
and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.
You shall **teach them to your children**, talking of them when you are sitting in your house,
and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.
(Deuteronomy 11:18-19 ESV)
- **Chapter twelve** wraps up the first part of the Book of Deuteronomy by establishing that the Tabernacle will be set up in a specific location (to be Shiloh)¹⁶⁰ and the official service would be conducted there.¹⁶¹ During the Wilderness Period, any animal to be slaughtered had to be brought to the Tabernacle.¹⁶² Deuteronomy chapter twelve establishes that in the Promised Land, animals for food may be slaughtered anywhere.¹⁶³ Finally, **Moses issues one last warning against idolatry and warns against altering the teaching**:
When [YHWH] your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess,
and you dispossess them and dwell in their land,
take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you,
and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying,
'How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.'
You shall not worship [YHWH] your God in that way,
for every abominable thing that [YHWH] hates they have done for their gods,
for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.
Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do.
You shall not add to it or take from it.
(Deuteronomy 12:29-32 ESV)

The Writings of Moses, from start to finish, contain an internally consistent, cohesive, and complete description of the Way of God. If Israel had indeed lived by the Sinai Covenant, obeying the teaching of God, and becoming **"a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"**, they would have received God's blessing to **"be my treasured possession among all peoples"**. Unfortunately, the nation repeatedly fell into grievous apostasy. The Writing Prophets documented this tragedy and went on to elaborate the Way of God showing how he would remedy the situation.

3.4.2 The Writing Prophets

The **Prophet Samuel** had established **"Schools of Prophets"** in Israel before 1000BC.¹⁶⁴ Prior to this, during the Period of the Judges, Israel had fallen repeatedly into idolatry.¹⁶⁵ The Priesthood had more or less ceased to function.¹⁶⁶ The Nation was threatened with extermination by the Philistines.¹⁶⁷ Through Samuel, God pushed back the Philistines and established a period of tentative peace.¹⁶⁸ **The purpose of the Schools of the Prophets was to train men to teach Israel the Way of God.**¹⁶⁹ God continued to use the Schools of the Prophets until the time of Elisha, early 8th Century BC.

¹⁶⁰ See Joshua 18:1,8-10

¹⁶¹ See Deuteronomy 12:1-14,26-28

¹⁶² See Leviticus 17:1-9

¹⁶³ See Deuteronomy 12:15-25

¹⁶⁴ See Freeman, pages 28-34, Young (MSP) pages 83-94

¹⁶⁵ See the **Book of Judges**

¹⁶⁶ See 1 Samuel 2:12-17,22-25,27-36, 3:10-14, 4:11,12-18

¹⁶⁷ See 1 Samuel 4:1-3,11, 13:19-23

¹⁶⁸ See 1 Samuel 7:3-14

¹⁶⁹ For further discussion see sections **2.4.1.1 The Former Prophets** and **2.4.1.2 The Writing Prophets** in the paper **"Second Pillar - The Plan of God"** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Around the middle of the 9th Century BC, **God began to send the Writing Prophets to Israel**.¹⁷⁰ This was in the middle of the **Jezabel/Ahab crisis**,¹⁷¹ which threatened to eradicate worship of YHWH in North Israel and replace it with Ba'al worship. **Elijah and Elisha successfully defeated Jezabel/Ahab through King Jehu**, but his reform did NOT go far enough – **he allowed the sins of Jeroboam to continue**, the failure of Jehu became proverbial:

So **Jehu struck down all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel**, all his great men and his close friends and his priests, until he left him none remaining. ... And when he came to Samaria, **he struck down all who remained to Ahab in Samaria**, till he had wiped them out, according to the word of [YHWH] that he spoke to Elijah. ... Jehu said to the guard and to the officers, **“Go in and strike them down; let not a man escape.”** So when they put them to the sword, the guard and the officers cast them out and went into the inner room of the house of Baal, and they brought out the pillar that was in the house of Baal and burned it.

Thus **Jehu wiped out Baal from Israel**.

But **Jehu did not turn aside from the sins of Jeroboam** the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin—that is, the golden calves that were in Bethel and in Dan. And [YHWH] said to Jehu,

“Because **you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes**, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.”

But **Jehu was not careful to walk in the [torah]¹⁷² of [YHWH]**, the God of Israel, with all his heart. **He did not turn from the sins of Jeroboam**, which he made Israel to sin.

(2 Kings 10:11, 17, 25b-26, 28–31 ESV)

And [YHWH] said to him,

“Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while **I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel**, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. And on that day I will break the bow of Israel in the Valley of Jezreel.”

(Hosea 1:4-5 ESV)

The nation was delivered from the official worship of Ba'al, but **they did NOT embrace true worship of YHWH**. This is the situation into which God thrust the Writing Prophets.

3.4.2.1 The Apostacy of Israel

So the **Northern Kingdom** remained in **official apostacy** from the Sinai Covenant and the **Southern Kingdom** maintained official worship of YHWH, but in fact slipped further and further into apostacy. It was to this ongoing apostacy which the writing prophets responded. At first, the possibility of **national repentance** was offered by God to the nation, but by the end it was clear that **to a person, the nation was corrupt** and had to be destroyed. We have but scant record of it, but no doubt there were **many individuals who did repent**¹⁷³ – God has always maintained a group of **True Worshipers**.

The **Prophets Amos and Hosea** were sent first to the Northern Kingdom with the strong message against apostacy and the need for repentance. Both prophets identify **pride and arrogance** as the well spring of **idolatry**, the mother of all sin; the **roots of pride** are in self-satisfaction:

- **Self-satisfaction**, the root of pride and arrogance:

Woe to **those who are at ease** in Zion,
and to **those who feel secure** on the mountain of Samaria ...

Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall,
who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp
and like David invent for themselves instruments of music,
who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils,
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!
(Amos 6:1a, 4-6 ESV)

¹⁷⁰ The **Book of Obadiah** was most likely written in response to the **revolt of Edom** in about 845BC, see 2 Kings 8:20-22, 2 Chronicles 21:8-10,16-17, 22:1. The **Prophet Obadiah** is possibly identified in 1 Kings 18:3-7,16. The **Book of Joel** was most likely written in response to punishment meted out to the Southern Kingdom for the **sins of Athaliah/Jehoram**, see 2 Kings 8:18, 2 Chronicles 18:1, 21:1,11-15.

¹⁷¹ See 1 Kings 16:29-33, 18:4,13,18-19

¹⁷² See footnote 11

¹⁷³ See 1 Kings 19:18

The more they increased, the more they sinned against me;

Like a stubborn heifer, **Israel is stubborn**;

can [YHWH] now feed them like a lamb in a broad pasture?

Strangers devour his strength, and **he knows it not**;

gray hairs are sprinkled upon him, and **he knows it not**.

For **they sow the wind**, and they shall reap the whirlwind.

You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice;

you have eaten the fruit of lies.

Because **you have trusted in your own way** and in the multitude of your warriors ...

Ephraim has said,

“Ah, but **I am rich**; I have found wealth for myself;

in all my labors **they cannot find in me iniquity or sin**.”

... when they had grazed, **they became full**,

they were filled, and **their heart was lifted up**; therefore they forgot me.

(Hosea 4:7a, 16, 7:9, 8:7a, 10:13, 12:8, 13:6 ESV)

Self satisfaction was identified by Moses as the root of pride and arrogance:

Take care lest you forget [YHWH] your God

by not keeping his commandments and his [mish'patim]¹⁷⁴ and his statutes, which I command you today, lest,

when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them,

and when your herds and flocks multiply and **your silver and gold is multiplied**

and all that you have is multiplied, then **your heart be lifted up**,

and you forget [YHWH] your God ...

(Deuteronomy 8:11-14a ESV)

- **Pride and arrogance**, the well spring of idolatry:

... their **lies have led them astray**, those after which their fathers walked.

The Lord [YHWH] has sworn by himself, declares [YHWH], the God of hosts:

“I abhor the pride of Jacob ...”

Silence! We must not mention the name of [YHWH].

... you who rejoice in Lo-debar,¹⁷⁵

who say, **“Have we not by our own strength** captured Karnaïm for ourselves?”

(Amos 2:4, 6:8a, 10b, 13 ESV)

Hosea uses **the metaphor of “whoredom”**, specifically alluding to **“spiritual whoredom”**,

i.e., **“idolatry”**, to emphasize **the attitude of pride and arrogance**:

When [YHWH] first spoke through Hosea, [YHWH] said to Hosea,

“Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom,

for **the land commits great whoredom** by forsaking [YHWH].”

For **a spirit of whoredom has led them astray**, and they have left their God to play the whore.

For the spirit of whoredom is within them, and **they know not [YHWH]**.

The pride of Israel testifies to his face ...

... for now, O Ephraim, **you have played the whore**; **Israel is defiled**.

When their drink is gone, **they give themselves to whoring**; **their rulers dearly love shame**.

Rejoice not, O Israel! Exult not like the peoples;

for **you have played the whore**, **forsaking your God**.

You have loved a prostitute's wages on all threshing floors.

(Hosea 1:2, 4:12b, 5:4b-5a, 3b, 4:18, 9:1 ESV)

- **Idolatry**, the mother of all sin:

Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob, declares the Lord [YHWH], the God of hosts, that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions,

I will punish the altars of Bethel,¹⁷⁶

and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground.

For thus says [YHWH] to the house of Israel:

“Seek me and live; but **do not seek Bethel**,

and do not enter into **Gilgal**¹⁷⁷ or cross over to **Beersheba**.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ See footnote 13

¹⁷⁵ “Lo-debar means nothing” ESV footnote

¹⁷⁶ Bethel was the site of one of Jeroboam's golden calves, see 1 Kings 12:26-29.

¹⁷⁷ Idols were set up at Gilgal, see Judges 3:19.

¹⁷⁸ There is NO explicit record of idolatry in Beersheba, but given the Patriarchal association with Beersheba, it is possible some form of “shrine” existed there; see Genesis 21:31-33, 22:19, 26:23-25, 46:1-5.

for Gilgal shall surely go into exile,
and Bethel shall come to nothing.”

Seek [YHWH] and live,
lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph,
and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel ...

Those who swear by the Guilt of Samaria, and say, ‘As your god lives, O Dan,
and, ‘As the Way of Beersheba lives,’ they shall fall, and never rise again.”
(Amos 3:13-14, 5:4-6, 8:14 ESV)

And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.
And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals
when she burned offerings to them
and adorned herself with her ring and jewelry,
and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares [YHWH].

My people inquire of a piece of wood, and their walking staff gives them oracles.
They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills ...
Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone.

With their silver and gold they made idols for their own destruction.

I have spurned your calf, O Samaria.

My anger burns against them.

How long will they be incapable of innocence?

For it is from Israel; a craftsman made it; it is not God.

The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces.

Because Ephraim has multiplied altars for sinning, they have become to him altars for sinning.
Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit.

The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built;

as his country improved, he improved his pillars.

Their heart is false; now they must bear their guilt.

[YHWH] will break down their altars and destroy their pillars.

(Hosea 2:8, 13, 4:12a, 13a, 17, 8:4b-6, 8:11, 10:1-2 ESV see also 10:5-6, 11:2, 13:1-2, 14:3)

Idolatry is the abject rejection of the Creator, the True God, YHWH, as he was known to Israel; and, for Israel, it was the most direct violation of the Sinai Covenant by which the nation had been created. God had given the nation copious instruction in the Writings of Moses regarding what God required as True Worship. **Israel violated the covenant and rejected God’s teaching:**

For I desire [hesed] and not sacrifice,

the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.

Set the trumpet to your lips!

One like a vulture is over the house of [YHWH],

because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my [torah].

(Hosea 6:6-7, 8:1 ESV)

The **Prophet Jeremiah** was the last voice God sent to the nation prior to its final destruction. For about forty years, Jeremiah warned the nation of the consequences of its sins. His preaching frequently focused on the Sinai Covenant and the associated teaching from the Writings of Moses:

The word that came to Jeremiah from [YHWH]:

“Hear the words of this covenant,

and speak to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

You shall say to them, Thus says [YHWH], the God of Israel:

Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant

that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt,
from the iron furnace, saying,

Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you.

So shall you be my people, and I will be your God ...”

And [YHWH] said to me,

“Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem:

Hear the words of this covenant and do them.

For I solemnly warned your fathers when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt,
warning them persistently, even to this day, saying, **Obey my voice.** ...”

They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words.

They have gone after other gods to serve them.

The house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant that I made with their fathers.
(Jeremiah 11:1–4, 6-7, 10 ESV)

All the Writing Prophets **identified the progression from self satisfaction to pride and arrogance and finally to idolatry**. In the ancient world, idolatry comprised the existence and worship of actual images – although this type of idolatry remains alive and well in the world today, the true essence of idolatry is far more insidious. **The progression to idolatry is at the basis of the social and political agenda playing out today in Western Civilization**. Left wing elites and their political puppets have become **worshippers of their own ideas**. They accept no challenge to their dogma – they have embraced Satan’s agenda of sin and death. They are taking Western Civilization to destruction. **The essence of idolatry is in the mind – any concept set up in opposition to the teaching of God is an idol**. **The leaders of Western Civilization have rejected God and set up their own corrupt ideas as idols**:

Little children, **keep yourselves from idols**.
(1 John 5:21 ESV)

Therefore, my beloved, **flee from idolatry**.
(1 Corinthians 10:14 ESV)

Put to death therefore **what is earthly in you**:
sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, **which is idolatry**.
(Colossians 3:5 ESV)

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,
you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of **sin**, which leads to **death**,
or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?
(Romans 6:16 ESV)

3.4.2.2 The Sins of Israel

Being in a state of idolatry and apostasy, **Israel degenerated into a morass of sin and corruption**. **All the Prophets** decried the moral and ethical sins which resulted from violations of the teaching of God revealed through Moses. **The litany of sins of Ancient Israel is being repeated every day in modern Western Civilization** - how long will God stand for it?

Thus says [YHWH]:

“For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because **they sell the righteous for silver**, and the needy for a pair of sandals—
those who **trample the head of the poor into the dust** of the earth
and **turn aside the way of the afflicted**;
a man and his father go in to the same girl, so that my holy name is profaned;
they lay themselves down beside every altar on **garments taken in pledge**,
and in the house of their God they **drink the wine of those who have been fined**. ...”

“**They hate him who reproves in the gate**, and **they abhor him who speaks the truth**.
Therefore because **you trample on the poor** and **you exact taxes** of grain from him,
you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.
For I know how **many are your transgressions** and how **great are your sins**—
you who **afflict the righteous**, who **take a bribe**, and **turn aside the needy** in the gate. ...”

(Amos 2:6-8, 5:10-12 ESV see also 3:10, 4:1, 8:4, 6)

Hear the word of [YHWH], O children of Israel,
for [YHWH] has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land.
There is no faithfulness or [hesed], and **no knowledge of God in the land**;
there is **swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery**;
they break all bounds, and **bloodshed follows bloodshed**.
Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish ...

Therefore **your daughters play the whore**, and **your brides commit adultery**.
I will not punish your daughters when they play the whore,
nor your brides when they commit adultery;
for **the men themselves go aside with prostitutes** and **sacrifice with cult prostitutes**,
and a people without understanding shall come to ruin.
(Hosea 4:1-3a, 13b-14 ESV see also 4:18, 5:2, 6:8-10, 7:1-7, 12:7)

Woe to those who **devise wickedness** and **work evil** on their beds!
When the morning dawns, **they perform it**, because it is in the power of their hand.
They covet fields and seize them, and **houses**, and **take them away**;
they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance.

“Do not preach”—thus they preach—
 “one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us.”
 If a man should go about and utter wind and lies,
 saying, “I will preach to you of wine and strong drink,”
 he would be the preacher for this people!
 (Micah 2:1-2, 6, 11 ESV see also 2:8-9, 3:1-3)

Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity,
 offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly!
 They have forsaken [YHWH], they have despised the Holy One of Israel,
 they are utterly estranged.

Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel?
The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.
 From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it,
 but bruises and sores and raw wounds;
 they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil.

How the faithful city has become a whore, she who was full of justice!
 Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers.
 Your silver has become dross, your best wine mixed with water.
 Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves.
Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts.
They do not bring justice to the fatherless,
 and the widow’s cause does not come to them.
 (Isaiah 1:4-6, 21-23 ESV see also 3:14-15, 5:8, 11, 18, 20-23, 10:1-2, 29:15-16, 30:10, 12)

This is the city that must be punished; there is nothing but oppression within her.
 As a well keeps its water fresh, so she keeps fresh her evil;
violence and destruction are heard within her; sickness and wounds are ever before me.
 For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain;
 and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely.

They bend their tongue like a bow; falsehood and not truth has grown strong in the land;
 for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know me, declares [YHWH].

Let everyone beware of his neighbor, and put no trust in any brother,
 for every brother is a deceiver, and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer.
 Everyone deceives his neighbor, and no one speaks the truth;
they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity.
 Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit,
 they refuse to know me, declares [YHWH].
 Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully;
 with his mouth each speaks peace to his neighbor, but in his heart he plans an ambush for him.
 (Jeremiah 6:6b-7, 13, 9:3-6, 8 ESV see also 2:33-34, 4:18, 5:26-31, 30:12-14)

And the word of [YHWH] came to me, saying,
 And you, son of man, will you judge the bloody city?
 Then declare to her all her abominations. You shall say, Thus says the Lord [YHWH]:
A city that sheds blood in her midst, so that her time may come,
 and that makes idols to defile herself!
 You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed,
 and defiled by the idols that you have made ...

Behold, the princes of Israel in you, every one according to his power,
 have been bent on shedding blood. Father and mother have treated with contempt in you;
the sojourner suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you.
 You have despised my holy things and profaned my Sabbaths.

There are men in you who slander to shed blood, and people in you who eat on the mountains;
 they commit lewdness in your midst. In you men uncover their fathers’ nakedness;
 in you they violate women who are unclean in their menstrual impurity.
 One commits abomination with his neighbor’s wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law;
 another in you violates his sister, his father’s daughter.

In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take interest and profit
 and make gain of your neighbors by extortion;
 but me you have forgotten, declares the Lord [YHWH].

Behold, I strike my hand at the dishonest gain that you have made,
 and at the blood that has been in your midst.
 (Ezekiel 22:1-4a, 6-13 ESV see also 22:25-30, 7:23, 8:17, 11:6, 33:26)

In these condemnations of sin, all that is necessary is to change the milieu to modern Western Civilization, and there is a perfect description of the sins that Western Civilization has fallen into.

Leaders of Sin

The Writing Prophets all castigate the nation identifying the “leaders” for causing the problem. This is again all too familiar in modern Western Civilization – “those in leadership positions” are destroying everything which had made Western Civilization successful:

Yet let no one contend, and let none accuse,
for with you is my contention, O priest. You shall stumble by day;
the prophet also shall stumble with you by night; and I will destroy your mother.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;
because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me.
And since you have forgotten the [torah] of your God, I also will forget your children.

The more they increased, the more they sinned against me;
I will change their glory into shame.
They feed on the sin of my people; they are greedy for their iniquity.
And it shall be like people, like priest;
I will punish them for their ways and repay them for their deeds.
(Hosea 4:4-9 ESV see also 4:18, 5:1, 6:9, 9:7)

And I said:

Hear, you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel!
Is it not for you to know justice?—you who hate the good and love the evil,
who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones,
who eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them,
and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot like flesh in a cauldron.

Thus says [YHWH] concerning the prophets who lead my people astray,
who cry “Peace” when they have something to eat,
but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths.

Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel,
who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight,
who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity.
Its heads give judgment for a bribe;
its priests teach for a price; its prophets practice divination for money;
(Micah 3:1–3, 5, 9-11a ESV see also Zephaniah 3:4, Jeremiah 6:13-14, 8:10-11)

His watchmen are blind; they are all without knowledge;
they are all silent dogs; they cannot bark, dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber.
The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough.
But they are shepherds who have no understanding;
they have all turned to their own way, each to his own gain, one and all.
“Come,” they say, “let me get wine; let us fill ourselves with strong drink;
and tomorrow will be like this day, great beyond measure.”
(Isaiah 56:10-12 ESV see also 1:23, 3:1-15, 9:13-16, 28:7, 29:10)

Then I said: “Ah, Lord [YHWH], behold, the prophets say to [the people],
‘You shall not see the sword, nor shall you have famine,
but I will give you assured peace in this place.’”

And [YHWH] said to me:

The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them,
nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision,
worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.

Therefore thus says [YHWH] concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name
although I did not send them, and who say,
‘Sword and famine shall not come upon this land’:

By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed.
And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem,
victims of famine and sword, with none to bury them—they, their wives, their sons,
and their daughters. For I will pour out their evil upon them.

For both prophet and priest ply their trade through the land and have no knowledge.
(Jeremiah 14:13-16, 18b ESV see also 2:8, 10:21, 12:10, 23:25-27, 29:8, Ezekiel 7:26, 13:2-16, 22:25-28)

“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares [YHWH].

Therefore thus says [YHWH], the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people:

“You **have scattered my flock** and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares [YHWH]. ...”

Both prophet and priest are ungodly; even in my house I have found their evil, declares [YHWH].

In the **prophets of Samaria** I saw an unsavory thing:

they **prophesied by Baal** and led my people Israel astray.

But in the **prophets of Jerusalem** I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery and **walk in lies**;

they **strengthen the hands of evildoers**, so that no one turns from his evil;

all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah.

Thus says [YHWH] of hosts:

“Do not listen to the words of **the prophets** who prophesy to you, **filling you with vain hopes**.

They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of [YHWH].

They say continually to **those who despise the word of [YHWH]**,

‘It shall be well with you’;

and to **everyone who stubbornly follows his own heart**, they say,

‘No disaster shall come upon you.’”

(Jeremiah 23:1-2, 11, 13-14, 16-17 ESV see also Ezekiel 34:2-10, Zechariah 10:2-3)

Lies of the Leaders

As in Western Civilization today, **the people of Israel were more and more persuaded by the lies of the “leaders”**. In the end, the majority of the people were utterly corrupt, like the “leaders”.

And I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites.

Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel? declares [YHWH].

But **you made the Nazirites drink wine**, and **commanded the prophets**, saying, **‘You shall not prophesy.’** (Amos 2:11-12 ESV)

All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel.

What is the **transgression of Jacob**? Is it not **Samaria**?

And what is the **high place of Judah**? Is it not **Jerusalem**?

Shall I acquit the **man with wicked scales** and with a bag of deceitful weights?

Your **rich men are full of violence**;

your **inhabitants speak lies**, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

(Micah 1:5, 6:11-12 ESV see also 7:2-6)

For they are **a rebellious people, lying children**,

children unwilling to hear the instruction of [YHWH];

who say to the seers, “Do not see,”

and to the prophets,

“Do not prophesy to us what is right;

speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions,

leave the way (derek), turn aside from the path (**‘orah**),

let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.”

Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel,

“Because **you despise this word**

and trust in oppression and perverseness and rely on them,

therefore this iniquity shall be to you ...”

(Isaiah 30:9-13a ESV see also 1:2-4, 10)

Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods?

But **my people** have changed their glory for that which does not profit.

Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares [YHWH],

for **my people have committed two evils**:

they have **forsaken me**, the **fountain of living waters**, and

hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Why do you contend with me? **You have all transgressed against me**, declares [YHWH].

In vain have I struck **your children**; they **took no correction**;

your own sword devoured your prophets like a ravaging lion.

And you, O generation, behold the word of [YHWH].

Have I been a wilderness to Israel, or a land of thick darkness?

Why then do **my people say**, ‘We are free, **we will come no more to you**’?

Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?

Yet **my people have forgotten me** days without number. ...

For **my people are foolish; they know me not**;

they are stupid children; they have no understanding.

They are ‘wise’—in **doing evil**! But **how to do good they know not**.

(Jeremiah 2:11-13, 29-32, 4:22 ESV see also 5:31, 8:7, 13:10, 18:15, 19:4, 50:6)

Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken, and I will cast down your slain before your idols. And I will lay the dead bodies of **the people of Israel before their idols**, and I will scatter your bones around your altars. ...

The people of the land have practiced **extortion** and committed **robbery**. They have **oppressed** the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner **without justice**. And **I sought for a man** among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, **but I found none**. (Ezekiel 6:4-5, 22:29-30 ESV see also 14:11, 33:17, 31, 36:20)

Individual Responsibility

Bad leadership does NOT absolve any person from responsibility – the Writing Prophets make it clear that **each and every person is individually responsible** for his/her actions and his/her understanding of the Way of God. Furthermore, God is clear that True Worshipers, **“the watchmen”**, have a responsibility to warn the people:

Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast, **even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness**, declares the Lord [YHWH].

If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they ravage it, and it be made desolate, so that no one may pass through because of the beasts, even if **these three men** were in it, as I live, declares the Lord [YHWH], they would deliver neither sons nor daughters. They **alone would be delivered**, but the land would be desolate.

Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, Let a sword pass through the land, and I cut off from it man and beast, though **these three men** were in it, as I live, declares the Lord [YHWH], they **would deliver neither sons nor daughters**, but they alone would be delivered.

Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off from it man and beast, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, declares the Lord [YHWH], they would deliver neither son nor daughter. **They would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness**.

(Ezekiel 14:13-20 ESV see also Jeremiah 15:1-2)

Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel.

Whenever you hear a **word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me**.

If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.

But **if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity**, but you will have delivered your [life].

Again, **if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die**. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand.

But **if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live**, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your [life].

What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel,

‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’?

As I live, declares the Lord [YHWH], this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel.

Behold, **all [lives] are mine; the [life] of the father as well as the [life] of the son is mine: the [person] who sins shall die**.

(Ezekiel 3:17-21, 18:2-4 ESV see also 18:5-24, 33:7-16, Jeremiah 31:29-30)

For **the look on their faces bears witness against them**;

they proclaim their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it.

Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves.

Tell **the righteous** that **it shall be well with them**, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds.

Woe to the wicked!

It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him.

Seek [YHWH] while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;

let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

let him **return to the [YHWH]**,

that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
(Isaiah 3:9-11, 55:6-7 ESV)

Individual responsibility was clearly specified in a statute of Moses:

Fathers shall not be put to death because of their children,
nor shall children be put to death because of their fathers.

Each one shall be put to death for his own sin.

(Deuteronomy 24:16 ESV see also 1 Kings 14:6 // 2 Chronicles 25:4)

Rejecting the Teaching of God

Sin and corruption are the direct result of **rejecting the teaching of God, the Way of God**. This is the choice made by Adam and Eve to decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong. Humanity has never learned the lesson – every imaginable philosophy of human organization has been tried, and all have failed. This is most evident in modern **Western Civilization** which was once based on the **Judaean-Christian ethic: personal freedom and the rule of law**. Through creeping socialism Western Civilization has now degenerated to a motely collection of a tyrannical “nanny” states. **Human beings stubbornly demand to decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong instead of accepting the plain revelation from the Creator:**

Thus says [YHWH]:

For three **transgressions of Judah**, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because **they have rejected the [torah] of [YHWH]**, and have not kept his statutes,
but their **lies have led them astray**, those after which their fathers walked.

(Amos 2:4 ESV see also 5:7, 6:12)

When [YHWH] first spoke through Hosea, [YHWH] said to Hosea,

“Go, take to yourself a wife of **whoredom** and have children of **whoredom**,¹⁷⁹
for **the land commits great whoredom** by **forsaking [YHWH]**.”

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;

because **you have rejected knowledge**, I reject you from being a priest to me.

And since **you have forgotten the [torah]** of your God, I also will forget your children.

The more they increased, the more they sinned against me;

I will change their glory into shame.

Rejoice not, O Israel!

Exult not like the peoples; for **you have played the whore, forsaking your God**.

You have loved a prostitute's wages on all threshing floors.

Threshing floor and wine vat shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail them.

(Hosea 1:2, 4:6-7, 9:1-2 ESV see also 2:13, 5:11, 7:13, 8:1, 14, 13:16)

Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust;

for **they have rejected the [torah]** of [YHWH] of hosts,

and have **despised the word** of the Holy One of Israel.

Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet;

declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways (derek),

as if they were a nation that did righteousness

and did not **forsake the [justness] (mish'pat)**¹⁸⁰ **of their God**;

(Isaiah 5:24, 58:1-2a ESV see also 31:1, 65:11)

Have you not brought this upon yourself by **forsaking [YHWH] your God**,
when **he led you in the way (derek)**?

Your evil will chastise you, and your apostasy will reprove you.

Know and see that **it is evil and bitter for you to forsake [YHWH] your God**;

the **fear of me is not in you**, declares the Lord [YHWH] of hosts.

Thus says [YHWH]:

“Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths (n^ethivah),

where the good way (derek) is; and walk in it, and find rest for your [lives].

But they said, ‘**We will not walk in it.**’

I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!’

But they said, ‘**We will not pay attention.**’

¹⁷⁹ The Book of Hosea makes an extended metaphor of “physical whoredom” representing “spiritual whoredom”, infidelity to God. See the discussion in section 6. *Spiritual Whoredom* in the paper “The Human Condition” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

¹⁸⁰ See footnote 71

Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what will happen to them.
Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices,
because **they have not paid attention to my words**;
and as for **my [torah], they have rejected it.** ...”

How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the [torah] of [YHWH] is with us’?

But behold, **the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie.**

The wise men shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken;

behold, **they have rejected the word of [YHWH]**, so what wisdom is in them?

(Jeremiah 2:17, 19, 6:16-19, 8:8-9 ESV see also 2:20, 32, 7:22-26, 9:13-14, 15:6, 16:10-12, 17:13)

Thus says the Lord [YHWH]:

This is Jerusalem. I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her.

And **she has rebelled against my [mish*patim]**¹⁸¹ by doing wickedness more than the nations,
and against my statutes more than the countries all around her;

for **they have rejected my [mish*patim]** and have **not walked in my statutes.**

(Ezekiel 5:5-6 ESV see also 20:13-21, 22:26)

Refusal to Repent

When human beings get to a state where they **refuse to repent**, they knowingly reject the Way of God and have determined that they will NOT turn around, **there is nothing God can do with those persons.** Ultimately, **this attitude becomes the unpardonable sin.**¹⁸² A person with this attitude must ultimately be killed by God. This was clearly laid out by Moses:

If **one person sins unintentionally**, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering.

And **the priest shall make atonement before [YHWH] for the person** who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and **he shall be forgiven.**

You shall have one [torah] for him who does anything unintentionally,

for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them.

But **the person who does anything with a high hand**, whether he is native or a sojourner, **reviles [YHWH]**, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has **despised the word of [YHWH]** and has **broken his commandment**, **that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.**

(Numbers 15:27-31 ESV)

The Writing Prophets are clear that this attitude was **the prevalent state of persons in the Nation of Israel when it had to be destroyed**. Sadly, this attitude is more and more prevalent in Western Civilization today:

“I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places,
yet you did not return to me,” declares [YHWH].

“I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest;
I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city;
one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain would wither;
so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied;
yet you did not return to me,” declares [YHWH].

“I struck you with blight and mildew; your many gardens and your vineyards,
your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured;
yet you did not return to me,” declares [YHWH].

“I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt;
I killed your young men with the sword, and carried away your horses,
and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils;
yet you did not return to me,” declares [YHWH].

“I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning;
yet you did not return to me,” declares [YHWH].
(Amos 4:6-11 ESV)

I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from me;

for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore;

Israel is defiled.

Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God.

For the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not [YHWH].

¹⁸¹ See footnote 13

¹⁸² See Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-31, Mark 3:28-29 // Matthew 12:31-32, Luke 12:10, 1 John 5:16

They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds;
for grain and wine they gash themselves; **they rebel against me.**
Although I trained and strengthened their arms, yet **they devise evil against me.**
They return, but not upward; they are like a treacherous bow;
(Hosea 5:3-4, 7:14-16a ESV see also 8:5-7)

For they are **a rebellious people,** lying children,
children **unwilling to hear the instruction of [YHWH];**
who say to the seers, “Do not see,”
and to the prophets,

“Do not prophesy to us what is right;
speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions,
leave the way (derek), turn aside from the path (’orah),
let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 30:9-11 ESV)

Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note!
Search her squares to **see if you can find a man,**
one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her.

Though they say, “As [YHWH] lives,” yet **they swear falsely.**

[YHWH], do not your eyes look for truth?

You have struck them down, but **they felt no anguish;**
you have consumed them, but **they refused to take correction.**

They have made their faces harder than rock; **they have refused to repent.**

You shall say to them, Thus says [YHWH]:

When men fall, do they not rise again?

If one turns away, does he not return?

Why then has **this people** turned away in perpetual backsliding?

They hold fast to deceit; they **refuse to return.**

I have paid attention and listened, but they have not spoken rightly;

no man relents of his evil, saying, ‘What have I done?’

Everyone turns to his own course, like a horse plunging headlong into battle.

(Jeremiah 5:1-3, 8:4-6 ESV see also 3:3, 9:4-6, 11:9-10, 13:10-11, 16:11-12, 19:15)

The detailing by the Writing Prophets of the sins of Ancient Israel is **a standing testimony to Modern Western Civilization.** The leaders are demented and corrupt. They have manufactured a litany of lies in their own minds which they have set up as “idols”. They accept no correction. More and more the people are accepting of the lies and following the degenerate leadership. **God holds each and every person individually responsible** to reject the corruption and learn the Way of God. **The Way of God is defined by the teaching of God** contained in the Bible. Rejecting God’s teaching leads to an attitude of refusal to repent – this ultimately becomes the unpardonable sin: the choice of death.

3.4.2.3 Elaboration of the Way of God

The Writing Prophets did much more than catalogue the sins of Israel – they provided much positive instruction to elaborate the teaching given through Moses.

A Form of Godliness

One of the most important contributions of the Writing Prophets was to establish that “**perfunctory worship**” of God is useless. Human beings tend to make worship ritualistic – going through the motions, but **NOT understanding the deep spiritual principles.**¹⁸³ The **Pharisees** of Jesus’ day took this to extremes with their worthless interpretations. Sadly, the **mainstream of Christianity** has also fallen into this trap, accepting pagan lies and rejecting the True Teaching of God. The sacrificial system God gave to Israel was based on deep spiritual principles as specified by Moses. **The Levitical/Aaronic Priesthood failed to understand and teach the Way of God.** The Writing Prophets are specific that the **rituals and sacrifices themselves are NOT the objective:**

I hate, **I despise your feasts,** and **I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.**

Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them;

and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them.

Take away from me the noise of your songs; the melody of your harps I will not listen.

¹⁸³ See the paper “**True Worship of the True God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.
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But let **[justness] (mish*pat)**¹⁸⁴ roll down like waters, and **righteousness** like an ever-flowing stream.

“Come to Bethel, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression;
bring your sacrifices every morning, **your tithes** every three days;
offer **a sacrifice** of thanksgiving of that which is leavened,
and proclaim **freewill offerings**, publish them;
for so you love to do, O people of Israel!”

declares the Lord [YHWH].

I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation;
I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head;
I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.
(Amos 5:21-24, 4:4-5, 8:10 ESV)

Come, **let us return to [YHWH]**; for he has torn us, that he may heal us;
he has struck us down, and he will bind us up.

After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him.
Let us know; **let us press on to know [YHWH]**;
his going out is sure as the dawn;
he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth.¹⁸⁵

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?

What shall I do with you, O Judah?

Your love is like a morning cloud, like the **dew that goes early away**.¹⁸⁶

Therefore **I have hewn them by the prophets**;

I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and **my [mish*patim]**¹⁸⁷ **goes forth as the light**.

For **I desire [hesed]** and not sacrifice, the **knowledge of God** rather than burnt offerings.

Rejoice not, O Israel!

Exult not like the peoples; for you have played the whore, forsaking your God.

They shall not remain in the land of [YHWH] ...¹⁸⁸

They shall not pour drink offerings of wine to [YHWH],

and **their sacrifices shall not please him**.

It shall be like mourners' bread to them; all who eat of it shall be defiled;
for their bread shall be for their hunger only; it shall not come to the house of [YHWH].

What will you do on the day of the appointed festival,

and **on the day of the feast of [YHWH]**?¹⁸⁹

My people are bent on turning away from me,
and **though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up** at all.
(Hosea 6:1-6, 9:1a, 3a, 4-5, 11:7 ESV see also 2:10-11, 5:5-7, 8:13, 12:11)

What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says [YHWH];

I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts;

I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats.

When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts?

Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me.

New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—

I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my [being]¹⁹⁰ hates;

they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you;

even though you make many prayers, I will not listen;

your hands are full of blood.

Wash yourselves; **make yourselves clean**;

remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes;

cease to do evil, **learn to do good**;

seek justice, **correct oppression**;

bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

(Isaiah 1:11-17 ESV see also 29:1, 13, 48:1-2)

¹⁸⁴ See footnote 71

¹⁸⁵ These verses represent the insincere desire of the people to serve God.

¹⁸⁶ God sees through the insincerity.

¹⁸⁷ See footnote 13

¹⁸⁸ Exile would be the fate of Israel.

¹⁸⁹ The people's beloved perfunctory worship will NOT be possible in exile.

¹⁹⁰ See footnote 12

Thus says [YHWH] of hosts, the God of Israel:

Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place.

Do not trust in these deceptive words:

‘This is the temple of [YHWH], the temple of [YHWH], the temple of [YHWH].’

For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly **execute justice one with another**, if you **do not oppress** the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or **shed innocent blood** in this place, and if you **do not go after other gods** to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.

Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and **then come and stand before me in this house**, which is called by my name, and say,

‘We are delivered!’ —only to go on doing all these abominations?

(Jeremiah 7:3–10 ESV see also 5:1-2, 6:20, 14:7-12)

The Apostle Paul specifically identified perfunctory worship as an end-time problem:

But understand this, that **in the last days** there will come times of difficulty.

For **people will be** lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, **lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God**, **having the appearance of godliness**, but **denying its power**. Avoid such people.

(2 Timothy 3:1-5 ESV)

Repentance and Relationship

God’s requirements for true worship were documented by Moses. Israel failed to live up to God’s requirements. The Writing Prophets reiterated and elaborated God’s requirements in contrast to the state of sin into which Israel had fallen in an attempt to bring Israel back through repentance. **The basis of any person’s relationship with God is repentance:**

“Yet even now,” declares [YHWH],

“return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.”

Return to [YHWH] your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in [hesed]; and he relents over disaster.

Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for [YHWH] your God?

Blow the trumpet in Zion; **consecrate a fast**;

call a solemn assembly; gather the people.

Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders;

gather the children, even nursing infants.

Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber.

Between the vestibule and the altar **let the priests**, the ministers of [YHWH], **weep** and say,

“Spare your people, [YHWH],

and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations.

Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

(Joel 2:12-17 ESV see also 1:5, 8, 11, 13-14, 2:32)

For thus says [YHWH] to the house of Israel:

“Seek me and live;

but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beersheba;

for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing.”

Seek [YHWH] and live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph,

and it devour, with none to quench it for Bethel,

O you who turn [justness] (mish^apat)¹⁹¹ to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth!

Seek good, and not evil, **that you may live**;

and so [YHWH], the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said.

Hate evil, and **love good**, and **establish justice** in the gate;

it may be that [YHWH], the God of hosts, **will be gracious** to the remnant of Joseph.

(Amos 5:4-7, 14-15 ESV see also Hosea 5:15, 14:1-2)

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;

remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good;

seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.

¹⁹¹ See footnote 71

“Come now, let us reason together,” says [YHWH],
“though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. ...”
(Isaiah 1:16-18 ESV see also 30:15, 55:6-7)

“If you return, O Israel,” declares [YHWH], “to me you should return.
If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver,
and if you swear, ‘As [YHWH] lives,’ in truth, in [justness] (mish^epat), and in righteousness,
then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.”

For thus says [YHWH] to the men of Judah and Jerusalem:

“Break up your fallow ground,¹⁹² and sow not among thorns.
Circumcise yourselves¹⁹³ to [YHWH]; remove the foreskin of your hearts,
O men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem;
lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it,
because of the evil of your deeds.”

(Jeremiah 4:1-4 ESV see also 3:1, 11-14a, 15:19)

I prayed to [YHWH] my God and made confession, saying,

“O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and [hesed] with those who love him
and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and
rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and [mish^epatim].¹⁹⁴
We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings,
our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day,
to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel,
those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them,
because of the treachery that they have committed against you. To us, [YHWH], belongs open
shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.

To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against him and have
not obeyed the voice of [YHWH] our God by walking in his [torah].¹⁹⁵
which he set before us by his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed your [torah] and
turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written
in the [torah] of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us,
because we have sinned against him.

He has confirmed his words, which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us,
by bringing upon us a great calamity. For under the whole heaven there has not been done
anything like what has been done against Jerusalem. As it is written in the [torah] of Moses,
all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of [YHWH] our God,
turning from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth.

Therefore [YHWH] has kept ready the calamity and has brought it upon us,
for [YHWH] our God is righteous in all the works that he has done,
and we have not obeyed his voice. And now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of
the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day,
we have sinned, we have done wickedly. ...”

(Daniel 9:4–15 ESV)

Walk the Walk

Having repented, a person must commence to live by the Way of God. The Way of God is fully defined
in the Writings of Moses. The Writing Prophets were careful to remind the Nation of Israel of the
requirements of their Creator. These are the same requirements God places on True Worshippers in all
ages. The **Prophet Micah** specifies the basis of True Worship:

Come, let us go up to the mountain of [YHWH], to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways (derek) and that we may walk in his paths ('orah).
For out of Zion shall go forth [torah], and the word of [YHWH] from Jerusalem.¹⁹⁶

Do not my words do good to him who walks uprightly?

With what shall I come before [YHWH], and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

¹⁹² See also Hosea 10:12; to “breakup fallow ground”, spiritually, means to try something new, repent, truly live by the Way of God.

¹⁹³ **This was prescribed by Moses in Deuteronomy 10:16**; it means to become converted, remove the hardness of an impenitent heart; see also
Jeremiah 6:10, 9:26, Acts 7:51, Romans 2:28-29.

¹⁹⁴ See footnote 13

¹⁹⁵ See footnote 11

¹⁹⁶ See also Isaiah 2:3

Will [YHWH] be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my [life]?
He has told you, O man, what is good; and **what does [YHWH] require of you**
but to **do justice**, and to **love [hesed]**, and to **walk humbly with your God**?
(Micah 4:2, 2:7b, 6:6-8 ESV)

The **Prophet Isaiah** emphasizes that **the Way of God is a path that must be walked**. This echoes Moses' teaching that **living God's Way requires "doing", "walking on the path"**:

And [YHWH] spoke to Moses, saying,

"Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, **I am [YHWH] your God**.

You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived,
and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you.
You shall not walk in their statutes.

You shall **follow my [mish*patim]** and **keep my statutes** and **walk in them**.

I am [YHWH] your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my [mish*patim];
if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am [YHWH]."

(Leviticus 18:1-5 ESV see also 26:3, Exodus 16:4, 18:20,
Deuteronomy 5:33, 6:7, 8:6, 10:12, 11:22, 13:4, 19:9, 26:17, 28:9, 30:16)

For **you are a people holy to [YHWH] your God**.

[YHWH] your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession,
out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ...

Know therefore that [YHWH] your God is God,

the faithful God who keeps covenant and [hesed] with those who love him

and **keep his commandments**, to a thousand generations ...

You shall therefore be careful to **do the commandment** and the **statutes** and the **[mish*patim]**
that I command you today. And because you listen to these **[mish*patim]** and **keep and do them**,
[YHWH] your God will keep with you the covenant and the [hesed] that he swore to your fathers.
(Deuteronomy 7:6, 9, 11-12 ESV see also 4:6, 5:1, 31, 6:3, 17:19, 26:16, 27:26, 28:13, 29:9)

O house of Jacob, come, **let us walk in the light of [YHWH]**.

... yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher.

And **your ears shall hear a word** behind you, saying, "**This is the way (derek), walk in it**," ...

And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called **the Way (derek) of Holiness**;
the unclean shall not pass over it.

It shall belong to those who walk on the way (derek);

even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.

No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;

they shall not be found there, but **the redeemed shall walk there**.

The path ('orah) of the righteous is level; you make level **the way (ma`gal)**¹⁹⁷ of the righteous.

In **the path ('orah) of your [mish*patim]**, [YHWH], we wait for you;
your name and remembrance are the desire of our [heart].

My [heart] yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.

For **when your [mish*patim] are in the earth**, the **inhabitants of the world learn righteousness**.

(Isaiah 2:5, 30:20b-21a, 35:8-9, 26:7-9 ESV see also 40:30-31)

Put on the Divine Nature

The New Testament authors are explicit that True Worshipers must "put on the divine nature". This can only be accomplished by living by the Way of God:

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness,
through the knowledge of him **who called us** to his own glory and excellence,
by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises,
so that through them **you may become partakers of the divine nature** ...

(2 Peter 1:3-4a ESV see also Romans 13:14, Galatians 3:27, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10)

Isaiah elaborates on **the objective of living by the Way of God** – to learn to have the Nature of God:

Zion shall be **redeemed by [justness] (mish*pat)**,¹⁹⁸
and those in her who repent, **by righteousness (tz*daqah)**.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ **MGL**: The Hebrew word, מַגָּל - ma`gal, means a "wagon track"; it is used here metaphorically; see Holladay page 205.

¹⁹⁸ See footnote 71

¹⁹⁹ See the discussion of these character attributes of God in section **1.4.3 Attributes of God's Character** in the paper "First Pillar - The Nature of God" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

... therefore thus says the Lord [YHWH],

“Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion,
a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation.”²⁰⁰

“Whoever believes will not be [put to shame].”²⁰¹

And I will make **[justness] (mish*pat)** the line, and **righteousness (tz*daqah)** the plumb line; ...”

Is not this the fast that I choose:

to **loose the bonds of wickedness**, to undo the straps of **the yoke**,²⁰²
to let the oppressed go free, and to break **every yoke**?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Then shall **your light break forth like the dawn**, and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness (tzedeq) shall go before you; the glory of [YHWH] shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and [YHWH] will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’

If you take away **the yoke** from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall **your light rise** in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.

And [YHWH] will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong;
and **you shall be like a watered garden**, like **a spring of water**, **whose waters do not fail**.

Listen to me, **you who pursue righteousness (tzedeq)**, **you who seek [YHWH]**:

“Give attention to me, **my people**, and give ear to me, **my nation**;
for [torah] will go out from me, and I will set **my [justness] (mish*pat)** for a light to the peoples.
My righteousness (tzedeq) draws near, my salvation has gone out,
and my arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands hope for me, and for my arm they wait.

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment,
and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;
but **my salvation will be forever**, and **my righteousness (tz*daqah)** will never be dismayed.

Listen to me, **you who know righteousness (tzedeq)**,
the **people in whose heart is my [torah]**;
fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings.
For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool,
but **my righteousness (tz*daqah) will be forever**, and **my salvation to all generations**.”

(Isaiah 1:27, 28:16-17a, 58:6-11, 51:1a, 4-8 ESV see also 28:5-6, 32:15-17, 33:15-16)

The Whole Teaching of God

The purpose of this human life is to learn to be like God, to have God’s nature. This requires removing all vestiges of human nature so that God can look on a person and consider that person as a candidate for the gift of eternal life. To describe this desired state, Isaiah uses the metaphor, “**people in whose heart is my torah**”. This is a common metaphor going back to the Writings of Moses and taken up by many of the Prophets.²⁰³ Isaiah elaborates by making it clear that the required teaching comprises the **whole torah of God** as summarized in **the Ten Commandments**. Isaiah is also explicit that the keeping of **the Sabbath** is the key to understanding the Way of God:

Oh that they had such a heart as this always,
to fear me and to **keep all my commandments (mitz*wah)**,²⁰⁴
that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!

Hear, O Israel: [YHWH] is our God, [YHWH] alone.

You shall love [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your [mind] and with all your might.
And **these words that I command you today shall be on your heart**.

The whole commandment (mitz*wah) that I command you today you shall be careful to do,
that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land that the Lord swore to give to your fathers.

And you shall **remember the whole way (derek) that [YHWH] your God has led you** these forty years
in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you **to know what was in your heart**,

²⁰⁰ This is a prophecy of the life and work of Jesus Christ; see Mark 12:10, Acts 4:11, Romans 9:33, 1 Corinthians 1:22-24, 3:11, Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:4-8

²⁰¹ See the Septuagint, as quoted in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6.

²⁰² The “yoke” is the sin that human nature naturally falls into; see Jeremiah 17:9-10.

²⁰³ See Jeremiah 31:33, 32:39, Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26

²⁰⁴ The word “mitz*wah” means specifically the Ten Commandments.

whether you would keep his commandments (mitz'wah) or not.

(Deuteronomy 5:29, 6:4-6, 8:1-2 ESV see also 11:18, 26:16, 30:14)

Thus says [YHWH], your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:

"I am [YHWH] your God, who teaches you to profit,

who leads you in the way you should go.

Oh that you had paid attention to **my commandments (mitz'wah)!** ..."

Bind up the testimony; **seal the teaching (torah) among my disciples.** I will wait for [YHWH] ...

To the teaching (torah) and to the testimony!

If they will not speak according to **this word**, it is because they have no dawn.

(Isaiah 48:17-18a, 8:16-17a, 20)

Thus says [YHWH]:

"Keep [justness] (mish'pat), and do righteousness (tz'daqah),

for soon **my salvation** will come, and **my righteousness (tz'daqah)** be revealed.

Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast,

who **keeps the Sabbath**, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

Let not **the foreigner** who has joined himself to [YHWH] say,²⁰⁵

"[YHWH] will surely separate me from his people";

and let not **the eunuch** say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."

For thus says [YHWH]:

"To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me

and hold fast my covenant, I will give **in my house**²⁰⁶ and within my walls

a monument and a name better than sons and daughters;

I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

And **the foreigners** who join themselves to [YHWH],

to minister to him, to love the name of [YHWH], and to be his servants,

everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,

and holds fast my covenant—**these I will bring to my holy mountain,**

and make them joyful **in my house** of prayer;

their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar;

for **my house** shall be called a house of prayer **for all peoples.**"

If you **turn back your foot from the Sabbath**, from doing your pleasure on my holy day,

and **call the Sabbath a delight** and the holy day of [YHWH] honorable;

if you honor it, **not going your own ways (derek)**, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;

then you shall take delight in [YHWH],

and **I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;**

I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,

for the mouth of [YHWH] has spoken.

(Isaiah 56:1-7, 58:13-14 ESV see also 66:22-23, Jeremiah 17:19-27)

Preach the Gospel

Knowing the Way of God is NOT sufficient in itself. Having been given the gift of understanding, God requires a person to participate in the spreading of the knowledge. Isaiah prophesizes the **promulgation of the Gospel:**

And **I will lead the blind** in a way (derek) that they do not know,

in paths (n'ativah) that they have not known **I will guide them.**

I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground.

These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.

Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see!

Who is blind but my servant,²⁰⁷ or deaf as my messenger whom I send?

Who is blind as my dedicated one, or blind as the servant of [YHWH]?

He sees many things, but does not observe them;

his ears are open, but he does not hear.²⁰⁸

[YHWH] was pleased, **for his righteousness' (tzedeq) sake, to magnify his [torah] and make it glorious.**

²⁰⁵ "Foreigners" were traditionally excluded from the "congregation of Israel"; see Deuteronomy 23:3-8. "Eunuchs" could NOT serve in the priesthood; see Leviticus 21:18-19. These prohibitions, and all physical limitations, are irrelevant for entry into the Family of God.

²⁰⁶ "The house of God" is the Family of God.

²⁰⁷ This is the state of all persons before God's calling and enlightenment through the Holy Spirit.

²⁰⁸ This is the state of a person who does NOT respond to God's calling.

Come, everyone who thirsts, **come to the waters**;
 and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!
 Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
 and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and **come to me**; hear, that your [being] may live;²⁰⁹
Seek [YHWH] while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;
 let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
 let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,
 and to our God, for **he will abundantly pardon**.
 For **my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways**, declares [YHWH].
 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
 so are my ways (derek) higher than your ways (derek) and my thoughts than your thoughts.
 (Isaiah 42:16, 18-21, 55:1-3a, 6-9 ESV)

The Gospel is the Word of God, the teaching of God, delivered through his prophets starting with Moses
 and very much taken up the Writing Prophets and extending to the New Testament authors:

And [YHWH] came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent
 and called Aaron and Miriam, and they both came forward. And he said,
"Hear my words: If there is **a prophet** among you,
 I, [YHWH], make myself known to him in **a vision**; I speak with him in **a dream**.
 Not so **with my servant Moses**.
 He is faithful in all my house. With him **I speak mouth to mouth**, clearly, and not in riddles ..."
 (Numbers 12:5-8a ESV)

Moses said,
 'The **Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers**.
 You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.
 And it shall be that every [person] who does not listen to that prophet
 shall be destroyed from the people.' (citing Deuteronomy 18:15, 19)

And **all the prophets who have spoken**,
 from **Samuel** and those who came after him, **also proclaimed these days**.
 (Acts 3:22-24 ESV)

Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?
Does a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey?
 Does a young lion cry out from his den, if he has taken nothing?

For the Lord [YHWH] does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.

The lion has roared; who will not fear?
 The Lord [YHWH] has spoken; **who can but prophesy?**
 (Amos 3:3-4, 7-8 ESV)

I am [YHWH], who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens,
 who spread out the earth by myself, who frustrates the signs of liars
 and makes fools of diviners, who turns wise men back and makes their knowledge foolish,
who confirms the word of his servant and **fulfills the counsel of his messengers** ...

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth,
 making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty,
 but **it shall accomplish that which I purpose**, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news,
 who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
 who **publishes salvation**, who says to Zion, **"Your God reigns."**

Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins.

"And as for me, **this is my covenant** with them," says [YHWH]:
 "My Spirit that is upon you,
 and **my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth**,
 or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,"
 says [YHWH], **"from this time forth and forevermore."**
 (Isaiah 44:24b-26a, 55:10-11, 52:7, 58:1, 59:21 ESV)

²⁰⁹ This would be better translated, "that you may have eternal life".

The Writing Prophets provide True Worshipers of God with deep insight into the Way of God. **Perfunctory worship of God is worthless.** Words, good intentions, acts of piety, mean nothing to God. A true relationship with God begins with repentance. Having been called by God and truly coming to see oneself in proper perspective to God, a person can start to learn to **live by the Way of God.** This is a lifelong process of coming to deeper and deeper understanding of the Way of God. The Objective of living by the Way of God is **replace sinful human nature with the Divine Nature of God** – the new man, the rejuvenated inner being. Only by doing this can a person come to a complete understanding of the whole teaching of God. In this converted state, God requires a True Worshiper to give back – to **participate in the preaching of the Gospel.**

3.4.3 The New Testament Documents

The **Apostle Paul** asserts that the **Gospel message is “light”**. The Gospel is the **knowledge from God about Jesus Christ** and **the teaching of Jesus Christ**, as contained in both the Old Testament and the New Testament:

And even **if our gospel is veiled**, it is veiled to those who are perishing.
In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the **unbelievers**,
to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
For what **we proclaim** is not ourselves, but **Jesus Christ as Lord**,
with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.
For God, who said, **“Let light shine out of darkness,”**
has shone in our hearts to give **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**
(2 Corinthians 4:3-6 ESV)

The New Testament Gospel of the Kingdom of God²¹⁰ is the explanation and elaboration of all the teaching from the Old Testament, in particular all the prophecies of the Kingdom of God. Throughout the New Testament, the “metaphor of light” is used explain the teaching of God, **The Way of God.**

3.4.3.1 The Metaphor of “Light”²¹¹

Jesus himself used the metaphor to explain **one of the most important aspects of his teaching** – the revelation of God the Father:

At that time Jesus declared,
“I thank you, **Father**, Lord of heaven and earth,
that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding
and **revealed them to little children**; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.
All things have been handed over to me by my Father,
and **no one knows the Son except the Father**, and **no one knows the Father except the Son**
and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.
Come to me, all who **labor** and are **heavy laden**, and **I will give you rest.**
Take my yoke upon you, and **learn from me**, for **I am [contrite]**²¹² and **lowly in heart**,
and you will find rest for your [lives]. For **my yoke is easy**, and **my burden is light.**”
(Matthew 11:25-30 ESV)

Analysis of Jesus statement:

- Jesus thanks the Father in prayer for calling True Worshipers, **“little children”**
- Jesus asserts his ultimate authority, **“all things have been handed over to me”**
- Jesus asserts that only those called by the Father can be converted, **“no one knows the Son except the Father”**
- Jesus asserts that he knows the Father, **“no one knows the Father except the Son”**
- Jesus asserts that his purpose is to reveal the Father, **“anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him”**
- To those called by the Father, Jesus says, **“Come to me”**
- Before conversion, all are weighed down with sin, **“labour”**, **“heavy laden”**

²¹⁰ See the discussion in section **2.3.5 The Kingdom of God** in the paper “**Second Pillar - The Plan of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

²¹¹ For further discussion of this metaphor, see section 1.1.2 God is Light in the paper “**First Pillar - The Nature of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

²¹² The Greek word πρᾶσις - praus is better translated “contrite”; see the presentation, “**David – Contrition**” located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/presentations>.

- Jesus promises true rest, i.e., the Kingdom of God,²¹³ **"I will give you rest"**
- Jesus' requirement is **"Take my yoke"**; and, having taken the "yoke",²¹⁴ to **"learn from me"**
- Jesus then identifies two of his character attributes which exemplify the required learning, **"I am contrite and lowly in heart"**
- Having learned to be like Jesus, to have his nature, his teaching is easy, **"my yoke is easy"**
- In contrast to the weight of sin, conversion is "light", **"my burden is light"**
- Jesus uses double entendre, **"my burden is light"**, the weight of sin is gone, but the teaching of God, the Gospel, the Way of God, **"the light"**, becomes the focus of the converted person's life

The father of John the Baptist, **Zechariah**, prophesized that his son would bring **knowledge of salvation**, i.e., the Gospel, to the people in preparation for the arrival of the Messiah. **This knowledge is "light"**:

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to **prepare his ways**, to give **knowledge of salvation** to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into **the way of peace**.
(Luke 1:76-79 ESV)

The **Apostle Matthew** reports Jesus' preaching at the start of the Great Galilean Ministry as **fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy bringing light**:

And leaving Nazareth [Jesus] went and lived in Capernaum by the sea,
in the **territory of Zebulun and Naphtali**, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:
The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light,
And for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, **on them a light has dawned**.
(citing Isaiah 9:1-2)
From that time **Jesus began to preach**, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
(Matthew 4:13-17 ESV)

Devout Simeon in the Temple asserted that **the presence of Jesus was the revelation of the light of salvation**:

Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;
for **my eyes have seen your salvation** that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.
(Luke 2:29-32 ESV)

On more than one occasion, **Jesus stated that the Gospel message was light** to be promulgated to the world:

And [Jesus] said to them,
"Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand?
For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; **nor is anything secret except to come to light**.
If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."
(Mark 4:21-23 ESV // Luke 8:16-17)
So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.
What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.
(Matthew 10:26-27 ESV see also Luke 12:2-3)

The **Apostle Paul** reiterates that **the Gospel message is the light revealing the mystery**, the secret things of God, which were reserved for the time of God's choosing:

Of **this gospel** I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace,
which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints,
this grace was given, **to preach to the Gentiles** the unsearchable riches of Christ,
and **to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God**,
who created all things ...
(Ephesians 3:7-9 ESV)

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and **stewards of the mysteries of God**.
Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. ...

²¹³ See Hebrews 4:1-11

²¹⁴ The "yoke" was a Rabbinical symbol for going to school; see Robertson page 59.

Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before **the Lord** comes, who **will bring to light the things now hidden** in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5a ESV)

The secret things belong to [YHWH] our God,

but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this [torah].

(Deuteronomy 29:29 ESV)

[YHWH], my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high;

I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

(Psalm 131:1, 139:6 ESV)

Thus says [YHWH] who made the earth, [YHWH] who formed it to establish it—[YHWH] is his name:

Call to me and **I will** answer you,

and will **tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.**

(Jeremiah 33:2-3 ESV)

Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, **to whom belong wisdom** and might.

He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings;

he gives wisdom to the wise **and knowledge** to those who have understanding;

he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and **the light dwells with him.**

(Daniel 2:20b-22 ESV)

Jesus extended the metaphor of light to True Worshipers, contrasting the Way of God, light, with the way of the world, darkness:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Nor do people **light a lamp** and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and **it gives light to all** in the house.

In the same way, **let your light shine before others,**

so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

(Matthew 5:14-16 ESV see also 6:22-23, Luke 11:33-36, 16:8, Acts 13:47-49, 1 Peter 2:9)

And this is the judgment:

the light has come into the world,

and **people loved the darkness rather than the light** because their works were evil.

For everyone who does wicked things **hates the light** and **does not come to the light,**

lest his works should be exposed.

But **whoever does what is true comes to the light,**

so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

(John 3:19-21 ESV)

And Jesus cried out and said,

“Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.

And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.

I have come into the world as light,

so that **whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.** ...”

(John 12:44-46 ESV)

The **Apostle John** warps up the use of the metaphor of light tying the **New Testament teaching** clearly back to the **Old Testament:**

Beloved, **I am writing you no new commandment,**

but **an old commandment that you had from the beginning.**

The old commandment is **the word that you have heard.**

At the same time, **it is a new commandment** that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you,

because the **darkness is passing away** and the **true light is already shining.**

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

But **whoever hates his brother is in the darkness** and walks in the darkness,

and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

(1 John 2:7-11 ESV see also 2 John 4-6)

Analysis of John’s statement:

- **Jesus had said:**

A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another:**

just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

By this **all people will know that you are my disciples,** if you have love for one another.

(John 13:34-35 ESV)

- John alludes to Jesus' statement, "**I am writing you no new commandment**"
- John then begins to tie back to the Old Testament, "**an old commandment that you had from the beginning**":
... you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am [YHWH].
(Leviticus 19:18b ESV)
- John then summarizes, "**the word that you have heard**", i.e., **the whole teaching of God**, the Gospel, focuses on "love" as summarized by the **Ten Commandments**
- But, in fact it, "**it is a new commandment**", because Jesus had tied discipleship to love, "**all people will know that you are my disciples**"
- When John wrote his letter, the New Testament Church was functioning, "**true light is already shining**", most of the New Testament documents were written; the revelation of the Truth of God to humanity was nearly complete; resulting in "**darkness is passing away**"
- John is then explicit about the teaching of God, "**whoever loves his brother abides in the light**", this echoes Jesus' statement: **the effect of the Way of God is brotherly love**
- It is hypocrisy to claim to be a Christian and harbour hate for a fellow Christian, "**whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness**"

Jesus had elaborated on brotherly love:

This is my commandment, that you **love one another as I have loved you**.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command you.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing;
but I have called you friends, for **all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you**.

You did not choose me,

but I chose you and appointed you that you should **go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide**,
so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

These things I command you, **so that you will love one another**.

(John 15:12-17 ESV)

Jesus is the Living Word of God. The Bible is the written Word of God. **Jesus is the Light**. The Light is defined by the written Word of God – **The Way of God**. The final revelation from God to humanity is contained in the New Testament documents, "**all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you**". "**To be in darkness**" is to reject the teaching of God; to reject Jesus; to **refuse to live by the Way of God**.

3.4.3.2 Jesus' Teaching

The **Apostle Matthew** summarizes the **Sermon on the Mount** with these words:

And when **Jesus finished these sayings**, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,
for **he was teaching them as one who had authority**, and not as their scribes.

(Matthew 7:28-29 ESV see also Mark 1:21-22 // Luke 4:31-32, Mark 6:2 // Matthew 13:54)

Jesus was sure about what he said because **he and the Father had planned his teaching very carefully prior to the First Advent**. The focus of Jesus' teaching was always to elucidate and elaborate the previous revelation, the Old Testament. Jesus is explicit about his purpose:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the [nomos]²¹⁵ or the Prophets;

I have not come to abolish them but to **[make them fully known] (plēroō)**.²¹⁶

For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away,

not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the [nomos] until all is accomplished.

Therefore whoever **relaxes one of the least of these commandments**

and **teaches others to do the same** will be called least in the kingdom of heaven,

but **whoever does them and teaches them** will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I tell you, **unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven**.

(Matthew 5:17-20 ESV)

²¹⁵ See footnote 4; in this passage, Jesus clearly alludes to the Writings of Moses.

²¹⁶ The most basic meaning of the verb πληρώω - plēroō, is to "make full"; see GEL page 676.

Jesus was always careful to distinguish his teaching from the teaching of “**the scribes and Pharisees**”. To a Jew at the time of the First Advent, the audience to which Jesus spoke and to which Matthew wrote, **the word *nomos* automatically implied all the teaching and interpretations of “the scribes and Pharisees”**. Jesus’ use of *nomos* here is explicitly referring to the Writings of Moses, explicitly excluding the teaching of “**the scribes and Pharisees**”. The scribes and Pharisees were famous for circumventing the actual intent of God’s teaching, “**relaxes one of the least of these commandments**”, and applying their own corrupt logic:

You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.

And he said to them,

You have a fine way of **rejecting the commandment of God** in order to establish your tradition!

For **Moses said**,

‘Honor your father and your mother’; and,

‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’

But you say,

‘If a man tells his father or his mother,

“Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban”’ (that is, given to God)

—then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother,

thus **making void the word of God by your tradition** that you have handed down.

And many such things you do.

(Mark 7:8-13 ESV see also Matthew 15:1-9)

The scribes and Pharisee were hypocrites; **they were deep into “the darkness”**:

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples,

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.

They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

They do all their deeds to be seen by others.

But woe to you, **scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!**

For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces.

For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

Woe to you, **scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!**

For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are **full of greed and self-indulgence.**

You blind Pharisee!

First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. ...”

(Matthew 23:1-5a, 13, 25-26 ESV see also all of chapter 23, 6:1-5, 16, Luke 11:42-52, 13:14-16)

The **Sermon on the Mount** contains many explicit **examples of Jesus’ elaboration and elucidation** of the Old Testament:

You have heard that it was said to those of old,

‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’

But I say to you that everyone who is **angry with his brother** will be liable to judgment; whoever **insults his brother** will be liable to the council; and whoever says,

‘You fool!’²¹⁷ will be liable to the hell of fire.

You have heard that it was said, **‘You shall not commit adultery.’**

But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already **committed adultery with her in his heart.**

It was also said, **‘Whoever divorces his wife,** let him give her a certificate of divorce.’

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and **whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.**²¹⁸

Again you have heard that it was said to those of old,

‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’

But I say to you, **Do not take an oath at all,** either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

²¹⁷ Matthew uses the word, μωρός – mōros, only in contexts of missing out on salvation; see Matthew 7:26, 23:17, 25:2,3,8. In 5:22, the implication is passing judgement on a brother.

²¹⁸ See the discussion of “adultery” in the paper “**The Human Condition**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

You have heard that it was said, '**An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.**'

But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil.

But **if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.**

And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, **let him have your cloak as well.**

And if anyone forces you to go one mile, **go with him two miles.**

You have heard that it was said, '**You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.**'

But I say to you, **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you** ...

(Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-37, 38-41, 43-44 ESV)

Jesus frequently emphasized the necessity of "repentance" as the basis of the relationship between a True Worshipper and God. All three Synoptists report that Jesus commenced the Great Galilean Ministry with a call to repentance:

Now after John was arrested, **Jesus** came into Galilee, **proclaiming the gospel** of God, and saying,

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;

repent and believe in the gospel."

(Mark 1:14-15 ESV)

Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea ... From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

(Matthew 4:12-13a, 17 ESV)

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.

And **he taught in their synagogues**, being glorified by all. ... And Jesus answered them,

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I have not come to call the righteous but **sinners to repentance.**"

(Luke 4:14-15, 5:31-32 ESV)

Jesus affirmed that the purpose of his public works, healing and casting out demons, **was to bring people to repentance:**

Then he began to **denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.**

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!

For if **the mighty works done in you** had been done in Tyre and Sidon,

they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ..."

(Matthew 11:20-22 ESV see also Luke 10:13-14)

The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for **they repented at the preaching of Jonah**,

and behold, **something greater than Jonah is here.**

(Matthew 12:41 ESV see also Luke 11:32)

Likely during a Feast in Jerusalem, Jesus warned the people that time and chance happen to all. **Only those who repent can have a relationship with God:**

There were some present at that very time who told him about

the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them,

"Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way?

No, I tell you; but **unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.**

Or **those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them:**

do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?

No, I tell you; but **unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.**"

(Luke 13:1-5 ESV)

Jesus used a trio of parables to emphasize the significance of repentance:

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

And the **Pharisees and the scribes** grumbled, saying, "**This man receives sinners and eats with them.**"

So he told them this parable:

"What man of you, **having a hundred sheep**, if he has **lost one** of them,

does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost,

until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.
And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them,
'Rejoice with me, for **I have found my sheep that was lost.**'

Just so, I tell you, **there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.**

"Or what woman, having **ten silver coins**, if she **loses one** coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?

And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying,
'Rejoice with me, for **I have found the coin that I had lost.**'

Just so, I tell you, **there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.**"

(Luke 15:1-10 ESV)

The "**Pharisees and the scribes**", of course, believed themselves to be "**righteous persons who need no repentance**". The parable of the "Lost Sheep" was a direct blow to them. No human being can be "truly righteous" – **all are in need of repentance**. The parable of the "Lost Coin" makes the point that **God loves all human beings**, each and everyone is of value to God. **When a person repents**, it is as though a "lost sheep" has returned, or a "lost coin" has been found. Those who are "**righteous persons who need no repentance**" are **worthless to God**.

Jesus used these parables to segue into one of his most famous parables, the "**Prodigal Son**". It is beyond the scope of the paper to fully analyze this parable.²¹⁹ **From the perspective of "repentance"**, the lesson is of the younger son, who came to realize **the true wretchedness of his condition**:

Not many days later, **the younger son** gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.

So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

And **he was longing to be fed** with the pods that the pigs ate, and **no one gave him anything**.

(Luke 15:13-16 ESV)

This "wretchedness" is truly **the state of all human beings prior to repentance**. In the parable, "the father" represents "God the Father." The prodigal son "**came to himself**", returned to the Father in **repentance**, and is **mercifully received**:

But **when he came to himself**, he said,

'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! **I will arise and go to my father**, and I will say to him,

"Father, **I have sinned against heaven and before you**.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

Treat me as one of your hired servants."

And the son said to him,

'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

But the father said to his servants,

"... this **my son was dead**, and is **alive again**; he **was lost**, and **is found**.'

And **they began to celebrate**.

(Luke 15:17-19, 21-22a, 24 ESV)

In reporting Jesus' "**Great Commission**", the **Synoptist Luke** reports Jesus' explicit words that **the objective of "repentance" is part of the commission**:

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them,

"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that **repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations**, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.

But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

(Luke 24:45-49 ESV)

²¹⁹ See the Bible Study Notes "The Brother of the Prodigal Son" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.
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Both the **Synoptists Mark and Matthew** report that believers require “**baptism**” implicitly indicating **prior repentance**:

And he said to them,
“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.
Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved ...”

(Mark 16:15-16a ESV)

And Jesus came and said to them,
“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Go therefore and **make disciples of all nations**,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

(Mathew 28:18-20 ESV)

The Sabbath was central to Jesus’ teaching.²²⁰ The scribes and Pharisees of his Jesus’ day had utterly corrupted the observance of the Sabbath making it an ugly burden to the people. Jesus opposed the Pharisees and their teaching at every turn.²²¹

All three Synoptist report the incident of **Jesus and the disciples passing through grain fields on the Sabbath**:

One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

And the **Pharisees were saying** to him,
“Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”

And he said to them,
“Have you never read what **David** did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and **ate the bread of the Presence**, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?”

And he said to them,
“**The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.**
So **the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.**”

(Mark 2:23-28 ESV // Matthew 12:1-8, Luke 6:1-5)

Jesus Christ, as YHWH, **created the Sabbath.**²²² He **explicitly showed the Israelites which day was the Sabbath.**²²³ He **enjoined them to remember and observe the Sabbath.**²²⁴ He **inspired the prophets to teach Sabbath observance.**²²⁵ He himself **kept the Sabbath.**²²⁶ He **inspired the New Testament Church to keep the Sabbath.**²²⁷ The Sabbath is the “Lord’s Day”. The observance of Sunday worship is a direct violation of the teaching of the whole Bible. Sunday worship is an affront to Jesus Christ, a repudiation of his sacrifice, and an abomination in the eyes of God the Father.²²⁸

3.4.3.3 Jesus’ Self-Revelation

At about age twelve, **the boy Jesus** found his way into the Temple where he **began to question the teachers**. When his parents found him, they were astonished at his self-awareness:

After three days they found him in the temple, **sitting among the teachers**, listening to them and **asking them questions**.

And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

And when **his parents** saw him, they **were astonished**. And his mother said to him,
“Son, why have you treated us so?
Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.”

²²⁰ For further discussion on the Sabbath, see section **8. When to Worship – the Sabbath** in the paper “**True Worship of the True God**” and section **4.2 The Sabbath** in the paper “**The Human Condition**”; both papers are located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

²²¹ See Mark 3:1-6 // Matthew 12:9-14 // Luke 6:6-11, Luke 13:10-17, 14:1-6, John 5:2-18, 7:22-24, 9:1-41

²²² See Genesis 2:1-3

²²³ See Exodus 16:4-5, 22-30

²²⁴ See Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15

²²⁵ See section **The Whole Teaching of God**

²²⁶ See Mark 1:21 // Luke 4:31, Mark 3:1 // Matthew 12:9 // Luke 6:6, Mark 6:2 // Matthew 13:54, Luke 4:16, 13:10

²²⁷ See Mark 15:42, 16:1, Mathew 28:1, Luke 23:54-55, John 19:31, Acts 13:14,42,44, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4

²²⁸ See Bacchiocchi for a discussion of how “Sunday” was substituted for the Sabbath.

And he said to them,
 “Why were you looking for me?
 Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?”
And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.
(Luke 2:46-50 ESV)

Similarly, some years later, soon after the start of his public ministry, Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus is appalled by the on-going merchandizing in the temple precincts. Jesus breaks up the bazar and makes a statement about himself that would not be understood for some years:

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons,
and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords,
he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen.
And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.
And he told those who sold the pigeons,
 “Take these things away; do not make my Father’s house a house of trade.”
His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”
(citing Psalm 69:9a)

So the Jews said to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?”
Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”
The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?”
But he was speaking about the temple of his body.
When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this,
and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.
(John 2:13-22 ESV)

During his ministry, Jesus clearly taught his disciples the true nature of who he was and what his purpose on earth was. During his life, they did NOT understand. Only after the events of the resurrection, the ascension, and the giving of the Holy Spirit, did they comprehend. Then they commenced to record Jesus’ life and teaching in the New Testament documents, which we have.

Near the beginning of the Great Galilean Ministry, Jesus was in the Synagogue in Nazareth, and he was given the Isaiah scroll from which to read. Jesus opened to the Fifth Servant Song and read:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.
And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.
And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.
He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,
 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
 because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.
(cited Isaiah 61:1-2a)

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down.
And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them,
 “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”
(Luke 4:16-21 ESV)

Analysis of Jesus’ action:

- Jesus was well known in Nazareth where he grew up, “he stood up to read”
- Jesus specifically went to Isaiah chapter 61, “found the place”
- The passage specifically references preaching the gospel, “proclaim good news to the poor”
- Jesus explicitly identifies himself as fulfilling the scripture, “today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”
- By this, Jesus affirmed to the people of Nazareth that he had been imbued with the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me”, and that he, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Anointed One, the Messiah, “he has anointed me”
- Finally, Jesus read only the first part of verse two, “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”, thus identifying his mission in the First Advent: to make God’s grace generally available to all called-out persons through his propitiating sacrifice

The people in the Synagogue did NOT appreciate Jesus' teaching:

When they heard these things, **all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.**
And they rose up and drove him out of the town
and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built,
so **that they could throw him down the cliff.**
(Luke 4:28-29 ESV)

Later, during Jesus' **second tour of Galilee** with the Twelve Apostles, Jesus went across the Sea of Galilee in a small boat:

On that day, when evening had come, [Jesus] said to them, **"Let us go across to the other side."**
And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was.
And other boats were with him.
And **a great windstorm arose**, and the waves were breaking into the boat,
so that **the boat was already filling.**

But [Jesus] was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him,
"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

And **he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea,** "Peace! Be still!"
And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them,
"Why are you so afraid? **Have you still no faith?**"

And **they were filled with great fear and said to one another,**
"Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"
(Mark 4:35-41 ESV // Matthew 8:18, 23-27, Luke 8:22-25)

The Apostle did NOT yet comprehend that Jesus was the Divine Being, the Creator, who had been known as YHWH. **Jesus demonstrates his Divinity for the Apostles** so that they may believe. Later, when Jesus' special training of the Twelve is nearly complete, **he tests their understanding:**

Now when **Jesus** came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he **asked his disciples,**
"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"

And they said,
"Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
He said to them, "But **who do you say that I am?**"

Simon Peter replied, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**
(Matthew 16:13-16 ESV // Mark 8:27-29, Luke 9:18-20)

Soon after this, **Jesus is explicit** in teaching the disciples that **in spite of his Divinity, he must suffer death.** But, he will be restored to life – **there will be a resurrection** after three days. The disciple cannot comprehend this:

And he began to teach them that **the Son of Man must suffer** many things
and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes
and be killed, and **after three days rise again.** And he said this plainly.
And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.
(Mark 8:31-32 ESV // Matthew 16:21-22a, Luke 9:22)

Jesus soon repeated his revelation of his purpose to the disciples. Now, although they did NOT understand, they began to listen:

They went on from there and passed through Galilee.
And he did not want anyone to know, for **he was teaching his disciples,** saying to them,
"The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and **they will kill him.**
And when he is killed, **after three days he will rise."**

But **they did not understand** the saying, **and were afraid to ask him.**
(Mark 9:30-32 ESV // Matthew 17:22-23, Luke 9:43b-45)

Finally, **just before the last visit to Jerusalem,** Jesus repeats his teaching emphasizing that the coming events are in fulfillment of prophecy. **Luke reports that the disciples still did NOT understand:**

And taking the twelve, he said to them,
"See, **we are going up to Jerusalem,**
and **everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.**
For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, **they will kill him,** and **on the third day he will rise."**

But **they understood none of these things.**
This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.
(Luke 18:31-34 ESV // Mark 10:32-34, Matthew 20:17-19)

The **Apostle John** wrote his Gospel significantly later than the Synoptists. One of his purposes was to **make abundantly clear who and what Jesus was**. John reports several **discourses of Jesus** where Jesus, in first person speech, clearly reveals his Divinity, his humanity, his purpose in the First Advent, the fact of the Second Advent, the reality of the resurrection of the dead:

- The conversation with Nicodemus: John 3:1-15
The Resurrection of the Dead
Jesus answered him,
“Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”
That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and **that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**
(John 3:3, 6 ESV)
- The conversation with the woman of Samaria: John 4:7-26
True Worship
But the hour is coming, and is now here,
when the true worshipers will **worship the Father in spirit and truth,**
for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.
God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.
The woman said to him,
“I know that **Messiah is coming** (he who is called Christ).
When he comes, he will tell us all things.”
Jesus said to her, “**I who speak to you am he.**”
(John 4:23-26 ESV)
- Lecture to the “Jews” in the Temple: John 5:19-47
The Father and the Son
So Jesus said to them,
Truly, truly, I say to you, **the Son can do nothing of his own accord,**
but only what he sees the Father doing.
For **whatever the Father does,** that the Son does likewise.
For as **the Father has life in himself,**
so he has granted **the Son also to have life in himself.**
And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because **he is the Son of Man.**
I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and **my judgment is just,**
because I seek not my own will but **the will of him who sent me.**
(John 5:19, 26-27, 30 ESV)
- Teaching the “crowd” in Capernaum: John 6:25-51
The Bread of Life
Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the **food that endures to eternal life,**
which **the Son of Man will give to you.** For on him God the Father has set his seal.
I am the living bread that came down from heaven.
If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.
And **the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.**
(John 6:27, 51 ESV)
- Lecturing the “Jews” in the Synagogue in Capernaum: John 6:52-59
Salvation is Only Through Jesus
So Jesus said to them,
“Truly, truly, I say to you,
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,
you have no life in you. ...”
(John 6:53 ESV)
- Teaching the disciples in Capernaum: John 6:60-70
The Words of Eternal Life
When **many of his disciples** heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?”
After this many of his disciples **turned back** and no longer walked with him.
So Jesus said to **the twelve,** “Do you want to go away as well?”
Simon Peter answered him,
“Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have the words of eternal life,**
and we have believed, and have come to know, that **you are the Holy One of God.**”
(John 6:60, 66-69 ESV)

- Teaching in the Temple at the Feast of Tabernacles: John 7:14-24, 33-34, 37-39
Rivers of Living Waters
 So Jesus answered them,
 “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.
 If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God
 or whether I am speaking on my own authority. ...”
 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out,
 “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.
Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said,
‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”
 Now this he said about the Spirit, [which] those who believed in him were to receive,
 for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.
 (John 7:16-17, 37-39 ESV)
- Lecturing the “Jews” in the Temple: John 8:12-29
Jesus is NOT of this World
 Jesus answered,
 “Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true,
 for I know where I came from and where I am going,
 but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. ...”
 He said to them,
 “You are from below; I am from above.
 You are of this world; I am not of this world. ...”
 So Jesus said to them,
 “When you have lifted up the Son of Man,
then you will know that [I am] (ἐγώ εἰμι - ego eimi),²²⁹
 and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ...”
 (John 8:14, 23, 28 ESV)
- Jesus teaches some “Jews” who believe: John 8:31-47
The Truth Will Set You Free
 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him,
 “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,
 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”
 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?
Whoever is of God hears the words of God.
 The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.
 (John 8:31-32, 46-47 ESV)
- Jesus responds to an accusation of the “Jews”: John 8:48-59
Before Abraham was, I AM
 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.
 The Jews said to him,
 “.... Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died!
Who do you make yourself out to be?”
 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am (ἐγώ εἰμι - ego eimi).”
 (John 8:51-52a, 53, 58 ESV)
- Jesus lectures the “Pharisees” following the healing of blind man: John 10:1-18
The Good Shepherd
 So Jesus again said to them,
 “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.
 All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.
‘I am the good shepherd.²³⁰ I know my own and my own know me,
 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;
 and I lay down my life for the sheep. ...”
 (John 10:7-8, 14-15 ESV)
- Jesus contends with the “Jews” at the Feast of Dedication: John 10:22-38
Unity of Jesus and The Father
 So the Jews gathered around him and said to him,
 “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.”

²²⁹ Jesus is identifying himself as “YHWH”, see Exodus 3:13-14.

²³⁰ “The Good Shepherd” was a Messianic prophecy well known to the Pharisees; see Ezekiel 34:11-15.

Jesus answered them,

"I told you, and you do not believe.

The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me ...

I and the Father are one. ...

If I am not doing **the works of my Father**, then do not believe me; but if **I do them**, even though you do not believe me, believe the works,

that you may know and understand that **the Father is in me and I am in the Father.**"

(John 10:24-25, 30, 37-38 ESV)

- A public exhortation of Jesus: John 12:44-50

Jesus Came to Save the World

And Jesus cried out and said,

"Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ...

I did not come to judge the world but **to save the world.**

... **the word that I have spoken** will judge him on the last day.

For I have not spoken on my own authority, but **the Father** who sent me

has himself given me a commandment—**what to say and what to speak.** ..."

(John 12:44, 47b, 48b-49 ESV)

- Jesus' last words to the Apostles: John chapters 14, 15, and 16

Jesus Will Return

... **I go to prepare a place for you?** And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again** and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

You heard me say to you, '**I am going away**, and **I will come to you.**'

If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because **I am going to the Father**, for **the Father is greater than I.**

A little while, and **you will see me no longer**; and again **a little while**, and **you will see me.**

(John 14:2b-3, 28, 16:16 ESV)

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

And I will ask **the Father**, and he **will give you another Helper**, to be with you forever,

even **the Spirit of truth**, [which] the world cannot receive,

because it neither sees [it] nor knows [it].

You know [it], for [it] **dwells with you and will be in you.**

I still have many things to say to you, but **you cannot bear them now.**

When **the Spirit of truth** comes, [it] **will guide you** into all the truth,

for [it] will not speak on his own authority, but **whatever [it] hears [it] will speak**,

and [it] will declare to you the things that are to come.

(John 14:16-17, 16:12-13 ESV)

Do the Work

I am the vine; you are the branches.

Whoever abides in me and I in him, **he it is that bears much fruit**,

for apart from me you can do nothing. ... **By this my Father is glorified**, that you bear much fruit

and so **prove to be my disciples.** ... If you **keep my commandments**, you will abide in my love ...

And **you also will bear witness**, because you have been with me from the beginning.

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.

In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; **I have overcome the world.**

(John 15:5, 8, 10a, 27, 16:33 ESV)

- Jesus' final prayer: John 17:1-26

The Glory of God

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said,

"Father, the hour has come; **glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,**

since you have given him authority over all flesh,

to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.

And **this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God,**

and **Jesus Christ whom you have sent.**

I glorified you on earth, **having accomplished the work** that you gave me to do.

And now, Father, **glorify me in your own presence**

with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. ..."

(John 17:1-5 ESV)

The New Testament Church

I have manifested your name to **the people whom you gave me** out of the world. ...

For **I have given them the words that you gave me**, and they have received them

and have come to know in truth that I came from you;
and they have believed that you sent me. ...

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

And I am no longer in the world, but **they are in the world**, and I am coming to you.

Holy Father, **keep them in your name**, which you have given me,
that they may be one, even as we are one.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

As you sent me into the world, so **I have sent them into the world**. ...

I do not ask for these only, **but also for those who will believe in me through their word** ...
(John 17:6a, 8, 17, 11, 16, 18, 20 ESV)

Some of Jesus' last thoughts in his final prayer relate to the work of the Apostles, "**the people whom you gave me**", to build the New Testament Church. Jesus had made the Father known, "**I have manifested your name**". Jesus had revealed the teaching of God, "**I have given them the words that you gave me**", "**your word is truth**". Jesus prays for the success of the Apostles, "**Sanctify them in the truth**", "**I have sent them into the world**", but "**they are not of the world**". Success will require the guidance and protection of God the Father, "**keep them in your name**", through The New Testament Church, "**The Church of God**". The work of the Apostles will extend to many others down through time, "**those who will believe in me through their word**". From that time on, the New Testament Church has been the focus of God the Father and the resurrected Jesus Christ, the Advocate, and intercessor for True Worshipers, True Christians. This is in stark contrast to what was about to play out on the "Jews", the last visible remnant of the nation of Ancient Israel.

3.4.3.4 The Messianic Hope

The "Jews" at the time of Christ were expecting the Messiah.²³¹ **F.F. Bruce states:**

No single form of messianic expectation was cherished by Jesus' contemporaries,
but **the hope of a military Messiah predominated**. The promises of **a prince of the house of David**
who would **break the oppressor's yoke** from his people's neck
seemed to many to be designed for a time such as theirs ...
(Bruce (NT) page 133)

The popular Messianic hope was caused by misunderstanding of the prophecies of the Second Advent.

The Jews of Jesus time were familiar with the prophecies of the Kingdom of God, the Day of YHWH, the Second Exodus, and the New Israel. They expected the Messiah to come and fulfill all these prophecies. With the inception of the New Testament Church, the "remnant community" had completed its work. Those living members of the "remnant community" were among the first converts to the New Testament Church. After this, there was no need for the vestigial nation of the "Jews". That nation suffered utter destruction in the wars of 70AD and 132AD.

Not even the Apostles could break away from the popular concept as late as the time of the ascension:

So when they had come together, they asked him,
"Lord, **will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**"

He said to them,

"It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.
But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**,
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria,
and to the end of the earth."

(Acts 1:6-8 ESV)

About ten days after this, **some 120 True Worshipers**, the complete company of Jesus' disciples, were gathered together to celebrate the **Feast of Pentecost**. Suddenly, **they were imbued with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit**,²³² just as Jesus had promised. **Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the teaching of Jesus began to come into focus**. In his sermon to the gathered crowd, the **Apostle Peter** quotes from the **Prophet Joel** a prophecy which Peter now understands:

And **in the last days** it shall be, God declares, that **I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh**,
and your sons and your daughters **shall prophesy**, and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;

²³¹ See Schürer, "The Messianic Hope", division II volume II, pages 126-187; and, Bruce (NT), "The Messianic Hope", pages 122-134.

²³² See Acts 1:15, 2:1-4

even on my male servants and female servants in those days **I will pour out my Spirit,** and **they shall prophesy.**

And I will show **wonders in the heavens** above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, **before the day of the Lord comes,** the great and magnificent day.

And it shall come to pass that **everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.** (Acts 2:17-21 ESV citing Joel 2:26-32a)

Analysis of Peter's new understanding:

- The inauguration of the New Testament Church marked the beginning of the last era of God's dealing with humanity under the sway of Satan, **"in the last days"**²³³
- The operative part of the prophecy had just been fulfilled, **"I will pour out my Spirit"**; the receipt of the Holy Spirit by the disciples was the beginning of a process that will ultimately extend to **"all flesh"**
- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit provided understanding to the Apostles so that they were the first who, **"shall prophesy"**,²³⁴ upon others, sons, daughter, old, young, even upon slaves, in the years to come, **"I will pour out my Spirit"**, and **"they shall prophesy"**
- These verses prophesize the Work of the New Testament Church which began with the Apostles, one of the most important outcomes of the **First Advent**
- The prophecy in Joel now jumps to the end of the era, **"wonders in the heavens"**, the Heavenly Signs, the sixth seal²³⁵
- Peter now understands why the Heavenly Signs precede the Day of YHWH, **"before the day of the Lord comes"**, they are a harbinger of the **Second Advent**, which Peter now understands because **Jesus said he would return**
- The **Second Advent inaugurates the Kingdom of God**, the government of God over the whole earth, the Messianic Kingdom, the Wonderful World Tomorrow
- The World Tomorrow is **a new era in God's dealing with humanity**, at that time the Holy Spirit will be made available to all, and **"everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"**

Peter's new understanding is of course in complete counter-distinction from the popular Messianic Hope. Throughout his ministry, Jesus had fought against the popular Messianic Hope, now **it was up to the Apostles to dispel the misinformation and make the Truth of God known.** Their record of this is in the New Testament Documents.

Since the return from exile in 538BC, God had carefully prepared and maintained **a group of True Worshipers, "the remnant community", to be ready for the First Advent.**²³⁶ They were ready. When **Joseph observed that Mary was pregnant,** he readily accepted the explanation:

But as he considered these things, behold, **an angel of the Lord appeared** to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do **not fear to take Mary as your wife,** for **that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for **he will save his people from their sins.**"

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

"Behold, **the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,** and they shall call his name Immanuel"²³⁷ (which means, God with us). (citing Isaiah 7:14)

When Joseph woke from sleep, **he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him:** he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 1:20-25 ESV)

²³³ See Hebrews 1:2, 9:26, 1 Corinthians 10:11, 1 John 2:18

²³⁴ Note that "to prophesy" is being used here in the sense of "forthtelling": to proclaim the Gospel; see the discussion in section **2.4.1 The Nature of Prophecy** in the paper **"Second Pillar - The Plan of God"** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

²³⁵ See Revelation 6:12-17

²³⁶ See the discussion of this group in section **2.3.3 The Purpose of the Restoration** in the paper **"Second Pillar - The Plan of God"** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

²³⁷ For a discussion of the name "Immanuel", see section **1.4.2.1 Explicit Form of God's Name** in the paper **"First Pillar - The Nature of God"**, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

When **Mary** herself was told of the impending pregnancy, she questioned how it could be possible, but **immediately accepted her responsibility:**

And Mary said to the angel, **“How will this be, since I am a virgin?”**

And the angel answered her,

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ...
For nothing will be impossible with God.”

And Mary said, “Behold, **I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.**”
(Luke 1:34-35, 37-38a ESV)

When John the Baptist was born, his father **Zechariah**, issued a prophecy clearly identifying the Messianic expectation:

And his father **Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied,** saying,

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and **redeemed his people** and has raised up a horn of salvation for us **in the house of his servant David,** **as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,** that we should be **saved from our enemies** and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember **his holy covenant,** the oath that he swore **to our father Abraham,** to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called **the prophet of the Most High;** for **you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,** to give **knowledge of salvation** to his people in the **forgiveness of their sins,** because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high **to give light** to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, **to guide our feet into the way of peace.**

(Luke 1:67-79 ESV)

When Jesus was born, the **Wise Men from the East** appeared while Mary and Joseph were still in Bethlehem. They **are explicit that that they are looking for the Messiah,** “the King of the Jews”. **Herod is clearly aware of the Messianic expectation:**

Now after **Jesus was born in Bethlehem** of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying,

“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?”

For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

When **Herod the king** heard this, he **was troubled,** and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, **he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.**

(Matthew 2:1-4 ESV)

After the return to Nazareth from Egypt,²³⁸ Mary and Joseph took the child Jesus up to the Temple in Jerusalem. There they encountered a True Worshipper, **Devout Simeon,** who is explicitly stated to have been waiting for the Messiah. **Simeon immediately identifies Jesus as the Messiah:**

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was **Simeon,** and this man was **righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel,** and **the Holy Spirit was upon him.**

And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that **he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.**

And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the [nomos],²³⁹ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for **my eyes have seen your salvation** that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, **a light for revelation to the Gentiles,** and for glory to your people Israel.”

(Luke 2:25-32 ESV)

John the Baptist was questioned by the priests and Levites from Jerusalem as to whether or NOT John was **the expected Messiah.** It is clear they were looking for the Messiah:

And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent **priests and Levites** from Jerusalem **to ask him,** **“Who are you?”**

²³⁸ See Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

²³⁹ Here, *nomos*, appears to refer to a Pharisaic interpretation – there is nothing in the Writings of Moses to require the presentation of a child.
Sunday, December 1, 2024

He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, **"I am not the Christ."**
 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?"
 He said, "I am not."
 "Are you the Prophet?"
 And he answered, "No."
 So they said to him,
"Who are you?" We need to give an answer to those who sent us.
 What do you say about yourself?"
 They asked him
 "Then why are you baptizing, **if you are neither the Christ**, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"
 (John 1:19-22, 25 ESV)

When Jesus first encountered some of those who would later become Apostles, **the imminency of the Messiah was clearly on their minds**, and they immediately recognized Jesus as the Messiah:

The next day again John²⁴⁰ was standing with two of his disciples,
 and he looked at **Jesus** as he walked by and said, **"Behold, the Lamb of God!"**
 The two disciples²⁴¹ heard him say this, and **they followed Jesus**.
 Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, **"What are you seeking?"**
 One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.
 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him,
"We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).
 The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found **Philip** and said to him, "Follow me."
 Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.
 Philip found Nathanael and said to him,
 "We have found **him of whom Moses** in the [nomos] and also **the prophets wrote**,
 Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."
 Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?"
 Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."
 Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, **you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!**"
 (John 1:35-38a, 40-41, 43-45, 48-49 ESV)

People as diverse as **Nicodemus**, apparently a member of the Sanhedrin, and the **Samaritan woman** at the well affirm they were expecting the Messiah:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named **Nicodemus**, a ruler of the Jews.
 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him,
 "Rabbi, **we know that you are a teacher come from God ...**"
A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."
 The Samaritan woman said to him,
 "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"
 Jesus answered her,
"If you knew the gift of God, and **who it is that is saying to you**, 'Give me a drink,'
 you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."
 The woman said to him,
"I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ).
 When he comes, he will tell us all things."
 Jesus said to her, **"I who speak to you am he."**²⁴²
 (John 3:1-2a, 4:7, 9a, 10, 25-26 ESV)

On several occasions, **Jesus performed miracles** out of mercy for the individuals' suffering and then **enjoined the recipients to NOT tell others**. Healing the sick was one of the well know signs of the kingdom,²⁴³ and Jesus did NOT want the signs to be associated with him before he was ready:
 And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean."
Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, **"I will; be clean."**

²⁴⁰ This is John the Baptist.

²⁴¹ John and Andrew had been disciples of John the Baptist.

²⁴² Jesus was okay with this explicit revelation to the Samaritan woman because, while the Samaritans were expecting the Messiah, they harboured no delusions of their own grandeur.

²⁴³ See Luke 7:18-23 // Matthew 11:2-6, Luke 7:11-17

And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.
And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, and said to him,
 "See that you say nothing to anyone," but go, show yourself to the priest
 and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them."
But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news,
so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places,
and people were coming to him from every quarter.
(Mark 1:40-45 ESV // Matthew 8:2-4, Luke 5:12-16,
see also Mark 5:39-43 // Luke 8:51-56, Matthew 9:27-31, Mark 8:22-26)

There is **a stark contrast to Jesus' normal reticence** about proclaiming his miracles. Jesus and the disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee to the country of the Gerasenes on the east side of the lake. This was part of the Greek area known as the **"Decapolis"**. Because **there was no Messianic expectation among the Greeks**, Jesus wanted the miracle proclaimed:

They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.
And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat,
immediately there met him out of the tombs **a man with an unclean spirit.**

For he was saying to him, **"Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"**

As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. And he did not permit him but said to him,

"Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you,
 and how he has had mercy on you."

And **he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.**

(Mark 5:1-2, 8, 18-20 ESV // Matthew 8:28-34, Luke 8:26-39)

Following **the miracle of feeding 5000 people**, the **Synoptists Mark and Matthew** simply report that Jesus went alone into a mountain to pray.²⁴⁴ The **Apostle John** adds that Jesus was motivated to escape the crowd because of their **Messianic desire to make Jesus King:**

When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said,
 "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"

Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king,

Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

(John 6:14-15 ESV)

Herod Antipas, "Herod the Tetrarch",²⁴⁵ ruled Galilee and Perea from 4BC to 39AD. In about 14AD, **John the Baptist** began to preach in the wilderness.²⁴⁶ Herod Antipas came to fear that John the Baptist could instigate a rebellion. **Josephus reports:**

Now, when **many others came to crowd around [John the Baptist],**
for they were greatly moved or pleased by hearing his words,
Herod, who **feared lest** the great influence **John** had over the people
might put it **in his power and inclination to raise a rebellion,**
(for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise,)
thought it best, by **putting him to death,** to prevent any mischief he might cause ...
(Antiquities 18, 5, 2)

Jesus was nearing the end of the Great Galilean Ministry by this time, so Herod became aware of Jesus' activities. **Being familiar with the popular Messianic expectation, Herod feared to lose his power.** Subsequent to this, Jesus took steps to avoid Herod.²⁴⁷ It was well known that Herod wanted to kill him.²⁴⁸ **The Synoptist Luke reports:**

Now **Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening,** and **he was perplexed,**
because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead,
by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen.

Herod said, **"John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?"**

And he sought to see him.

(Luke 9:7-9 ESV see also Mark 6:14-29 // Matthew 14:1-12)

²⁴⁴ See Mark 6:45-46 // Matthew 14:22-23

²⁴⁵ See Luke 3:1

²⁴⁶ See Mark 1:-6 // Matthew 3:1-6 // Luke 3:2b-6

²⁴⁷ See Mark 7:24,31 // Matthew 15:21,29

²⁴⁸ See Luke 13:31-32

The actions of the **Apostles** on many occasions demonstrated that they **did NOT understand that Jesus would NOT fulfill the popular Messianic expectation:**

- On more than one occasion, the Apostles argued over **“who is the greatest”**
And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them,
“What were you discussing on the way?”
But they kept silent,
for **on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.**
(Mark 9:33-34 ESV // Matthew 18:1, Luke 9:46 see also Luke 22:24)
- At one point, James and John asked permission to **destroy a Samaritan village:**
And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered **a village of the Samaritans,**
to make preparations for him.
But **the people did not receive him,** because his face was set toward Jerusalem.
And when his disciples **James and John** saw it, they said,
“Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”
(Luke 9:52-54 ESV)
- Little children were prevented access to Jesus:
And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them,
and **the disciples rebuked them.**
But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them,
“Let the children come to me; do not hinder them,
for to such belongs the kingdom of God. ...”
(Mark 10:13-14 ESV // Matthew 19:13-14, Luke 18:15-16)
- James and John requested positions of privilege:
And **James and John**, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him,
“Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.”
And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?”
And they said to him, **“Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”**
(Mark 10:35-37 ESV)

The rulers of the Jews were just like Herod – they were very aware of the popular Messianic expectation and **feared lest their power be threatened. This was their motivation to kill Jesus:**

So the **chief priests** and the **Pharisees** gathered the council and said,
“What are we to do? For this man performs many signs.
If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him,
and **the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.**”

But one of them, **Caiaphas**, who was **high priest** that year, said to them,
“You know nothing at all.
Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people,
not that the whole nation should perish.”

So from that day on **they made plans to put him to death.**
(John 11:47-50, 53 ESV)

Finally, before **Pilate**, who **clearly understood the popular Messianic expectation**, Jesus acknowledges his status as the King of Israel, but **Jesus is explicit that it is NOT now.** The popular Messianic expectation is out of sync with the Plan of God. **Jesus will assume his position as King of kings at the Second Advent:**

So **Pilate** entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him,
“Are you the King of the Jews?”

Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?”

Pilate answered,
“Am I a Jew?”
Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?”

Jesus answered,
“My kingdom is not of this world.
If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting,
that I might not be delivered over to the Jews.
But **my kingdom is not from the world.**”

Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?”

Jesus answered,

"You say that I am a king.

For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world

—to bear witness to the truth.

Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

(John 18:33-37 ESV)

The true understanding of the prophecies of the Second Advent required that the Gospel be proclaimed in all the world. The Apostles spent the rest of their lives doing this. For Jewish Christians, the hardest part was accepting the universal nature of Jesus' Messiahship.

3.4.3.5 The Universal Saviour

From its inception, God had worked out **salvation history only with the Nation of Israel**. With the creation of the New Testament Church, God began to bring the Gospel, and **the opportunity for salvation, to persons from all nations over the whole earth**. The New Testament documents are clear and specific to reveal **Jesus Christ as the Universal Saviour of all humanity**. The Synoptist Luke, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit and with the Apostolic authority of Paul, set the tone with his **genealogy of Joseph**, Jesus' legal father. In contrast with Matthew, who goes back only to Abraham, Luke takes his genealogy to Adam the progenitor of the human race, **"the son of God"**:

Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age,

being **the son** (as was supposed) **of Joseph**, the son of Heli ...

the **son of Zerubbabel**, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri ...

the son of Nathan, the **son of David** ...

the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the **son of Abraham** ...

the son of Shem, the **son of Noah** ...

the son of Seth, the **son of Adam, the son of God**.

(Luke 3:23, 27b, 31b, 34a, 36b, 38b, ESV)

In the **Great Commission** given by Jesus to the Apostles shortly before the Ascension, Jesus explicitly tells the Apostles that **the New Testament Church is to be a worldwide organism**:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And **Jesus came and said to them,**

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

(Matthew 28:16-20 ESV)

At the moment of the Ascension, **Jesus' last words to the disciples emphasized the universal nature of the New Testament Church**. Jesus had preached in **Samaria**, to the chagrin of the "Jews", but now Jesus enjoins the disciple to look at Samaria as no different than Judea. Furthermore, they are to go to the **"Gentiles"**, over the whole earth:

But **you will receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,

and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem and in all **Judea and Samaria**, and to **the end of the earth**.

(Acts 1:8 ESV)

The **Book of Acts** reports the beginning of this process from the first tentative encounters with Gentiles until the Apostle Paul is fully immersed at Rome in teaching Gentiles. **Cornelius** was a Centurion,²⁴⁹ an officer in the army of Rome, a Gentile. It took **a series of significant revelations** from God to get the **Apostle Peter** in contact with Cornelius:

About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in **a vision an angel of God** come in and say to him,

"Cornelius."

And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?"

And he said to him,

"Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. ..."

The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city,

Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

²⁴⁹ See Acts 10:1-2,28,34-35

And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, **he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened** and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth.

In it were **all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air.**

And **there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."**

But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for **I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.**"

And the voice came to him again a second time, "**What God has made clean, do not call common.**"

This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

(Acts 10:3-5, 9-16 ESV)

Peter of course did NOT immediately understand the vision.²⁵⁰ Naturally, the concept of eating unclean animals was abhorrent – just as "Jews" had been conditioned to regard contact with "Gentiles" as abhorrent. On the trip from Joppa to Caesarea, **God gave Peter the understanding of the vision:**

And as [Peter] talked with [Cornelius], he went in and found many persons gathered. And he said to them,

"You yourselves know how unlawful²⁵¹ it is

for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation,

but **God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.** ..."

So Peter opened his mouth and said:

"Truly I understand that **God shows no partiality,**

but **in every nation** anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

As for the word that he sent to Israel,

preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all) ...

And **we are witnesses** of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. ...

And **he commanded us to preach** to the people and to testify

that **he is the one appointed by God** to be judge of the living and the dead.

To him all the prophets bear witness

that **everyone who believes in him** receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

While Peter was still saying these things, **the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.**

And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed,

because **the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.**

(Acts 10:27-28, 34-36, 39a, 42-43, 44-45 ESV)

Later, in Jerusalem, **Peter recounted the events to the Jerusalem Church:**

As I began to speak, **the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning.**

And **I remembered the word of the Lord,** how he said,

'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

If then **God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us** when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?

When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying,

"Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

(Acts 11:15-18 ESV)

The **conversion of the Pharisee Saul,**²⁵² later to be known as the Apostle Paul, **was a harbinger of the conversion of Gentiles.** On the road to Damascus, Paul was struck blind. In Damascus a disciple named **Ananias** had been instructed to assist Paul:

But Ananias answered,

"Lord, **I have heard from many about this man,**

how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.

And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name."

But **the Lord said to him,**

"Go, for **he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles**

and kings and the children of Israel. ..."

(Acts 9:13-15 ESV)

²⁵⁰ See Acts 10:17-26

²⁵¹ This is a Pharisaic interpretation: there is nothing suggesting this in the Writings of Moses.

²⁵² See Acts 9:1-9, 22:6-11, 26:12-18

When the **Apostle Paul** embarked on his **first missionary journey**,²⁵³ he quickly established the pattern he would use to preach the Gospel. First, he went to the Jews preaching in the local synagogue.²⁵⁴ Generally this produced converts;²⁵⁵ but also, it aroused hostility from the local establishment at which point **Paul would focus on the Gentiles**:

But when **the Jews** saw the crowds, they **were filled with jealousy** and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying,

“It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you.

Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life,

behold, **we are turning to the Gentiles.** For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

I have made you a light for the Gentiles,

that you may **bring salvation to the ends of the earth.** (citing Isaiah 49:6)

And when **the Gentiles** heard this, they **began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord**, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.

But **the Jews** incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, **stirred up persecution** against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. (Acts 13:45-50 ESV)

Paul had similar experiences in city after city acquiring many converts and establishing many Churches.

In **Athens**, the Synoptist Luke reports **Paul’s address to the Assembly at the Areopagus**.²⁵⁶

Some of the **Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him.** And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?”

Others said,

“He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”

—because he was **preaching Jesus and the resurrection.**

And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying,

“May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?

For you bring some strange things to our ears.

We wish to know therefore what these things mean.”

Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said:

Men of Athens, **I perceive that in every way you are very religious.**

For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship,

I found also **an altar with this inscription:**

‘To the unknown god.’

What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

And **he made from one man every nation** of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, **that they should seek God**, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.

Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for

“In him we live and move and have our being”;²⁵⁷

as even some of your own poets have said,

“For we are indeed his offspring.”²⁵⁸

Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

²⁵³ See Acts 13:1-4

²⁵⁴ See Acts 13:5,14

²⁵⁵ See Acts 13:42-44

²⁵⁶ Acts 17:19 The Areopagus is the “hill of Ares” (Ares being the Greek god of war). The Court of the Areopagus was a long-established body with extensive authority over the civil and religious life of Athens. In Paul’s day, it exercised jurisdiction especially in matters of religion and morality. In speaking before the group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (v. 18), Paul would have addressed them either on the “hill of Ares” (i.e., Mars Hill), located below the acropolis, or northwest of the acropolis in the northwest corner of the Agora, where at the time of Paul the group held its ordinary meetings in the Royal Colonnade. (www.esv.org ESV Study Bible)

²⁵⁷ Probably from Epimenides of Crete; ESV Footnote.

²⁵⁸ From Aratus’s poem “Phainomena”; ESV Footnote.

The times of ignorance God overlooked,
but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,
because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness
by a man whom he has appointed;
and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."
(Acts 17:18–31 ESV)

Paul's speech is a masterpiece of tact and diplomacy. It is an excellent example of a segue to establish communication with persons who have no knowledge of God – a vast percentage of the world today. Paul got the attention of certain Philosophers by "preaching Jesus and the resurrection" – something new and exciting to the Philosophers. With the Assembly, he established common ground by referring to a local artefact, "an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god'". Paul then appealed to **General Revelation** to establish who he represents, "the God who made the world and everything in it". He then focused on humanity, "he made from one man every nation", and God's purpose, "that they should seek God", appealing to Greek poets to establish that human beings are "God's offspring". Condemning "idolatry" as a product of "times of ignorance", Paul established God's right to require "all people everywhere to repent", and alluded again to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, "he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead".

The Book of Acts ends with Paul in Rome. The Church in Rome had been started without Apostolic guidance by persons who had been in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost at the inception of the New Testament Church.²⁵⁹ Paul had previously sent his "letter", the **Book of Romans**, to the Church in Rome dealing with certain problems in the Church and expressing his desire to come to Rome.²⁶⁰ The Brethren in Rome welcomed Paul when he arrived.²⁶¹ In Rome, Paul followed his normal procedure with the normal results:

After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews,
and when they had gathered, he said to them,
"Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers,
yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. ..."

And they said to him,
"We have received no letters from Judea about you,
and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you.
But we desire to hear from you what your views are,
for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers.
From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God
and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the [nomos]²⁶² of Moses and from the Prophets.
And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.

And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after **Paul had made one statement:**

"The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

Go to this people, and say,
You will indeed hear but never understand,
and you will indeed see but never perceive.

For this people's heart has grown dull,
and with their ears they can barely hear,
and their eyes they have closed;
lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears
and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'
(citing Isaiah 6:9-10)

Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles;
they will listen."

(Acts 28:17, 21-28 ESV)

²⁵⁹ See Acts 2:10

²⁶⁰ See Romans 15:14-16, 22-24, 16:17-19

²⁶¹ See Acts 28:14b-15

²⁶² See footnote 4

A common theme throughout Paul's letters is salvation is only available by God's grace. No physical attribute of any human being can in any way put God in a position where he must grant eternal life to that person. **Eternal life is strictly the gift of God.** Race, position, status, wealth, even personal ethical and moral merit, cannot "earn" eternal life:

For I am not ashamed of **the gospel**, for it **is the power of God for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the **Jew** first **and** also to the **Greek**.

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and **circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit**, not by the letter.

... the righteousness of God **through faith [of] Jesus Christ** for all who believe.

For there is no distinction: for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God, **and are justified by his grace as a gift**, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ...

For if Abraham was **justified by works**, he has something to boast about, but **not before God**.

For what does the Scripture say?

"Abraham **believed God**, and **it was counted to him as righteousness**."
(citing Genesis 15:6)

What shall we say then? **Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!**

How can we who died to sin still live in it?

But now that **you have been set free from sin** and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

For the wages of sin is death, but **the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**.
(Romans 1:16, 2:28-29a, 3:22-24, 4:2-3, 6:1-2, 22-23 ESV)

There is no well-documented history, but there are legends and circumstantial evidence that **certain of the Apostles traveled east into the Parthian Empire and even as far as India**. The Gospel was in those location also preached to Gentiles and "Jews". Indeed **the Apostles did fulfill Jesus' Great Commission** to take the Gospel to the **"ends of the earth"**. The New Testament Church proliferated in the First Century. However, almost all the New Testament documents make it clear that **"heresy" was arising**. **The Adversary, Satan the Devil, moved quickly to corrupt the Gospel**. In the second century the corruption took over and by the time of the Council of Nicaea the process was complete. The **Church of Rome** had been utterly compromised and **now gained the ascendancy**. Vile doctrines such as "Sunday Worship" and the "Trinity" were enforced. The New Testament Church, the **True Church**, was forced underground. **God has maintained True Worshippers down through the centuries**, but soon with the **Second Advent**, the **Universal Saviour, Jesus Christ, will assume his position as King of kings**. The Kingdom of God will be established over the whole earth and **the Way of God will be taught to all peoples everywhere on the planet**:

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of [YHWH] as the waters cover the sea.
(Isaiah 11:9 ESV)

3.5 Wisdom Literature

The genre of "wisdom literature" is well represented in the Bible. There are occasional indicators as to the authors of some of the literature, but much of it is anonymous. Generally the "Sitz im Leben", the life situation, under which the literature arose is not clear. Similarly, the date at which many of the various pieces of literature were written, is also not clear. For discussion of these issues, see the commentaries and introductions.

The "wisdom literature" that we have in the Bible, as with all other parts of the Bible, was **produced under the inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit's working with the various authors**. This is the primary determinative in understanding the literature. Much of it is "poetic", so difficult to understand. Occasionally, passages have clearly suffered in transmission, again making understanding difficult. Where understanding is difficult, the primary exegetical rule is to **"let the Bible interpret the Bible"**. When properly understood, **no statement in the Bible is in contradiction with the rest of the Bible**. The message of the entire Bible must always be taken into account when analyzing the "wisdom literature".

3.5.1 The Book of Job

The Book of Job is one of the most enigmatic pieces of literature in existence. There are only questions about its provenance. **The basic message of the Book of Job is clear and simple:** Job was a righteous man,²⁶³ but he trusted in his own righteousness²⁶⁴ and did NOT see himself in proper relation to his Creator. When he came to this realization, he repented:

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but **now my eye sees you;**
therefore **I despise myself,** and repent in dust and ashes.
(Job 42:5-6 ESV)

The basic message is of course an object lesson for all True Worshipers of God. But **the genius of the Book of Job is the detailed argumentation contained in the various discourses.**²⁶⁵ Contained in these discourses is much wisdom regarding the Way of God.

3.5.1.1 Job – Living by the Way of God

The Book of Job is clear and specific that **Job is a True Worshiper of God.** The implication of this is that **the teaching in the Book of Job is intended for True Worshipers.** This is what the **Apostle Paul** meant when he commented on the Old Testament:

And [YHWH] said to Satan,
“Have you considered **my servant Job,** that there is none like him on the earth,
a **blameless** and **upright** man, who **fears God** and turns away from evil?”

After [YHWH] had spoken these words to Job, [YHWH] said to Eliphaz the Temanite:

“My anger burns against you and against your two friends,
for **you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.** ...
And **my servant Job shall pray for you,** for **I will accept his prayer**
not to deal with you according to your folly.

For you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.”

(Job 1:8, 42:7, 8b ESV see also 1:5, 20-22, 2:3, 10)

For **whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction,**
that through endurance and through the **encouragement of the Scriptures** we might have hope.
(Romans 15:4 ESV)

One of the objectives of living by the Way of God is to attain *mish^epatim* – “**godly understanding, wisdom, and discernment**”. The Book of Job contains one of the best definitions of “**wisdom and understanding**”:

But **where shall wisdom be found?** And **where is the place of understanding?**

Man does not know its worth, and it is not found in the land of the living.

The deep says, ‘It is not in me,’ and the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’

It cannot be bought for gold, and silver cannot be weighed as its price.

It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire.

Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold.

No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; **the price of wisdom is above pearls.**

The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold.

From where, then, does wisdom come? And **where is the place of understanding?**

It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air.

Abaddon²⁶⁶ and Death say, ‘We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.’

God understands the way to it, and he knows its place.

For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.

When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure,

when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder,

then **he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out.**

And **he said to man,**

Behold, **the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,**

and **to turn away from evil is understanding.**

(Job 28:12-28 ESV)

²⁶³ See Job 1:1,5,8,22, 2:3,10

²⁶⁴ See Job 32:1-2

²⁶⁵ For a detailed analysis of the discourses, see the paper “**The Book of Job**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

²⁶⁶ “Abaddon” means “destruction”, poetically “death”. It is used in parallel with “sh^eol”, “the grave”, in Job 26:6, Proverbs 15:11, and 27:20; with, “qever”, “grave” in Psalm 88:11; and, stand alone in Job 31:12; see TWOT article 2d pages 3-4.

“Wisdom” is defined as coming to a point in one’s life where **“fear of God”** is inherent – this can only happen by living by the Way of God. To have **“fear of God”** means to know God, to have proper **“reverence”** for God;²⁶⁷ and, **to be known by God**. A corollary of living by the Way of God is **“to turn away from evil”** – this is discussed in section **3.1.2 Rejecting the Way of the World**, which is defined as **“understanding”**. Although Job was a True Worshipper and had a lot of knowledge of God and the Way of God, **Job had to come to a point of truly having mish^epatim**.

Zophar the Naamathite challenges Job’s understanding:

But oh, that God would speak and open his lips to you,
and that **he would tell you the secrets of wisdom!**
For **he is manifold in understanding**.
(Job 11:5-6a ESV)

Job responds in defense:

No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you.
But **I have understanding** as well as you; I am not inferior to you.
Wisdom is with the aged, and understanding in length of days.
With God are wisdom and might; he has counsel **and understanding**.
(Job 12:2-3a, 12-13 ESV)

Eliphaz the Temanite also challenges Job:

Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind?
Have you listened in the council of God?
And **do you limit wisdom to yourself?**
What do you know that we do not know?
What do you understand that is not clear to us?
(Job 15:2, 8-9 ESV)

Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite similarly challenges Job:

... listen to me; be silent, and **I will teach you wisdom**.
Job speaks without knowledge; his words are without insight.
Job opens his mouth in empty talk; **he multiplies words without knowledge**.
I will get my knowledge from afar and ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
For truly my words are not false; **one who is perfect in knowledge** is with you.
Hear this, O Job; stop and consider **the wondrous works of God**.
Do you know the balancings of the clouds,
the wondrous works of him **who is perfect in knowledge** ...
(Job 33:33, 34:35, 35:16, 36:3-4, 37:14, 16 ESV)

Job was very sure of himself. He felt that he knew God and that God was accepting of his righteousness. The challenges by his compatriots troubled him:

This would be my comfort; I would even exult in pain unsparing,
for **I have not denied the words of the Holy One**.
I am a laughingstock to my friends;
I, who called to God and he answered me,
a just and blameless man, am a laughingstock.
As God lives, who has taken away my right, and the Almighty, who has made my [life] bitter,
as long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils,
my lips will not speak falsehood, and **my tongue will not utter deceit**.
Far be it from me to say that you are right;
till I die **I will not put away my integrity from me**.
I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go;
my heart does not reproach me for any of my days.
I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; **my [justness] (mish^epat)**²⁶⁸ was like a robe and a turban.
(Job 6:10, 12:4, 27:2-6, 29:14 ESV)

²⁶⁷ See **Excursus 5 – Reverence** נִיּוּן in the paper “True Worship of the True God” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

²⁶⁸ See footnote 71

Job even went so far as to think he could **justify himself by presenting a legal challenge to God**. In his challenge to God, Job is rightly conflicted because he feels God is his accuser, but he knows that God remains “judge” and “jury”. **Job appeals to God’s mercy but still attempts to justify himself:**

God will not turn back his anger;

How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him?

Though **I am in the right**, I cannot answer him;

I must appeal for mercy to my accuser.

For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that **we should come to trial together**.

There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both.

I will say to God, **Do not condemn me**; let me know why you contend against me.

... although **you know that I am not guilty**, and there is none to deliver out of your hand?

But I would speak to the Almighty, and **I desire to argue my case with God**.

Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet **I will argue my ways to his face**.

Behold, **I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be in the right**.

Even now, behold, **my witness is in heaven**, and he who testifies for me is on high.

Today also my complaint is bitter; my hand is heavy on account of my groaning.

Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!

I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments.

I would know what he would answer me and understand what he would say to me.

Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?

No; **he would pay attention to me**.

There **an upright man could argue with him**, and **I would be acquitted forever by my judge**.

(Job 9:13a, 14-15, 32-33, 10:2, 7, 13:3, 15, 18, 16:19, 23:2-7 ESV)

Job clearly felt that he was living by the Way of God. He was sure of his “righteousness”. But therein lay his problem: his success as a True Worshipper of God clouded his perception of the great gulf between God and man. **Job did not understand the Nature of God**.

3.5.1.2 Job Learns from General Revelation

Job was very aware that the greatness of God is manifest in the creation:²⁶⁹

... he who removes mountains, and they know it not, when he overturns them in his anger,

who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble;

who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars;

who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea;

who made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the chambers of the south;

who does great things beyond searching out, and marvelous things beyond number.

But **ask the beasts**, and **they will teach you**; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you;

or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

Who among all these does not know that **the hand of [YHWH] has done this?**

(Job 9:5-10, 12:7-9 ESV see also 22:12, 26:7-14)

General Revelation was the main thrust of Elihu’s final argument against Job:

Look at the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds, which are higher than you.

Behold, **God is great**, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable.

For he draws up the drops of water;

they distill his mist in rain, which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly.

Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion?

Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea.

Keep listening to the thunder of his voice and the rumbling that comes from his mouth.

Under the whole heaven he lets it go, and his lightning to the corners of the earth.

After it his voice roars; he thunders with his majestic voice,

and he does not restrain the lightnings when his voice is heard.

God thunders wondrously with his voice; **he does great things that we cannot comprehend**.

Hear this, O Job; **stop and consider the wondrous works of God**.

Do you know how God lays his command upon them and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine?

Do you know the balancings of the clouds, **the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge**,

you whose garments are hot when the earth is still because of the south wind?

Can you, like him, spread out the skies, hard as a cast metal mirror?

(Job 35:5, 36:26-30, 37:2-5, 14-18 ESV)

²⁶⁹ See section **3.2 General Revelation**

In the final discourse, the grand finale, when YHWH presents himself to Job, the whole argument centers around General Revelation:

Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone ...

Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb,
when I made clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band,
and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said,

‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed’?

Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion?

Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth²⁷⁰ in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children?

Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?

(Job 38:2, 4-6, 8-11, 31-33 ESV see also 38:12-30, 34-41, 39:1-30, 40:15-24, 41:1-34)

Given this demonstration of who God is, Job begins to see himself in true relation to the Great Creator.

His self assurance in his own righteousness is gone. He bows his head in shame over his presumption in thinking he could justify himself before God. He is ready now to learn *mish^epatim* from living by the Way of God:

And [YHWH] said to Job:

Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?

He who argues with God, let him answer it.

Then Job answered [YHWH] and said:

Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you?

I lay my hand on my mouth.

I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.

Then [YHWH] answered Job out of the whirlwind and said:

Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me.

Will you even put me in the wrong?

Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?

Have you an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like his?

Adorn yourself with majesty and dignity; clothe yourself with glory and splendor.

Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him.

Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand.

Hide them all in the dust together; bind their faces in the world below.

Then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can save you.

Then Job answered [YHWH] and said:

I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’

Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,

things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.’

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;

therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

And [YHWH] restored the fortunes of Job ...

And [YHWH] blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. ...

And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons’ sons, four generations.

And Job died, an old man, and full of days.

(Job 40:1-14, 42:1-6, 10a, 12a, 16-17 ESV)

Having a clear perception of who and what God is, is essential to attain to objectives of living by the Way of God. This understanding is the foundation of true repentance. Then a True Worshipper can go on to fully attain the *mish^epatim* that God requires.

²⁷⁰ Job 38:32 the Mazzaroth. This is a transliteration of a Hebrew word, otherwise unknown. In the context, it must refer to one of the constellations. (www.esv.org Footnote)

3.5.1.3 Finer Points on the Way of God

The Book of Job also contains many other discussions of the finer points of living by the Way of God.

Repentance

The compatriots of Job were all familiar with the concept of “repentance”, but they all looked at it as a means **to attain blessings in this physical life.** Consider the advice of Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite:

If you will seek God and **plead with the Almighty for mercy,**
if you are pure and upright,
surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation.
And though your beginning was small, **your latter days will be very great.**
If you **prepare your heart,** you will **stretch out your hands toward him.**
If **iniquity** is in your hand, **put it far away,** and let not injustice dwell in your tents.
Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish; **you will be secure and will not fear.**
You will forget your misery; you will remember it as waters that have passed away.
And **your life will be brighter than the noonday;** its darkness will be like the morning.
And you will feel secure, because there is hope; you will look around and take your rest in security.
You will lie down, and none will make you afraid; **many will court your favor.**
(Job 8:5-7, 11:13-19 ESV see also 22:21-23, 33:26-28)

In spite of their bad advice, Job came to true repentance.

The Metaphor of “Light”

See the discussion this metaphor in section **3.4.3.1 The Metaphor of “Light”** and in section **1.1.2 God is Light** in the paper “**Pillar One - The Nature of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresreach.ca. The Book of Job continues the metaphor using “light” to represent illumination from God. **Job acknowledges that he has been given “light”,** understanding of the Way of God, but in his misery, he cannot see the true value of it:

Why is **light** given to him who is in misery, and **life** to the bitter in [heart],
who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures,
who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave?
Why is **light** given to a man whose **way (derek) is hidden,** whom God has hedged in?
He uncovers the deeps out of darkness and **brings deep darkness to light.**
He makes nations great, and he destroys them; he enlarges nations, and leads them away.
He takes away **understanding** from the chiefs of the people of the earth
and makes them wander in a trackless waste.
They grope in the dark without light, and he makes them stagger like a drunken man.
Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days **when God watched over me,**
when **his lamp** shone upon my head, and **by his light I walked** through darkness ...
But when I hoped for **good,** evil came, and when I waited for **light,** darkness came.
(Job 3:20-23, 12:22-25, 29:2-3, 30:26 ESV see also 17:12, 18:5-6, 18, 22:28, 24:13, 33:28-30)

Life is Short

Job on several occasions muses on the brevity of human life – without the hope of the resurrection (see section **3.3.4.2 Job Explores the Concept of the Resurrection**), life is very futile:

My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle and **come to their end without hope.**
Remember that **my life is a breath;** my eye will never again see good.
For we are but of yesterday and know nothing, for **our days on earth are a shadow.**
Man who is born of a woman is **few of days** and full of trouble.
Since **his days are determined,** and the number of his months is with you,
and **you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass ...**
(Job 7:6-7, 8:9, 14:1, 5 ESV see also 9:25-26, 10:20, 13:28, 14:20-21, 16:22)

Life is Hard

Human life is NOT easy, **especially for True Worshipers of God.** God’s message is that there is a purpose for this life – it is NOT an end in itself:

Has not man a hard service on earth, and are not his days like the days of a hired hand?
Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like a hired hand who looks for his wages ...
What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him,
visit him every morning and **test him every moment?**

How long will you not look away from me, nor leave me alone till I swallow my spit?

If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind?

Why have you made me your mark? Why have I become a burden to you?

I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint;

I will speak in the bitterness of my [heart].

I will say to God, Do not condemn me; **let me know why you contend against me**.

Does it seem good to you to oppress, to despise the work of your hands
and favor the designs of the wicked?

Have you eyes of flesh?²⁷¹ Do you see as man sees?

Are your days as the days of man, or your years as a man's years,

that **you seek out my iniquity** and search for my sin ...

Man is also rebuked with pain on his bed and with continual strife in his bones,

so that his life loathes bread, and his appetite the choicest food.

His flesh is so wasted away that it cannot be seen, and his bones that were not seen stick out.

His [life] draws near the pit, and his life to those who bring death.

... **then man prays to God**, and he accepts him;

he sees his face with a shout of joy, and **he restores to man his righteousness**.²⁷²

(Job 7:1-2, 17-20, 10:1-6, 33:19-22, 26 ESV see also 9:21, 30:16-31)

The Wicked DO Prosper in This Life:

People who “play by the rules” of this world can and do succeed in this world. **God is NOT dealing with these people**. Their time is yet to come:

The earth is given into the hand of the wicked;

In the thought of **one who is at ease** there is contempt for misfortune;

The tents of robbers are at peace, and **those who provoke God are secure** ...

Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power?

Their offspring are established in their presence, and their descendants before their eyes.

Their houses are safe from fear, and **no rod of God is upon them**.

Their bull breeds without fail; their cow calves and does not miscarry.

They send out their little boys like a flock, and their children dance.

They sing to the tambourine and the lyre and rejoice to the sound of the pipe.

They spend their days in **prosperity**, and in **peace** they go down to [the grave].

They say to God,

‘Depart from us! **We do not desire the knowledge of your ways (dere)**.

What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?

And what profit do we get if we pray to him?’

Do you not know this from of old, since man was placed on earth,

that **the exulting of the wicked is short**, and the joy of the godless but for a moment?

This is the wicked man's portion from God, the heritage decreed for him by God.

(Job 9:24a, 12:5a, 6a, 21:7-15, 20:4-5, 29 ESV see also 22:17-18, 24:1-25, 11:20, 36:6, 40:12)

Righteous Acts

Although **Eliphaz the Temanite**, in his first speech, flatteringly commends Job for his “righteous acts”, by his third speech Eliphaz revilingly accuses Job of gross wickedness:

Behold, you have **instructed many**, and you have **strengthened the weak** hands.

Your words have **upheld him** who was stumbling, and you have **made firm** the feeble knees.

Is not your evil abundant? There is no end to your iniquities.

For you have **exacted pledges** of your brothers for nothing and **stripped the naked** of their clothing.

You have given **no water to the weary** to drink, and you have **withheld bread** from the hungry.

The man with power **possessed the land**, and the favored man lived in it.

You have **sent widows away** empty, and the arms of the **fatherless were crushed**.

(Job 4:3-4, 22:5-9 ESV)

Indeed, **Job's problem was that he trusted in his own righteousness**. He had done manifold righteous acts and was confident that his actions made him “**good with God**” and therefore he was in line for “**salvation**”:

Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days **when God watched over me**,

when **his lamp shone upon my head**, and **by his light I walked** through darkness,

²⁷¹ Here Job foreshadows one of the reasons why the Divine Being known as YHWH had to become a human being.

²⁷² This is an allusion to the resurrection.

as I was in my prime, when **the friendship of God was upon my tent,**
when the Almighty was yet with me ...

... **because** I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him.
The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me,
and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; **my [justness] (mish^epat)**²⁷³ was like a robe and a turban.
I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.
I was a father to the needy, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know.
I broke the fangs of the unrighteous and made him drop his prey from his teeth.
(Job 29:2-5a, 12-17 ESV)

The “three friends” all recognize Job’s self righteousness as a problem, but none of them can see the cause of the problem – Job does NOT see himself in true relation to God. They all assume he has some hidden grievous sin for which his self righteousness is a cover:

Is not your fear of God your confidence, and **the integrity of your ways (derek) your hope?**

Can mortal man be in the right before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker?

As for me, I would **seek God,** and to God would I commit my cause ...

How long will you say these things, and the words of your mouth be a great wind?

Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right?

If you will **seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy,**

if you are pure and upright,

surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation.

And though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great.

For you say, ‘My doctrine is pure, and **I am clean in God’s eyes.’**

But oh, that God would speak and open his lips to you,

and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom! For he is manifold in understanding.

Know then that **God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.**

Can a man be profitable to God? Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself.

Is it any pleasure to the Almighty if you are in the right,

or **is it gain to him if you make your ways (derek) blameless?**²⁷⁴

Is it for your fear of him that he reproves you and enters into judgment with you?

Is not your evil abundant? There is no end to your iniquities.

(Job 4:6, 17, 5:8, 8:2-3, 5-7, 11:4-6, 22:2-5 ESV see also 15:2-6, 25:4-6)

It is finally Elihu who identifies the cause of the problem:

I gave you²⁷⁵ my attention, and, behold,

there was none among you who refuted Job or who answered his words.

You²⁷⁶ say,

‘I am pure, without transgression; I am clean, and there is no iniquity in me.

Behold, he finds occasions against me, he counts me as his enemy,

he puts my feet in the stocks and watches all my paths (‘orah).’

Behold, **in this you are not right.** I will answer you, for **God is greater than man.**

Of a truth, God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice.

Who gave him charge over the earth, and who laid on him the whole world?

If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath,

all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust.

For **his eyes are on the ways (derek) of a man,** and **he sees all his steps.**

Do you think this to be just? **Do you say,** ‘It is my right before God,’

that you ask,

‘What advantage have I? **How am I better off than if I had sinned?**’

I will answer you and your friends with you.

Look at the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds, which are higher than you.

If you have sinned, **what do you accomplish against him?**

And if your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to him?

If you are righteous, what do you give to him?

Or **what does he receive from your hand?**

²⁷³ See footnote 71

²⁷⁴ Here Eliphaz come close to understanding the problem, but he still CANNOT see the cause – he continues to attribute Job’s “self righteousness” to hidden sin.

²⁷⁵ Speaking to the “three friends”, see 32:3,6-11

²⁷⁶ Speaking to Job, see 33:1

Your wickedness²⁷⁷ concerns a man like yourself, and your righteousness a son of man.
(Job 32:12, 33:9-12, 34:12-15, 21, 35:2-8 ESV)

Elihu rightly deduces that nothing a man can do affects God. No amount of sin can harm God and no amount of “human righteousness” can put a person “in good” with God. **God is sovereign.** Salvation is purely God’s gift at his sovereign discretion.

Discipline of God

In his anguish, Job expresses his despair that God himself is the cause of his suffering. This is the universal conundrum of this world: **why does God allow suffering?** It is clear from the prologue that Satan is the direct cause of Job’s suffering.²⁷⁸ Human beings are NOT privy to the goings-on of eternity. **The direct cause of all the suffering in the world is Satan the Devil,** but **God allows it.** Human beings have chosen the way of sin and death – suffering is part of that. **With True Worshipers, like Job, God allows suffering to teach that this life is NOT an end in itself** – the purpose of this life is to learn the Way of God. Job begins to express some understanding of this:

If I speak, my pain is not assuaged, and if I forbear, how much of it leaves me?

Surely now **God has worn me out**; he has made desolate all my company.

And **he has shriveled me up**, which is a witness against me,
and my leanness has risen up against me; it testifies to my face.

He has torn me in his wrath and hated me; he has gnashed his teeth at me;
my adversary²⁷⁹ sharpens his eyes against me.

... know then that **God has put me in the wrong** and closed his net about me.

Behold, I cry out, ‘Violence!’ but I am not answered; I call for help, but **there is no justice.**

He has walled up my way (‘orah), so that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness upon my paths (n^ethivah).

He has stripped from me my glory and taken the crown from my head.

He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone, and my hope has been pulled up like a tree.

He has kindled his wrath against me and **counts me as his adversary²⁸⁰.**

His troops come on together;

they have cast up their siege ramp against me and encamp around my tent.

But he is unchangeable, and **who can turn him back?**

What he desires, that he does.

For **he will complete what he appoints for me**, and many such things are in his mind.

Therefore **I am terrified** at his presence; when I consider, **I am in dread** of him.

God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me;

(Job 16:6-9, 19:6-12, 23:13-16 ESV see also 5:17-18, 9:17-19, 13:21, 30:19-23, 33:10-11, 19-21)

The Way of God and Eternal life

Job’s quest into the nature of the resurrection was discussed in section **3.3.4.2 Job Explores the Concept of the Resurrection**. Clearly the concept of eternal life was on Job’s mind.²⁸¹ Also on Job’s mind was the contrast between the Way of God and the way of the world. Job grappled with the fact that living by the Way of God was prerequisite to being considered a candidate for eternal life, but **in no sense does living by the Way of God put God into a position where God must grant eternal life to any person.**

Job is adamant that he has lived by the Way of God:

But **he knows the way(derek) that I take**; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.

My foot has held fast to his steps; **I have kept his way(derek)** and have not turned aside.

I have not departed from **the commandment** of his lips;

I have treasured **the words** of his mouth more than my portion of food.

Does not he see my ways(derek) and number all my steps?

If I have walked with falsehood and my foot has hastened to deceit;

(Let me be weighed in a just balance, and **let God know my integrity!**)

if my step has turned aside from the way(derek) and my heart has gone after my eyes,

and if any spot has stuck to my hands,

then let me sow, and another eat, and let what grows for me be rooted out.

(Job 23:10-12, 31:4-8 ESV)

²⁷⁷ Job’s “wickedness” is that he does not see himself in proper relation to God.

²⁷⁸ See Job 1:9-12, 2:3-6

²⁷⁹ The Hebrew word is **צָר** - tzar, it means “adversary”, “enemy” as in battle. It is distinct from **שָׂטָן** - satan, the appellative of Satan the Devil.

²⁸⁰ See previous footnote.

²⁸¹ See Ecclesiastes 3:11

In spite of his integrity, i.e., understanding and livening by the Way of God, Job is perplexed by his suffering until the very end:

Why is light given to a man whose way (derek) is hidden, whom God has hedged in?

For my sighing comes instead of my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water.

For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me.

I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; **I have no rest**, but trouble comes.

If I say, **'I will forget my complaint**, I will put off my sad face, and be of good cheer,'

I become afraid of all my suffering, for I know you will not hold me innocent.

I shall be condemned; **why then do I labor in vain?**

If I wash myself with snow and cleanse my hands with lye, **yet you will plunge me into a pit** ...

(Job 3:23-26, 9:27-31a ESV)

It is **Elihu the Buzite** who cuts through the confusion, identifying God's sovereignty in assessing human actions. **Life and death are in God's hands**. Eternal life, salvation, is his free gift at his sovereign discretion:

Behold, **God is exalted** in his power; who is a teacher like him?

Who has prescribed for him his way (derek), or who can say, 'You have done wrong'?

Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding:

Far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong.

For according to the work of a man he will repay him,

and **according to his ways (derek) he will make it befall him**.

For **his eyes are on the ways (derek) of a man**, and he sees all his steps.

Thus, knowing their works, he overturns them in the night, and they are crushed.

He strikes them for their wickedness in a place for all to see,

because **they turned aside from following him** and **had no regard for any of his ways (derek)** ...²⁸²

The Spirit of God has made me, and **the breath of the Almighty gives me life**.

... and he is merciful to him, and says,

'Deliver him from going down into the pit; **I have found a ransom**,'²⁸³

let his flesh become fresh with youth;

let him return to the days of his youthful vigor';

then man prays to God, and he accepts him;

he sees his face²⁸⁴ **with a shout of joy**, and **he restores to man his righteousness**.²⁸⁵

He sings before men and says:

'I sinned and perverted what was right, and it was not repaid to me.

He has redeemed my [life] from going down into the pit,

and **my life shall look upon the light**.'

Behold, God does all these things, twice, three times, with a man,²⁸⁶

to bring back his [life] from the pit,²⁸⁷ that **he may be lighted with the light of life**.²⁸⁸

(Job 36:22-23, 34:10-11, 21, 25-27, 33:4, 24-30 ESV)

Pondering the words of Elihu, do doubt, helped prepare Job for the words of YHWH. Note that in the final summation, Elihu is NOT included in the castigation of the "three friends". This would indicate that indeed **YHWH acknowledged that Elihu had some true insight into the Way of God**.

3.5.2 The Psalms

The Psalms in general have been discussed in some detail in section **5. The Davidic Psalms** and in **Excursus 5 – Notes on the Davidic Psalms**, both in the paper "**David - A Man After My Own Heart**", and in **Excursus 7 - Analysis of Non-Davidic Psalms** in the paper "**The Writings of Moses**"; both papers are located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca. This section of the current paper focuses on certain aspects of the Psalms the relate directly to the **Way of God**.

The literary genre of "psalm" was created by King David under inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit. The spiritual content of the Psalms is beyond expression. As such, the Psalms almost qualify as "a

²⁸² Rejecting the Way of God results in rejection by God.

²⁸³ Foreshadowing to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

²⁸⁴ This occurs at the resurrection.

²⁸⁵ Human beings can be "truly righteous" only by admittance to the God Family through the resurrection of the dead.

²⁸⁶ This is the "Christian life" – God is patient as we learn the Way of God.

²⁸⁷ The "pit" is the grave – the dead will be restored to life.

²⁸⁸ This implies eternal life.

great period of revelation”; but, since about a half the Psalms are non-Davidic, many are anonymous, and the dates of composition are unknown, it is best to just treat them as a heterogeneous corpus.

3.5.2.1 Davidic Psalms

David echoes the previous usage of *derek* and *’orah* to describe the life of a True Worshipper. David was keenly aware of his responsibility to pass on the knowledge of God that was given to him. David explores the concept of “righteousness” in relation to the Way of God.

David’s Use of *derek* and *’orah*

David sums up his relationship with God in the 25th and 139th Psalms:

Make me to know your ways (derek), [YHWH]; **teach me your paths (’orah)**.

Lead me in your truth and **teach me**, for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.

Remember your mercy, [YHWH], and your [hesed], for they have been from of old.

Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your [hesed] remember me, for the sake of your goodness, [YHWH]!

Good and upright is [YHWH]; therefore **he instructs sinners in the way (derek)**.

He leads the humble in what is right, and **teaches the humble his way (derek)**.

All **the paths (’orah) of [YHWH]** are **[hesed] and faithfulness**,
for those who **keep his covenant and his testimonies (’eduth)**.

(Psalm 25:4-10 ESV)

[YHWH], **you have searched me and known me!**

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

You search out my path (’orah) and my lying down **and are acquainted with all my ways (derek)**.

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, [YHWH], you know it altogether.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

If I would count them, they are more than the sand.

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

And **see if there be any grievous way (derek) in me**, and **lead me in the way (derek) everlasting!**

(Psalm 139:1-4, 17-18a, 23-24 ESV)

David implores God to instruct him in the Way of God, “**make me to know your ways**”, “**teach me your paths**”. David comes to God in repentance, “**remember not the sins**”, and pleads for forgiveness, “**remember your mercy**”. David acknowledges that all humans have sinned, “**he instructs sinners in the way**”. David recognizes the need for humility to learn the Way of God, “**teaches the humble his way**”. David defines the Way of God, “**the paths of YHWH**”, as faithfully adhering to the Teaching of God, “**[hesed and faithfulness]**”, to “**keep his covenant and his testimonies**”.

The 139th Psalm seems to have been written late in life when David reflected back on the understanding God had given him. David acknowledges that God has tirelessly worked with him, “**you have searched me and known me**”. David’s life is now lined with the Way of God, “**you search out my path**”, “**and are acquainted with all my ways**”. David rejoices in the precious knowledge he has, “**how precious to me are your thoughts**”, and implores God to perform any needed refining, “**try me and know my thoughts**”, “**see if there be any grievous way in me**”. David knows that the Way of God is the way of eternal life, “**lead me in the way everlasting**”.

Proclaim the Way of God

During his life, as he was learning to live by the Way of God, **David recognized that the *mish’atim*, the godly understanding, wisdom, and discernment, given to him was NOT solely for his benefit.** Repeatedly, **David acknowledged his responsibility to proclaim the Way of God to others.** God required David to pass on the Teaching of God, as God today requires True Worshipers to do. This need of David’s to teach the Way of God was very likely the motivation which caused him to develop the literary genre “psalm”:

Blessed is the **one whose transgression is forgiven**, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man against whom [YHWH] counts no iniquity, and **in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

I will instruct you and teach you in the way (derek) you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Oh, fear [YHWH], you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!
Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of [YHWH].

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Many will see and fear, and put their trust in [YHWH].

You have multiplied, [YHWH] my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you!

I will proclaim and tell of them, yet they are more than can be told.

Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways (derek), and sinners will return to you.

(Psalms 32:1-2, 8, 34:9, 11, 40:3, 5, 51:6, 13 ESV)

The two most common Hebrew words for an “assembly” or “congregation” are עֵדָה - `edah²⁸⁹ and קָהָל - qahal.²⁹⁰ Both can be used for religious and non-religious assemblies.²⁹¹ David uses both for something translated as “the congregation” or “the great congregation”. This is clearly an assembly which included religious purposes and at which True Worshipers were present:

I will tell of your name to my brothers;

in the midst of the congregation (qahal) I will praise you:

You who fear [YHWH], praise him!

All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted,

and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation (qahal rav);²⁹²

my vows I will perform before those who fear him.

The afflicted shall seat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise [YHWH]!

May your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to [YHWH],

and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.

For kingship belongs to [YHWH], and he rules over the nations.

All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;

before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive.

Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;

they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

(Psalm 22:22-31 ESV see also 26:12, 35:18, 68:26)²⁹³

David is clearly alluding to a public situation, “the congregation”, “great congregation”, where he is teaching True Worshipers, “my brothers”, “you who fear”²⁹⁴ YHWH, “the afflicted”,²⁹⁵ “those who seek him”. David affirms his commitment to teach the Way of God, “my vows I will perform before those who fear him”. David expresses his objective in teaching, that his hearers will learn to live by the Way of God and thus be considered candidates for eternal life, “may your hearts live forever”. David then looks to the “Messianic Kingdom”, the World Tomorrow, when all nations will be ruled by the Kingdom of God and all people will worship the True God, “all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to YHWH”, “kingship belongs to YHWH”, “before him shall bow all”. Finally, David returns to “teaching”, where he hopes his contribution, “the Psalms”, will contribute to the ongoing promulgation of the knowledge of God, “it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation”, and the Way of God will be universal, “he has done it”.

²⁸⁹ See Holladay page 265; **TWOT** article 878a page 388

²⁹⁰ See Holladay pages 314-315; **TWOT** 1991a page 790

²⁹¹ See Psalms 7:7, 22:16, 26:5, 68:30, 86:14

²⁹² The word רַב - rav carries a range of meaning including “great”, “numerous”, “much”, “many”; see Holladay page 330.

²⁹³ The word, מַקְהֵל - maq’hel, “great assembly”, is used only in Psalms 26:12 and 68:26; see Holladay page 211.

²⁹⁴ The word “fear” is translated from יָרֵא - yare, “reverence” is better translation; see the discussion in **Excursus 5 – Reverence** יָרֵא in the paper “**True Worship of the True God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

²⁹⁵ The phrase “the afflicted” is commonly used by David to designate True Worshipers; it is from the word אָנָוָה - anaw; see the discussion in section **5.2 The Human Condition** in the paper “**David - A Man After My Own Heart**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

In the 40th Psalm, David expresses his thanks to God for the privilege of having been able to promulgate the teaching of the Way of God:

(8) **I delight to do your will**, O my God; **your [torah]**²⁹⁶ **is within my heart**.

(9) I have told **the glad news of deliverance** in the **great congregation (qhal rav)**;

behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, [YHWH].

(10) I have not hidden **your deliverance** within my heart;

I have spoken of **your faithfulness** and **your salvation**;

I have not concealed **your [hesed]** and **your faithfulness** from the **great congregation (qahal rav)**.

(11) As for you, [YHWH], you will not restrain your mercy from me;

your [hesed] and **your faithfulness will ever preserve me!**

(Psalm 40:8-11 ESV)

David is overjoyed at the opportunity God has given to him, “**I delight to do your will**”. David is thankful that God has led him to conversion, “**your torah is within my heart**”. This has allowed David to proclaim the Way of God in the “**great congregation**” and have his teaching forever preserved in the Psalms.

David has brought “**the glad news of deliverance**”, the message of “**your salvation**”. In the end David trusts in the hope of eternal life, “**your faithfulness will ever preserve me**”.

The above translation, from the ESV, requires some explanation. In verse 9, the phrase “**I have told the glad news of deliverance**” is from:

בְּשִׂרְתִּי צֶדֶק
tzedek bissar^eti

Literally: “**I have told news righteousness**”

The verb בָּשַׂר - basar, means “bring news”, “publish”.²⁹⁷ The noun צֶדֶק - tzedek, is normally translated “righteousness”.²⁹⁸ In verse 10, tzedek is again translated “deliverance”. In verse 10, “your salvation” is translated from תְּשׁוּעָה - t^eshu`ah, one of the normal words for “spiritual salvation”.²⁹⁹ David is clearly focussing on the “good news” he is proclaiming – the teaching of God, the *torah*. The Way of God leads to conversion. Conversion makes possible “salvation”. **David is clearly using “tzedek” metaphorically** – God’s righteousness is NOT “news”, it is a well-established character attribute of God. **The possibility of spiritual salvation through the Way of God is “good news”**. Salvation is a corollary of God’s *hesed*, “covenant love”, and his “faithfulness”, his unfailing commitment perform his side of a “covenant”. The translation of “deliverance” for tzedek is therefore reasonable – the end result of living by the Way of God, if God see fit to grant the gift of eternal life, is to be made “righteous”, “holy”, to have inherent “righteousness”.

David Explores “Righteousness”

The masculine noun, צֶדֶק - tzedek, and the feminine noun, צִדְקָה - tz^edaqah, both carry a range of meaning including “justice”, “rightness”, “**righteousness**”. The adjective, צַדִּיק - tzaddiq, carries a range of meaning including “just”, “lawful”, “**righteous**”. The root verb is צָדַק - tzadeq, “be just”, “be right” “**be righteous**”.³⁰⁰ David uses all these words many times. David’s interest in these words is how they relate to human beings. “Righteousness” is essentially the same as “holiness”. Only God is holy. **As human beings we cannot be holy until we are transformed into spirit beings – we cannot be truly righteous**. David is clear and specific on this:

Hear my prayer, [YHWH]; give ear to my pleas for mercy!

In your faithfulness answer me, **in your righteousness (tz^edaqah)!**

Enter not into judgment with your servant, for **no one living is righteous (tzadeq) before you**.

(Psalm 143:1-2 ESV)

²⁹⁶ See footnote 11

²⁹⁷ See Holladay pages 50-51; **TWOT** article 291 pages 135-136

²⁹⁸ See ESV footnote; NIV, NEB; see the discussion in section **Righteousness צֶדֶק – tzadaq** in the paper “**First Pillar - The Nature of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

²⁹⁹ See **TWOT** article 929 pages 414-416

³⁰⁰ See **TWOT** article 1879 pages 752-755; for a discussion of these words in relation to God see section **1.4.3 Attributes of God’s Character** in the paper “**First Pillar - The Nature of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

But clearly, there is some aspect of “righteousness” that human beings can attain, or at least can strive to attain. **David frequently alludes to his own righteousness.** The question is what exactly does he mean by his own righteousness:

Answer me when I call, **O God of my righteousness (tzedek)**!

You have given me relief when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

[YHWH] judges the peoples;

judge me, [YHWH], **according to my righteousness (tzedeq)** and according to the integrity that is in me.

[YHWH] dealt with me **according to my righteousness (tzedek)**;

according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me.

Let those who delight in **my righteousness** shout for joy and be glad ...

(Psalms 4:1, 7:8, 18:20, 35:27a ESV)

David frequently uses the appellative “**the righteous**” for True Worshipers:

Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end,

and may you **establish the righteous (tzaddiq)**—

you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous (tzaddiq) God!

[YHWH] **tests the righteous (tz`daqah)** ...

The eyes of [YHWH] are toward **the righteous (tzaddiq)** and his ears toward their cry.

When **the righteous**³⁰¹ cry for help, [YHWH] hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.

[YHWH] is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Many are the afflictions of **the righteous (tzaddiq)**, but [YHWH] delivers him out of them all.

Better is the little that **the righteous (tzaddiq)** has than the abundance of many wicked.

For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but [YHWH] upholds **the righteous (tzaddiq)**.

The righteous (tzaddiq) shall inherit the [earth] (‘eret) and dwell upon it forever.

The mouth of **the righteous (tzaddiq)** utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks [justly] (mish`pat).³⁰²

(Psalms 7:9, 11:5a, 34:15, 17-19, 37:16-17, 29-30 ESV)

see also 37:21, 25, 52:6, 58:10, 64:10, 140:13, 141:5, 142:7)

David is clear and specific that God is truly righteous:

God is a righteous (tzaddiq) judge, and a God who feels indignation every day.

I will give to [YHWH] the thanks **due to his righteousness (tzedek)**,

and I will sing praise to the name of [YHWH], the Most High.

Vindicate me, [YHWH], my God, **according to your righteousness (tzedek)** ...

Then my tongue shall **tell of your righteousness (tzedek)** and of your praise all the day long.

Your [hesed], [YHWH], extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

Your righteousness (tz`daqah) is like the mountains of God;

[YHWH] is righteous (tzaddiq) in all his ways and kind in all his works.

(Psalms 7:11, 17, 35:24a, 28, 36:5-6a, 143:17 ESV see also 51:14)

David makes the point that **God loves righteousness and leads True Worshipers into righteousness:**

For **[YHWH] is righteous (tzaddiq)**;

he loves righteous (tz`daqah) deeds;

the upright shall behold his face.

[YHWH] is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my [life].

He leads me in paths (ma`gal)³⁰³ **of righteousness (tzedek)** for his name’s sake.

In you, [YHWH], do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame;

in your righteousness (tz`daqah) deliver me!

Blessed is **the one you choose** and bring near, to dwell in your courts!

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!

By awesome deeds **you answer us with righteousness (tzedek)**, O God of our salvation (yesha`),³⁰⁴

the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas;

(Psalms 11:7, 23:1-3, 31:1, 65:4-5 ESV)

³⁰¹ Supplied by translator.

³⁰² See footnote 71

³⁰³ See footnote 197

³⁰⁴ The word, יְשׁוּעָה - yesha`, is one of the normal words for “spiritual salvation”; See **TWOT** article 929 pages 414-416.

When a True Worshipper is **striving to live by the Way of God**, and therefore does what is right before God and towards other human beings, **God considers that person to be acting “righteously”**:

Lead me, [YHWH], in your righteousness (tz^edaqah) because of my enemies;
make your way (derek) straight before me.

[YHWH], who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?

He who walks blamelessly and does what is right (tzedek) and speaks truth in his heart;

He will receive blessing from [YHWH]

and **righteousness (tz^edaqah) from the God of his salvation (yesha^h).**

[YHWH] works righteousness (tz^edaqah) and [mish^epatim]³⁰⁵ for all who are oppressed.

He made known his ways (derek) to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

[YHWH] is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in [hesed].

But [hesed] of [YHWH] is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him,

and **his righteousness (tz^edaqah) to children’s children,**

to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

(Psalm 5:8, 15:1-2, 24:5, 103:6-8, 17-18 ESV)

Finally, after **learning to Live by the Way of God** and thus becoming a candidate for eternal life, if God see fit to grant the gift of eternal life, **a True Worshipper will attain the resurrection of the dead;** and thus **become truly “righteous”**:

For you have maintained my just cause;

you have sat on the throne, **giving righteous (tzedek) judgment.**

You have rebuked the nations; you have made the wicked perish;

you have blotted out their name forever and ever.

But **[YHWH] sits enthroned forever;** he has established his throne for justice (mish^epat),

and **he judges the world with righteousness (tzedek);** he judges the peoples with uprightness.

And **those who know your name** put their trust in you,

for you, [YHWH], have not forsaken **those who seek you.**

Be gracious to me, [YHWH]! ... that I may recount all your praises,

that in the gates of the daughter of Zion **I may rejoice in your salvation (y^eshu^h’ah).**³⁰⁶

For you will not abandon my [life] to [the grave], or let your holy one see corruption.

You make known to me the path (’orah) of life;

in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures **forevermore.**

Hear a just cause (tzedek), [YHWH]; attend to my cry!

Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit!

From your presence let my vindication come!

Let your eyes behold the right (mesharim).³⁰⁷

You have tried my heart, you have visited me by night, you have tested me, and you will find nothing;

I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress.

My steps have held fast to your paths (ma^egal);³⁰⁸ my feet have not slipped.

As for me, **I shall behold your face in righteousness (tzedek);**

when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

Commit your way (derek) to [YHWH]; trust in him, and he will act.

He will bring forth your righteousness (tzedek) as the light,

and your [justness] (mish^epat) as the noonday.

The steps of a man are established by [YHWH], **when he delights in his way (derek);**

Wait for [YHWH] and keep his way (derek), and he will exalt you to inherit the [earth] (’aretz);

The salvation (t^eshu^h’ah) of the righteous (tzaddiq) is from [YHWH];

(Psalms 9:4-5, 7-8, 10, 13a, 14, 16:10-11, 17:1-3, 5, 15, 37:5-6, 23, 34a, 39a ESV)

David of course discusses many other “finer” points of the Way of God. To discuss them all would be repetitious. The reader is encouraged to study the Davidic Psalms with a view to gaining further insight into the Way of God.

³⁰⁵ See footnote 13

³⁰⁶The word, יְשׁוּעָה - y^eshu^h’ah, is one of the normal words for “spiritual salvation”; See **TWOT** article 929 pages 414-416.

³⁰⁷ The word, מִישְׁפָּטִים - mesharim, “level way”, “with justice”, “uprightness”, carries a range of meaning more or less overlapping *tzedeq*; see Holladay page 193.

³⁰⁸ See footnote 197

3.5.2.2 Non-Davidic Psalms

The non-Davidic Psalms in general echo the themes set by David. They were written over a long period of time³⁰⁹ and reflect the views of many authors. **The First Psalm is anonymous.** It may well have been composed explicitly as an introduction to the Psalter, as a whole, or to some portion of it. **It emphasizes the need for True Worshipers to live by the Way of God**, which if there were one overall theme of the Psalms, that would be it:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands **in the way (derek) of sinners**, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but **his delight is in the [torah]**³¹⁰ of [YHWH], and on his [torah] he meditates day and night.
Therefore the wicked will not stand [with the just],³¹¹
nor sinners in **the congregation ('edah) of the righteous (tzaddiq);**
for [YHWH] knows the way (derek) of the righteous (tzaddiq),
but the way (derek) of the wicked will perish.
(Psalm 1:1-2, 5-6 ESV)

The 119th Psalm is a unique piece of literature. It is the largest and most complete Hebrew acrostic in existence. It is focused around one theme, taken from the First Psalm, **to extoll the Teaching of God**, the *torah*, **which defines the Way of God**. Each verse in some way either directly or indirectly alludes to the Teaching of God. Each “stanza” has an overall sub-theme – the three most common sub-themes are:

- **“the Way of God”** (א, ב, ה, ו, ז, ח, and ט);
- **“trust in God”** (ל, י, י, ס, ק, ר, and ת); and
- **“salvation”** (ד, ו, כ, ע, and ש).

Consider some examples of the theme **“the Way of God”**:

Stanza “Aleph” א

Blessed are those whose way (derek) is blameless, who walk in the [torah] of [YHWH]!
Blessed are those who keep his **testimonies ('eduth)**, who seek him with their whole heart,
who also do no wrong, but **walk in his ways (derek)**!
You have commanded your **precepts** to be kept diligently.
Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your **statutes**!
Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your **commandments**.
I will praise you with an upright heart, when I learn **your righteous (tzedek) [mish*patim]**.³¹²
I will keep your **statutes**; do not utterly forsake me!
(Psalm 119:1-8 ESV)

Stanza “He” ה

Teach me, [YHWH], the way (derek) of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end.
Give me understanding, that I may keep your [torah] and observe it with my whole heart.
Lead me in **the path (nathiv)**³¹³ of your **commandments**, for I delight in it.
Incline my heart to your **testimonies ('eduth)**, and not to selfish gain!
Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and **give me life in your ways (derek)**.
Confirm to your servant **your promise**, that you may be feared.
Turn away the reproach that I dread, **for your [mish*patim] are good**.
Behold, I long for your **precepts**; **in your righteousness (tz*daqah) give me life!**
(Psalm 119:33-40 ESV)

Stanza “Mem” מ

Oh how I love your [torah]! It is my meditation all the day.
Your **commandment** makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.
I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your **testimonies ('eduth)** are my meditation.
I understand more than the aged, for I keep your **precepts**.
I hold back my feet from every evil way ('orah), in order to keep **your word**.
I do not turn aside from your [mish*patim], for you have taught me.

³⁰⁹ For example, Psalm 137 is clearly exilic; post-exilic dates have been proposed for others.

³¹⁰ See footnote 11

³¹¹ The Hebrew is בִּמְשַׁפָּת - bimmish*pat, “with the mish*pat”; parallelism requires *mish*pat* to be a substantive for a person; therefore “the just”.

³¹² See footnote 13

³¹³ The word, נַתִּיב -nathiv, “path”, is a lesser used synonym of *orah*; see Holladay page 249.

How sweet are **your words** to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way ('orah).
(Psalm 119:97-104 ESV)

Psalms of the Sons of Korah

There are ten Psalms ascribed to the “Sons of Korah”. “Korah” was a Levite descended from Kohath ben Levi.³¹⁴ Korah was involved in a rebellion against Moses in the wilderness and died, but not all his sons died.³¹⁵ The clans of Kohath had originally been assigned the work of carrying the holy items of the Tabernacle.³¹⁶ David assigned the “sons of Korah” to work as **“singers” at the Tabernacle and the tent where the Ark of Covenant resided**.³¹⁷ After the exile, the “sons of Korah” were assigned the work of **“gatekeepers”**.³¹⁸ At some point these Psalms were composed and ascribed to this group. These Psalms exhibit a **deep sense of seeking to serve God, live by the Way of God, and teach the Way of God**.

The **Psalmist of the 42nd Psalm** is in absentia from his Temple duties and under duress from “an enemy”; yet, he **expresses his commitment to the Way of God and his desire to serve God**:

These things I remember, as I pour out my [heart]:
how I would go with the throng and **lead them in procession to the house of God**
with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.

When shall I come and appear before God?

My tears have been my food day and night, while **they say** to me all the day long,
“Where is your God?”

I say to God, my rock:

“Why have you forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning **because of the oppression of the enemy?**”

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my [being]³¹⁹ for you, O God.

My [being] thirsts for God, for the living God.

By day [YHWH] commands his [hesed], and **at night his song is with me**, a prayer to the God of my life.

Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, **my salvation and my God**.

(Psalm 42:4, 2b-3, 9, 1-2a, 8, 11b ESV)

The **Psalmist of the 44th Psalm** recounts past victories of God given to Israel but laments the current situation of Israel scattered among the nations. He then **focuses on the remnant of True Worshipers** trying to live by the “covenant” having rejected “idolatry” and **looking for the “redemption”**:

O God, **we have heard with our ears**, our fathers have told us,
what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old:

you with your own hand drove out the nations ...

But **you have rejected us** and disgraced us ...

You have made us like sheep for slaughter and have **scattered us among the nations**.

All this has come upon us, though **we have not forgotten you**,

and **we have not been false to your covenant**.

Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way (derek);

If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god,
would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart.

Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord?

Rouse yourself! **Do not reject us forever!**

Rise up; to me to our help! **Redeem us for the sake of your [hesed]!**

(Psalm 44:1-2a, 9a, 11, 17-18, 20-21, 23, 26 ESV)

The 45th Psalm is a masterpiece of “duality”. It appear to have been written when there was a king on the throne in Jerusalem – so it would be one of the oldest of the Psalms of the Sons of Korah. The Psalmist addresses a “physical” king as a “type”, but **the focus of the Psalm applies more closely to the “antitype”, the Messiah, the King of kings**:

My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; **I address my verses to the king;**

You are **the most handsome of the sons of men;**

³¹⁴ See Numbers 16:1, 1 Chronicles 6:16,22

³¹⁵ See Numbers 16:32, 26:10-11

³¹⁶ See Numbers 4:1-15

³¹⁷ See 1 Chronicles 6:31-37

³¹⁸ See 1 Chronicles 9:17-19

³¹⁹ See footnote 12

In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness (tzedek);
Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
 The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;
you have loved righteousness (tzedek) and hated wickedness.
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;
 In place of your fathers shall be your sons; **you will make them princes in all the earth.**
I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations;
 therefore **nations will praise you forever and ever.**
 (Psalm 45:1a, 2a, 4a, 6-7, 16-17 ESV)

The Psalmist of the 46th Psalm speaks for **True Worshipers in a world of chaos.** The Psalm looks to the **River of Life**,³²⁰ flowing through the “**city of God**”, foreshadowing the **New Testament Church.** The Psalmist then looks through the **Day of YHWH** to the **Kingdom of God:**

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
 [YHWH] of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.
There is a river whose streams make glad **the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.**
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; **God will help her** when morning dawns.
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.
 Come, behold the works of [YHWH], how **he has brought desolations on the earth.**
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
 Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”
 (Psalm 46:1, 7, 4-6, 8-9a, 10 ESV)

The Psalmist of the 47th Psalm carries forward from the 46th Psalm the themes of the **Day of YHWH** and the **Kingdom of God.** He speaks for **True Worshipers** having been granted the gift of eternal life and thus participating in the Kingdom of God:

For [YHWH], the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.
 God has gone up with a shout, [YHWH] **with the sound of a trumpet.**
God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.
He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet.
 Sing praises to God, sing praises! **Sing praises to our King,** sing praises!
 For **God is the King of all the earth;** sing praises with a psalm!
 (Psalm 47:2, 5, 8, 3, 6-7 ESV)

The Psalmist of the 48th Psalm is in **Jerusalem** at time when the city was large and beautiful. The Psalmist may have had some historical event in mind, but the Psalm certainly foreshadows the **Day of YHWH.** The Psalmist looks to the **World Tomorrow** when the **Way of God** will be passed on from one generation to the next for a thousand years:

Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers,
 consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels ...
 Great is [YHWH] and greatly to be praised in **the city of our God!**
 ... in the city of our God, **which God will establish forever.**
 For behold, **the kings assembled;** they came on together.
Trembling took hold of them there, anguish as of a woman in labor.
We have thought on your [hesed], O God, in the midst of your temple.
 As your name, O God, so **your praise reaches to the ends of the earth.**
Your right hand is filled with righteousness (tzedek).
 ... that you may **tell the next generation** that **this is God, our God forever and ever.**
 He will guide us forever.
 (Psalm 48:12-13a, 1a, 8b, 4, 6, 9-10, 13b-14 ESV)

The Psalmist of the 49th Psalm addresses the age-old conundrum, “**a proverb**”, of “**why do the wicked prosper**”. He specifically announces his intention to **teach all peoples.** **Death is the great equalizer.** Those to whom God sees fit to grant the gift of eternal life, **will be resurrected** and teach the Way of God to the masses who had pursued wickedness:

I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre.
 Why should I fear in times of trouble, when **the iniquity of those who cheat** me surrounds me,

³²⁰ See Ezekiel 47:1-12, Zechariah 14:8, Revelation 22:1-2
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those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches?
Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases.

Hear this, all peoples!

Give ear, all inhabitants of the world, both low and high, rich and poor together!
My mouth shall speak **wisdom**; the meditation of my heart shall be **understanding**.

Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life,
for the ransom of their life is costly³²¹ and can never suffice,
that he should **live on forever** and never see the pit.

For he sees that **even the wise die**;

the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others.

For when he dies he will carry nothing away; his glory will not go down after him.

Man in his pomp yet **without understanding** is like the beasts that **perish**.

Like sheep they are appointed for **[the grave]**; **death** shall be their shepherd,
and **the upright shall rule over them in the morning**.³²²

Their form shall be consumed in [the grave], with no place to dwell.

But **God will ransom my [life] from the power of [the grave]**, for he will receive me.

(Psalm 49:4-6, 16, 1-3, 7-10, 17, 20, 14-15 ESV)

The Psalmist of the 84th Psalm is inspired by **pilgrims coming to Jerusalem**, presumably for a Feast, likely the Feast of Tabernacles.³²³ He looks beyond his time to the **World Tomorrow** when the resurrected True Worshipper will “dwell” in the true “**dwelling place**”, the **Family of God**, “**the house of my God**”, in eternity:

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in **whose heart are the highways to Zion**.

As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs;

the early rain also covers it with pools.

They go from strength to strength; **each one appears before God in Zion**.

How lovely is your dwelling place, [YHWH] of hosts!

My [being] longs, yes, faints for the courts of [YHWH];

my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!

For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in **the house of my God** than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

(Psalm 84:5-7, 1-2, 4, 10 ESV)

The Psalmist of the 85th Psalm seems to be writing in post-exilic times when the nation was slipping back into the way of the world.³²⁴ **He pleads for restoration**, but quickly looks to the ultimate goal of **salvation** for “**his saints**”, **True Worshipers** who learn to live by the **Way of God**, and thus acquire the **Nature of God**:

[YHWH], you were favorable to your land; **you restored the fortunes of Jacob**.

You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin.

Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!

Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

Let me hear what God, [YHWH], will speak, for **he will speak peace to his people**, to **his saints**;
but let them not turn back to folly.

[hesed] and **faithfulness** meet; **righteousness (tzedek)** and peace kiss each other.

Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and **righteousness (tzedek)** looks down from the sky.

Yes, [YHWH] will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

Righteousness (tzedek) will go before him and **make his footsteps a way (derek)**.

(Psalm 85:1-2, 4-5, 8, 10-13 ESV)

³²¹ This foreshadows the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

³²² This is an allusion to the resurrection of the dead.

³²³ This is suggested by the emphasis on the “dwelling place”.

³²⁴ A possible situation for this was the time of Nehemiah and Ezra, see the discussion in sections **10.3 The Restoration of Nehemiah and Ezra** and **10.4 The Reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra** in the paper “**The Writings of Moses**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

The Psalmist of the 87th Psalm extolls the “**city of God**”, dualistically looking to Jerusalem as the “**mother**”³²⁵ of True Worshipers, who will be “**born in her**”, i.e., **resurrected to a spiritual body**:
Glorious things of you are spoken, O city of God.

And of **Zion** it shall be said, “**This one and that one were born in her**”;
for **the Most High himself will establish her**.
(Psalm 87:3, 5 ESV)

Psalms of Asaph

The Bible identifies several individuals named “Asaph”, **any of whom could have composed one or more Psalms**:

- A contemporary of **King David**: a Levite descended from Gershon ben Levi who David appointed as a singer, “**Asaph ben Berechiah**”: see 1 Chronicles 6:31-43, 15:16-19, Nehemiah 12:46
- **Asaph ben Berechiah** is likely the same person David appointed to minister at the tent of the Ark of the Covenant: see 1 Chronicles 16:4-7, 37-38
- **The descendants of Asaph ben Berechiah seem to have formed an order of Levitical singers**: see 1 Chronicles 25:1-9, 26:1, 2 Chronicles 5:12
- This group of singers, the “**sons of Asaph**” continued to be identified about a century later, in the time of **King Jehoshaphat**: see 2 Chronicles 20:13-14
- And again, the “**sons of Asaph**” continued to be identified after about another century in the time of **King Hezekiah**: see 2 Chronicles 29:12-13
- “**Asaph the seer**” – is likely an allusion to Asaph ben Berechiah: see 2 Chronicles 29:30, 1 Chronicles 25:1
- A contemporary of **King Hezekiah**: Joah, the **son of Asaph**, was a scribe for Hezekiah – this “Asaph” may be a distinct individual, father of Joah, or it may simply mean that “Joah” was a member of the “sons of Asaph”: see 2 Kings 18:18, 37 // Isaiah 36:3, 22
- And again, after about another fifty years in the time of **King Josiah**, the “**sons of Asaph**” continue to be identified: see 2 Chronicles 35:15
- **After the exile**, the “**sons of Asaph**” continue to be identified: see Ezra 2:41, 3:10, Nehemiah 7:44, 11:22
- In the time of Nehemiah, **two individuals are identified as “son of Asaph”** – again, these may be distinct individuals, or it may mean the named persons are member of the “sons of Asaph”: see Nehemiah 11:17, 12:35
- A **Persian official** in the time of Nehemiah: Nehemiah 2:8

It is most likely that the collection of Psalms attributed to “Asaph” came out of the “sons of Asaph”. Probably **Asaph ben Berechiah** initiated a tradition of Psalmody in imitation of David, and the tradition was carried down through his descendants. In many of these Psalms, **YHWH speaks in the first person** with some commentary by the Psalmist. **Where the Psalmist speaks, it is frequently in the form of prayer.** The Asaph Psalms touch on a very broad range of topics,³²⁶ but **they all make some mention of the Way of God**. There are twelve Psalms ascribed to “Asaph”.

Psalm 50 is largely the words of YHWH. God speaks to True Worshipers enjoining the right attitude in “sacrifice”. Animal sacrifices have no efficacy in themselves.³²⁷ **True sacrifice is a matter of attitude which is integral to the Way of God:**

Gather to me **my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!**

Hear, O **my people**, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you.

I am God, your God. Not for **your sacrifices** do I rebuke you;

your burnt offerings are continually before me.

I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds.

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; **I will deliver you**, and you shall glorify me.

³²⁵ See Galatians 4:26, Hebrews 12:22

³²⁶ See the summary discussions in *Excursus 7 - Analysis of Non-Davidic Psalms* in the paper “The Writings of Moses” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

³²⁷ For a discussion of sacrifices see section 10. *The Role of Sacrifices* in the paper “True Worship of the True God” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me:
to one who **orders his way (derek) rightly** I will show the **salvation** of God!
(Psalm 50:5, 7-9, 14-15, 23 ESV)

The Psalmist of the 73rd Psalm deals with the problem of “**the wicked prospering**”. He acknowledges that God is working only with “**the pure in heart**”, but prosperity of the wicked had almost derailed him, until he went into “**the sanctuary**” and received understanding from God. **This allows him to proceed in faith, living by and proclaiming the Way of God:**

Truly God is good to Israel, to **those who are pure in heart**.
But as for me, **my feet had almost stumbled**, my steps had nearly slipped.
For **I was envious** of the arrogant when I saw **the prosperity of the wicked**.
But when I thought **how to understand this**, it seemed to me a wearisome task,
until I went into **the sanctuary of God**; then **I discerned their end**.
Nevertheless, I am continually with you; **you hold my right hand**.
You guide me with your counsel, and afterward **you will receive me to glory**.³²⁸
But for me **it is good to be near God**;
I have made the Lord [YHWH] my refuge, **that I may tell of all your works**.
(Psalm 73:1-3, 16-17, 23-24, 28 ESV)

Psalm 74 is a prayer in which **the Psalmist implores God to act against “the enemy”**. The Psalmist prays on behalf of the “**congregation**”, the remnant of True Worshipers, **imploring God to “arise”** for the sake of **the Way of God, “your cause”**:

O God, **why do you cast us off forever?**
Why does your anger smoke against **the sheep of your pasture?**
Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old,
which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage!
Remember Mount Zion, where you have dwelt.
How long, O God, is the foe to scoff?
Is **the enemy** to revile your name forever?
Remember this, [YHWH], how **the enemy** scoffs, and a foolish people reviles your name.
Yet God my King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.
Have regard for **the covenant** ... **Arise**, O God, **defend your cause**;
(Psalm 74:1-2, 10, 18, 12, 20a, 22a ESV)

Psalm 75 is a communal prayer. The Psalmist prays on behalf of **True Worshipers** giving thanks for **God’s promise of deliverance**. The Psalmist reports God’s response. The Psalmist acknowledges the **responsibility** of True Worshipers to **proclaim the Way of God**:

We give thanks to you, O God; **we give thanks**, for your name is near.
We recount your wondrous deeds.
“**At the set time that I appoint** I will judge with equity. ...”
But **I will declare it forever**; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.
“All the horns of the wicked I will cut off, but **the horns of the righteous (tzaddiq) shall be lifted up**.”
(Psalm 75:1-2, 9-10 ESV)

Psalm 76 is a prayer of thanks to God for the Plan of God whereby **True Worshipers** will be delivered from the evil of this world and **ultimately receive salvation**. The Psalmist ends with an injunction to live by the Way of God, “**perform your vows**”:

But you, **you are to be feared!**
Who can stand before you when once your anger is roused?
From the heavens you uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still,
when God arose to establish [justice] (mish’pat),³²⁹ **to save all the humble** of the earth.
Make your vows to [YHWH] your God and **perform them**;
let all around him bring gifts to **him who is to be feared** ...
(Psalm 76:7-9, 11 ESV)

³²⁸ This is an allusion to the resurrection of the dead.

³²⁹ See footnote 71

The Psalmist of the 77th Psalm prays in anguish to understand his plight – has the remnant been **utterly rejected**? When the Psalmist reflects on **God's past mighty deeds**, he is **restored to faith** in living by the **Way of God**:

I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me.

In **the day of my trouble** I seek the Lord;

in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my [being] **refuses to be comforted**.

When I remember God, **I moan**; when I meditate, **my spirit faints**.

Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable?

Has his [hesed] forever ceased? Are his **promises at an end for all time**?

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?

I will remember the deeds of [YHWH]; yes, I will remember **your wonders of old**.

I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.

Your way (derek), O God, is holy. What god is great like our God?

(Psalm 77:1-3, 7-9, 11-13 ESV)

The Psalmist of the 78th Psalm states his purpose very clearly – to proclaim the “**teaching**” of God, the **Way of God**. He elucidates the statement from Psalm 77, “**I will remember the deeds of [YHWH]**”, by going into detail about multiple instances of YHWH’s acting for his people.³³⁰ He ends by acknowledging **King David’s contribution in teaching the Way of God**:

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.

We will not hide them from their children, but **tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of [YHWH]**, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

He established a testimony in Jacob and **appointed [torah] in Israel**,

which he commanded our fathers **to teach** to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, **so that they should set their hope in God** and not forget the works of God, but **keep his commandments**;

He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes he brought him **to shepherd Jacob his people**, Israel his inheritance.

With upright heart **he shepherded** them and **guided** them **with his skillful hand**.

(Psalm 78:1-7, 70-72 ESV)

Psalm 79 is a prayer, a lament, over the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. **The Psalmist prays for repentance to live by the Way of God**. He promises, on behalf of True Worshipers, ongoing gratitude and **proclamation of the Way of God**:

O God, **the nations** have come into your inheritance; they have **defiled your holy temple**; they have **laid Jerusalem in ruins**.

Do not remember against us **our former iniquities**;

let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low.

Help us, **O God of our salvation**, for the glory of your name;

deliver us, and **atone for our sins**, for your name’s sake!

But **we your people**, the sheep of your pasture, will **give thanks to you forever**;

from generation to generation **we will recount your praise**.

(Psalm 79:1, 8-9, 13 ESV)

The Psalmist of the 80th Psalm pleads with God to “**restore Israel**”. Then, foreshadowing the World Tomorrow, he promises the nation will not again “**turn back from you**”, but will “**call upon your name**”, live by the **Way of God**:

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock.

... stir up your might and come to save us!

[YHWH] God of hosts, **how long will you be angry** with your people’s prayers?

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!

Then **we shall not turn back** from you; give us life, and **we will call upon your name**!

(Psalm 80:1a, 2b, 4, 3, 18 ESV)

³³⁰ See Psalm 78:9-66; the historical allusions in Psalm 78 are very clear; and, due to its scope, it could be considered a “prototype” for the Psalms discussed in the section [Historical Psalms](#).

The 81st Psalm starts with a call to the joys of the Fall Feast Season. Then God briefly recounts the deliverance from Egypt and his purpose that Israel would learn the Way of God:

Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob!

Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp.

Blow the trumpet at the new moon,³³¹ at the full moon, on our feast day.³³²

I am [YHWH] your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.

Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me!

Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways (derek)!

(Psalm 81:1-3, 10a, 8, 10b, 13 ESV)

Psalm 82 is a glimpse into the Divine Throne Room in eternity.³³³ God looks down to earth and decries the ongoing injustice, “judge unjustly”. God then states an outcome resulting from the establishment of the Kingdom of God – the Way of God will be universal:

God has taken his place in the divine council;

in the midst of the [God Family] (‘elohim) he holds judgment:

“How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?

Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;

maintain the right (tzadek) of the afflicted and the destitute.

Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

(Psalm 82:1-4 ESV)

Psalm 83 again looks to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. The Psalmist implores God to act then lists historic enemies of Israel who serve as a “type” of the end-time nations who oppose the returning King of kings, Jesus Christ, the Messiah. They will be destroyed, “like whirling dust”. After the establishment of the Kingdom of God, the Way of God will be universal, and all humanity will come to know “YHWH is the Most High”:

O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God!

For behold, your enemies make an uproar; those who hate you have raised their heads.

O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind.

As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze,

so may you pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your hurricane!

Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek your name, [YHWH].

Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace,

that they may know that you alone, whose name is [YHWH], are the Most High over all the earth.

(Psalm 83:1-2, 13-18 ESV)

Anonymous Psalms

The “Anonymous Psalms”, as with all the Psalms, are a fantastic treasure. The spiritual content is beyond measure. The mind of God and the inspiration through the Holy Spirit are self evident throughout.

These Psalms explore many of the same themes as the Davidic Psalms. For example, they discuss:

- God’s righteousness

Psalms 71:2,15, 92:15, 96:13, 98:2,9, 111:3, 116:5, 129:4

- “the righteous” as an epithet for True Worshipers

Psalms 33:1, 92:12, 94:21, 97:11,12, 112:6, 118:15,20, 125:3, 146:8

- and the attainment of righteousness by True Worshipers

Psalms 33:5, 99:4, 106:3,31, 112:3,4,9, 118:19, 132:9

The “Way of God” is explicitly mentioned many times:

All this has come upon us, though we have not forgotten you,

and we have not been false to your covenant.

Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way (derek);

(Psalm 44:17-18 ESV)

³³¹ The Day of Trumpets, Leviticus 23:23-25

³³² The Feast of Tabernacles, Leviticus 23:33-36,39-43

³³³ See the discussion of this in section **1.3.2 Glimpses into Eternity** in the paper “First Pillar - The Nature of God” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us,
that your way (derek) may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.
(Psalm 67:1-2 ESV)

For forty years I loathed that generation and said,

“They are a people who go astray in their heart, and **they have not known my ways (derek)**.”

Therefore I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.”

(Psalm 95:10-11 ESV)

Blessed is everyone who fears [YHWH], **who walks in his ways (derek)**!

You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;

you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you. (Psalm 128:1-2 ESV)

See also: Psalm 119:1, 5, 14, 26, 27, 30, 32, 33, 35, 37, 59, and 168

There are many allusions to the particulars of the Way of God:

Teaching torah

He who teaches man knowledge—[YHWH]—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.

Blessed is the man whom you discipline, [YHWH], and **whom you teach out of your [torah]**,

to give him rest from days of trouble ...

(Psalm 94:10b-13a ESV)

See also Psalm 119:1,18,29,34,44,51,53,55,61,70,72,77,85,92,109,113,126,136,142,150,153,163,165,174

Commandments mitz'wah

Blessed is the man who fears [YHWH], who **greatly delights in his commandments (mitz'wah)**!

(Psalm 112:1 ESV)

See also Psalm 119:6,10,19,21,32,35,47,48,60,66,73,86,96,98,115,127,131,143,151,166,172,176

Testimonies 'eduth

Your decrees ('eduth) are very trustworthy; holiness befits your house, [YHWH], forevermore.

In the pillar of the cloud he spoke to them; **they kept his testimonies ('eduth)**

and **the statute (hoq) that he gave them**.

If your sons **keep my covenant and my testimonies ('eduth)** that I shall teach them,
their sons also forever shall sit on your throne.

(Psalms 93:5, 99:7, 132:12 ESV)

See also Psalm 119:2,14,22,24,31,36,46,59,79,88,95,99,111,119,125,129,138,144,146,152,157,167,168

Statutes hoq

He declares his word (davar) to Jacob, his statutes (hoq) and [mish'patim]³³⁴ to Israel.

He has not dealt thus with any other nation; **they do not know his [mish'patim]**.

(Psalm 147:19-20a ESV)

See also Psalm 119:5,8,12,23,26,33,48,54,64,68,71,80,83,112,117,118,124,135,145,155,171

mish'patim

In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, “There is no God.”

... **your [mish'patim] are on high**, out of his sight;

Zion hears and is glad, and the daughters of Judah rejoice,

because of your [mish'patim], [YHWH].

(Psalm 10:4, 5b, 97:8 ESV)

See also Psalm 119:7,13,20,30,39,43,52,62,75,102,106,108,120,137,149,156,164,175

Word davar, 'm'rah

For **the word (davar) of [YHWH] is upright**, and all his work is done in faithfulness.

(Psalm 33:4 ESV)

See also Psalm 119:9,11,16,17,25,28,42,43,49,57,65,67,74,81,89,101,103,105,107,114,130,139,147,
160,161,162,169,170,172

Many of the Psalmists express the need to proclaim the Way of God:

Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me;

let them **bring me to your holy hill** and to your dwelling!

Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy,

³³⁴ See footnote 13

and **I will praise you with the lyre**, O God, my God.
(Psalm 43:3-4 ESV)

My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all the day.
Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent.

But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more.

My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day,
for their number is past my knowledge.

With the mighty deeds of the Lord [YHWH] I will come;

I will remind them of your righteousness, yours alone.

O God, **from my youth you have taught me**, and **I still proclaim your wondrous deeds**.

So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me,

until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.

(Psalm 71:8-9, 14-18 ESV)

It is good to give thanks to [YHWH], to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

to **declare your [hesed] in the morning**, and **your faithfulness by night**,

to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre.

The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

They are planted in the house of [YHWH]; they flourish in the courts of our God.

They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green,

to declare that [YHWH] is upright;

he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

(Psalm 92:1-3, 12-15 ESV)

Oh sing to [YHWH] a new song; sing to [YHWH], **all the earth!**

Sing to [YHWH], bless his name; **tell of his salvation from day to day**.

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!

Say among the nations,

“[YHWH] reigns!

Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved;

he will judge the peoples with equity.”

(Psalm 96:1-3, 10 ESV)

Praise [YHWH]!

I will give thanks to [YHWH] with my whole heart, **in the company of the upright, in the congregation**.

Great are the works of [YHWH], studied by all who delight in them.

Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever.

He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered; [YHWH] is gracious and merciful.

(Psalm 111:1-4 ESV)

Let those who fear [YHWH] say, “His [hesed] endures forever.”

[YHWH] is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

Glad songs of salvation are **in the tents of the righteous**:

“The right hand of [YHWH] does valiantly,

the right hand of [YHWH] exalts,

the right hand of [YHWH] does valiantly!”

I shall not die, but **I shall live**, and **recount the deeds of [YHWH]**.

(Psalm 118:4, 14-17 ESV)

Historical Psalms

King David first used the technique of “**historical summary**” in Psalm 68.³³⁵ He, of course, made other historical allusions.³³⁶ The “**Sons of Korah**”³³⁷ used the technique to some extent, and it is further developed in the “**Asaph Psalms**”,³³⁸ and by **Ethan the Ezrahite**.³³⁹ The fullest expression of the technique is in **anonymous Psalms 105, 106, and 107**. There are also historic allusions in other anonymous Psalms.³⁴⁰ The overarching theme of the three main historic Psalms is to **consider the lessons of history** and from them **learn about the Way of God**.

³³⁵See verses 7-14

³³⁶ See Psalms 18:7-9, 15, 22:4-5, 103:7, 110:4b, 133:2, 144:5-6

³³⁷ See Psalm 44

³³⁸ See Psalms 74, 78, and 81

³³⁹ See Psalm 89

³⁴⁰ See, for example, Psalm 95:7b-11

Psalm 105 starts off by stating **the Psalmist's purpose** in no uncertain terms: to learn the Way of God from the historical works of God and proclaim it to all peoples. **The Psalmist's target audience is**

True Worshippers of God:

Oh give thanks to [YHWH]; call upon his name; **make known his deeds among the peoples!**
Sing to him, sing praises to him; **tell of all his wondrous works!**

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of **those who seek [YHWH]** rejoice!

Seek [YHWH] and his strength; seek his presence continually!

Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles, and **the [mish*patim]³⁴¹ he uttered, O offspring of Abraham,³⁴²** his servant, children of Jacob, **his chosen ones!**

(Psalm 105:1-6 ESV)

The objective of the Plan of God, to have the Way of God established over the whole world, is stated next: "He is [YHWH] our God; **his mish*patim are in all the earth.**" (verse 7 ESV) The Psalmist commences his historical survey, in verses 8-11, by referencing **the Covenant with Abraham³⁴³** and the promise of the Land of Canaan. The Psalmist briefly reviews the patriarchal period summarizing God's beneficence in verses 12-15:

... he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account, saying,

"Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!"

(Psalm 105:14-15 ESV)

Joseph's descent into Egypt and his ascent to power are reviewed in verses 16-22, and the arrival in Egypt of **Jacob and his family** and their **commitment to slavery** is mentioned in verses 23-25. Then, **God "sent Moses, his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen."** (verse 26 ESV) The **plagues** on Egypt and the **Exodus** are covered in verses 27-38. The **Wilderness Period** is covered in verses 39-41.

Finally the Psalmist ends with **God's motivation, success, and purpose:**

For **he remembered his holy promise**, and Abraham, his servant.

So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing.³⁴⁴

And **he gave them the lands of the nations**, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil, that they might **keep his statutes (hoq)** and **observe his [torah]**. Praise [YHWH]!

(Psalm 105:42-45 ESV)

Psalm 106 is clearly exilic or post-exilic. The Psalmist prays for favour and restoration of the nation:

Remember me, [YHWH], when you show favor to your people; help me when you save them, that I may look upon the prosperity of **your chosen ones**, that I may rejoice in the gladness of **your nation**, that I may glory **with your inheritance**.

(Psalm 106:4-5 ESV)

The Psalmist summarizes the current state of the nation:

Then the anger of [YHWH] was kindled against his people, and he abhorred his heritage;

he gave them into the hand of the nations, so that those who hated them ruled over them.

Their enemies oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their power.

Save us, [YHWH] our God, and **gather us from among the nations**,

that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.

(Psalm 106:40-42, 47 ESV)

The purpose of the Psalmist is clearly stated – to **learn the Way of God** and **proclaim the Way of God:**

Praise [YHWH]! Oh give thanks to [YHWH], for he is good, for his [hesed] endures forever!

Who can utter the mighty deeds of [YHWH], or declare all his praise?

Blessed are **they who observe [justness] (mish*pat),³⁴⁵ who do righteousness** at all times!

(Psalm 106:1-3 ESV)

The perspective of the Psalmist is clear, **"all have sinned"**; God was perfectly right in the punishment meted out to Israel:

Both we and our fathers have sinned; we have committed **iniquity;** we have done **wickedness.**

³⁴¹ See footnote 13

³⁴² See Galatians 3:29

³⁴³ For a discussion of the Covenant with Abraham see section **3. The Covenant of Promise** in the paper "Covenants of Grace" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

³⁴⁴ **SONG:** This is an allusion to the "Song of the Sea", Exodus 15:1-16

³⁴⁵ See footnote 71

Many times he delivered them,

but **they were rebellious** in their purposes and were brought low through their iniquity.

(Psalm 106:6, 43 ESV)

The Psalmist does not attempt to present a complete chronological summary. **His approach is topical.**

He picks out **specific instances of sin or rebellion** ending each allusion with a **moralizing comment**:

- Rebellion at Yam Suph: verses 7-12

They said to Moses,

“Is it because there are no graves in Egypt

that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?

What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?

Is not this what we said to you in Egypt:

‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’?

For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians

than to die in the wilderness.”

(Exodus 14:11-12 ESV)

Yet he saved them for his name’s sake, that he might make known his mighty power.

Then they believed his words; they sang his praise.³⁴⁶

(Psalm 106:8, 12 ESV)

- Complaining in the wilderness: verses 13-15

When they came to **Marah**, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah.

And **the people grumbled against Moses**, saying, “What shall we drink?”

(Exodus 15:23-24)

They set out from Elim,

and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to **the wilderness of Sin** ...

And **the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron**

in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them,

“Would that we had died by the hand of [YHWH] in the land of Egypt,

when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full,

for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

(Exodus 16:1a, 2-3 ESV)

All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages,

according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at **Rephidim**,

but there was no water for the people to drink.

Therefore **the people quarreled with Moses** and said, “Give us water to drink.”

And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? **Why do you test [YHWH]?**”

But the people thirsted there for water, and **the people grumbled against Moses** and said,

“Why did you bring us up out of Egypt,

to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

(Exodus 17:1-3 ESV)

While the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed,

the anger of [YHWH] was kindled against the people,

and **[YHWH] struck down the people with a very great plague.**

(Numbers 11:33 ESV)

... **he gave them what they asked,** but **sent a wasting disease among them.**

(Psalm 106:15 ESV)

- Challenge of Dathan and Abiram: verses 16-18

... **Dathan** and **Abiram** the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men.

And they **rose up before Moses**, with a number of the people of Israel ...

They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said to them,

“You have gone too far!

For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and [YHWH] is among them.

Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of [YHWH]?”

(Numbers 16:1b-2a, 3 ESV)

Fire also broke out in their company; the **flame burned up the wicked.**

(Psalm 106:18 ESV)

³⁴⁶ See footnote 344

- The Golden Calf incident: verses 19-23
When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain,
the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him,
“Up, **make us gods** who shall go before us. ...”
And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool
and **made a golden calf**. And they said,
“**These are your gods, O Israel**, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”
(Exodus 32:1a, 4 ESV)
Therefore he said he would destroy them—had not **Moses**, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them.
(Psalm 106:23 ESV)
- Refusal to go into the Land: verses 24-27
At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. ...
However, the people who dwell in the land are strong,
and the cities are fortified and very large. ...
Then the men who had gone up with him said,
“**We are not able to go up against the people**, for they are stronger than we are.”
And **all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron**.
The whole congregation said to them,
“Would that we had died in the land of Egypt!
Or would that we had died in this wilderness!
Why is [YHWH] bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword?
Our wives and our little ones will become a prey.
Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?”
And they said to one another, “**Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt**.”
(Numbers 13:25, 28a, 31, 14:2-4 ESV)
Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them
that **he would make them fall in the wilderness** ...
(Psalm 106:26 ESV)
- The Ba`al of Peor incident: verses 28-31
While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to **whore with the daughters of Moab**.
These invited the people to the **sacrifices of their gods**,
and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.
So Israel yoked himself to **Baal of Peor**. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.
(Numbers 25:1-3 ESV)
Then **Phinehas** stood up and **intervened**, and the plague was stayed.
And **that was counted to him as righteousness** from generation to generation forever.
(Psalm 106:30-31 ESV)
- The Waters of Meribah: verses 32-33
And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the **wilderness of Zin** ...
Now there was **no water** for the congregation.
And **they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron**.
And the people quarreled with Moses ...
... and **[YHWH] spoke to Moses**, saying,
“Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother,
and **tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water** ...”
Then **Moses** and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them,
“Hear now, you rebels: **shall we bring water for you out of this rock?**”
And **Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock** ...
(Numbers 20:1a, 2-3a, 7-8a, 10-11a)
... for **they made his spirit bitter**, and **he spoke rashly** with his lips.
(Psalm 106:33 ESV)
- Absorbing the culture of Canaan: verses 34-39
Now the angel of [YHWH] went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said,
“I brought you up from Egypt
and brought you into the land that I swore to give to your fathers. I said,
‘I will never break my covenant with you,
and **you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land;**
you shall break down their altars.’
But you have not obeyed my voice. What is this you have done?”

So now I say, I will not drive them out before you,
but they shall become thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.”

So the people of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. And their daughters they took to themselves for wives, and their own daughters they gave to their sons, and they served their gods.
(Judges 2:1-3, 3:5-6 ESV)

Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign ...
but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel.
He even burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom [YHWH] drove out before the people of Israel.
(2 Kings 16:2a, 3 ESV)

... you who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree,
who slaughter your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?
(Isaiah 57:5 ESV)

And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me,
and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured.
Were your whorings so small a matter
that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them?
(Ezekiel 16:20-21 ESV)

Thus they became unclean by their acts, and played the whore in their deeds.
(Psalm 106:39 ESV)

Finally the Psalmist of the 106th Psalm acknowledges the remnant through whom God was working and praises God for his universal beneficence:

Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress, when he heard their cry.
For their sake he remembered his covenant,
and relented according to the abundance of his [hesed].

He caused them to be pitied by all those who held them captive.

Blessed be [YHWH], the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise [YHWH]!
(Psalm 106:44-46, 48 ESV)

Psalm 107 has a complicated structure: the main part comprises four stanzas each with a recurring theme. The ESV translators have supplied the word “some” at the beginning of each stanza. Each stanza commences with a statement of persons in some adverse condition. If the Psalmist has any historical allusions in mind, they are obscure. More likely the situations are hypothetical:

- Some wandered in desert wastes (verse 4a)
- Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death (verse 10a)
- Some were fools through their sinful ways (verse 17a)
- Some went down to the sea in ships (verse 23a)

Each stanza then elaborates on the distress of the persons resulting in their petitioning YHWH, “then they cried to YHWH in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress” (verses 6, 13, 19, 28). In each stanza the beneficence of YHWH is differently described, and the persons are adjured, “let them thank YHWH for his hesed, for his wondrous works to the children of man” (verses 8, 15, 21, 31). Each stanza ends with a further elaboration of the beneficence of YHWH:

- **Main Stanza 1:** verses 4-9

The first group is lost in the desert with no sustenance:

Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way (derek) to a city to dwell in;
hungry and thirsty, their [being] fainted within them.
(verses 4-5 ESV)

God rescues them – note the duality: the “straight way” is a path out of the desert, but it is the “Way of God”; the city to dwell in is “heavenly Jerusalem”:

He led them by a straight way (derek) till they reached a city to dwell in.
(verse 7 ESV)

The outcome: they become converted and come to know God:

For he satisfies the longing [person], and the hungry [person] he fills with good things.
(verse 9 ESV)

- **Main Stanza 2:** verses 10-16

The second group are in physical and spiritual depravation because they had rejected the teaching of God:

Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons,
for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High.
So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help.
(verse 10-12 ESV)

God rescues them – by opening the mind of a person to understand the truth, the darkness is removed and the “bonds” of sin are broken:

He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart.
(verse 14 ESV)

The outcome: the calling of God liberates a person from the bonds of sin:

For he shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron.
(verse 16 ESV)

- **Main Stanza 3:** verses 17-22

The third group were hopelessly lost in sin, rejecting all (spiritual) food, and near unto (spiritual) death:

Some were fools through their sinful ways (derek), and because of their iniquities suffered affliction;
they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.
(verses 17-18 ESV)

God rescues them – understanding the Way of God provides spiritual healing, recovery from the affliction of sin:

He sent out his word (davar) and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.
(verse 20 ESV)

The outcome: conversion, offering spiritual sacrifices, and proclaiming the Way of God:

And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!
(verse 22 ESV)

- **Main Stanza 4:** verses 23-32

The fourth group are average people in the world. Doing their normal business. Living their lives apart from God – NOT knowing God and NOT rejecting God. Those who live through the tribulation and the Day of YHWH, “they saw the deeds of YHWH”, will indeed be “at their wits’ end”:

Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters;
they saw the deeds of [YHWH], his wondrous works in the deep.
For he commanded and raised the stormy wind, which lifted up the waves of the sea.
They mounted up to heaven; they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their evil plight;³⁴⁷
they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits’ end.
(verses 23-27 ESV)

God rescues them – in the peace of the World Tomorrow, these people will learn the Way of God, “their desired haven”:

He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.
Then they were glad that the waters were quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
(verses 29-30 ESV)

The outcome: these people will become fully functioning members of society under the Kingdom of God. They will promote the Way of God based on their own conversion experience:

Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.
(verse 32)

³⁴⁷ Note that these disruptions of nature are the antithesis of General Revelation: they are intended to warn the “average person”.

The objective of the Psalm is largely prophetic – God will accomplish the execution of his Plan of Salvation. The first three verses of Psalm 107 are a **“Prologue”** clearly indicating the Psalmist’s intention:

Oh give thanks to [YHWH], for he is good, for his [hesed] endures forever!
Let **the redeemed** of [YHWH] say so,
whom he has **redeemed from trouble** and **gathered in from the lands**,
from the **east** and from the **west**, from the **north** and from the **south**.
(Psalm 107:1-3 ESV)

The Psalmist starts off extolling the Nature of God, **“Oh give thanks to YHWH, for he is good, for his hesed endures forever”** and adjuring **“the redeemed”**, **True Worshipers**, to “say so”, i.e., **proclaim the gospel** (verses 1-2). Verse three is clearly an allusion to the prophecies of the **Second Exodus**³⁴⁸ which suggests that the purpose of the Psalmist in the four main stanzas is to epitomize the difficulties of the returnees. **Those called to the New Israel will come from the “four corners of the earth”**.³⁴⁹ They are people God chose NOT to call to the True Church prior to the tribulation, but God will mark them for protection during the tribulation.³⁵⁰ Each of the four groups of people in Psalm 107 represent **persons in the world prior to the calling of God**:

- First group: people in general, **“lost in the desert”**, not knowing the Way of God; conversion brings a person to know God, to satisfy that inner emptiness, **“he satisfies the longing person”**
- Second group: people who have **had exposure to the teaching of God**, but have rejected it, **“rebelled against the words of God”**; when they are called to conversion, God will indeed **“bring them out of darkness”**
- Third group: people who have embraced lives of sin, **“fools through their sinful ways”**; even they are NOT incorrigible, **“he sent out his word and healed them”**, living by the Way of God can bring any person back
- Fourth group: the majority of the people in the world – they are simply going about their lives ignorant of the Way of God, **“doing business”**; eventually all these people will be called to conversion; those called to the New Israel will have **“seen the deeds of YHWH”**; they will be ready to **“extol him in the congregation”** and **“praise him in the assembly”**.

After the four main stanzas, **in the “Epilogue”**, the Psalmist returns to prophecies of the **Second Exodus and the New Israel**. These verses echo many other prophecies:

He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground,
a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the evil of its inhabitants.
He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water.
And there he lets the hungry dwell, and **they establish a city to live in**;
they sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield.
By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their livestock diminish.
(Psalm 107:33-38 ESV)

The Psalmist ends with a brief contrast of **retributive justice** versus the treatment of **True Worshipers**, **“he raises up the needy out of affliction”** and adjures True Worshipers to take heed, **“whoever is wise, let him attend to these things”**:

When they are diminished and brought low through oppression, evil, and sorrow,
he pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes;
but **he raises up the needy out of affliction** and makes their families like flocks.
The upright see it and are glad, and all wickedness shuts its mouth.
Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the [hesed] of [YHWH].
(Psalm 107:39-43 ESV)

The Psalms contain perhaps the greatest manifestation of **the working of the Holy Spirit to inspire persons**, many of whom are unknown, **to express beautiful spiritual truths**. True Worshipers of God can reap untold nourishment in **the Way of God** by careful study of the Psalms. But, the other Wisdom Literature should also NOT be ignored.

³⁴⁸ See the Bible Study Notes, “The Remnant & the Second Exodus”, located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

³⁴⁹ See Isaiah 11:12, 43:5-6,

³⁵⁰ See Revelation 7:1-8

3.5.3 Other Wisdom Literature

The Bible contains three other Books which are generally classed as “wisdom literature”, and **the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel** contains a significant amount of “wisdom literature”. Some commentators classify the **Book of Daniel** as “**wisdom literature**” because of **the status of Daniel**, but the contents of the Book of Daniel are mostly prophetic – it is the prototypical “Apocalyptic” book:

Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts,
and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon
and **chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon**.

(Daniel 2:48 ESV)

The **Book of the Prophet Jeremiah** makes allusion to a “**wisdom tradition**” in **Edom**. It is possible that the **Book of Job** is the result of the Edomite Wisdom Tradition.³⁵¹

Concerning Edom. Thus says [YHWH] of hosts:

“**Is wisdom no more in Teman?**

Has counsel perished from the prudent?

Has their wisdom vanished? ...”

(Jeremiah 49:7 ESV)

The Book of Proverbs

The Book of Proverbs comprises seven groupings of proverbs:

- Chapters 1 through 9: “**The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel**” (1:1 ESV)
- Chapters 10 through 22 verse 18: “**The proverbs of Solomon**” (10:1a ESV)
- Chapter 22 verse 17 through chapter 24 verse 22: “Incline your ear, and hear **the words of the wise**” (22:17a ESV)
- Chapter 24 verses 23-34: “**These also are sayings of the wise**” (24:23a ESV)
- Chapters 25 through 29: “**These also are proverbs of Solomon** which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.” (25:1 ESV)
- Chapter 30: “**The words of Agur son of Jakeh**. The oracle.” (30:1a ESV)
- Chapter 31: “**The words of King Lemuel**. An oracle that his mother taught him:” (31:1 ESV)

The first group, chapters 1-9, is the most cohesive. It contains several sections of sustained concept development. The other sections contain mostly disjointed sayings – occasionally they can be grouped into small themes. **The main themes of all the proverbs are basically set by the first group**. The

Prologue defines the parameters of the material:

To know **wisdom** and instruction, to **understand** words of insight,
to receive instruction in wise dealing, in **righteousness (tzedek)**, **[justness] (mish^epat)**,³⁵² and equity;
to give prudence to the simple, **knowledge** and **discretion** to the youth—

Let **the wise hear and increase in learning**, and the one who understands obtain guidance,
to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.

The fear of [YHWH] is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

(Proverbs 1:2-7 ESV)

As discussed in section **3.1.1 Living by the Way of God**, an objective of living by the Way of God, is to attain *mish^epatim*. There is no English word to translate “*mish^epatim*”. It is best described as the “**understanding, wisdom, and discernment that come from living by the Way of God**”. This is precisely what the Prologue says is the purpose of the proverbs.

³⁵¹ See Genesis 36:34, 1 Chronicles 1:38-42, 45, 51-53, Job 1:1, 2:11, 4:1, 15:1, 22:1, 42:7-9, Jeremiah 25:20, 49:20, Lamentations 4:21, Ezekiel 25:13, Amos 1:12, Obadiah 9, Habakkuk 3:3

³⁵² See footnote 71

As discussed in section **3.1 What is the Way of God?**, the most common Hebrew word for “way” or “path” is דֶּרֶךְ - derek. The synonym, אֹרֶחַ - ‘orah, is also very common. The Book of Proverbs frequently uses two other synonyms, נְתִיבָה - nethibah,³⁵³ and מַעְגָּל - ma’egal.³⁵⁴ **The Way of God is a main theme throughout all the sections of the Book of Proverbs.** The way of True Worshipers in learning the Way of God is also commonly addressed and is contrasted with the way of world, the way of sin and death.

In the first group, the proverbs are explicitly addressed to “my son”:

Hear, my son, your father’s **instruction**, and forsake not your mother’s **teaching (torah)** ...
(Proverbs 1:8 ESV)

The phrase is repeated more than a dozen times.³⁵⁵ In the ancient world, **it was common for instructors to refer to their pupils as “sons”**.³⁵⁶ Ultimately, **it is God**, through the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, who is **the Instructor of the Book of Proverbs**. The Instructor goes on to say:

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my **commandments** with you, making your ear attentive to **wisdom** and inclining your heart to **understanding**; yes, if you call out for **insight** and raise your voice for **understanding**,³⁵⁷
then you will understand the fear of [YHWH] and find the knowledge of God.³⁵⁸

For [YHWH] gives **wisdom**; from his mouth come **knowledge** and **understanding**;
he stores up sound **wisdom** for **the upright**;
he is a shield to those who **walk in integrity**, guarding the **paths (‘orah) of [justness] (mish’pat)**
and **watching over the way (derek) of his saints**.

Then you will understand righteousness (tzedek) and [justness] (mish’pat) and equity, every good path (ma’gal);

for **wisdom** will come into your heart, and **knowledge** will be pleasant to your [mind];
discretion will watch over you, **understanding** will guard you,

delivering you from the **way (derek) of evil**, from men of perverted speech,
who forsake the **paths (‘orah) of uprightness** to walk in the **ways (derek) of darkness**,
who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil,
men whose **paths (‘orah) are crooked**, and who are **devious in their ways (ma’gal)**.
(Proverbs 2:1-3, 5-15 ESV)

The Way of God is “**paths of justness**”, “**paths of uprightness**”. True Worshipers are “**the upright**”, “**his saints**”. God is “**watching over the way of his saints**” to deliver them from the way of the world, the “**way of evil**”, “**ways of darkness**”. Those who live by the way of the world, whose “**paths are crooked**”, are “**devious in their ways**”.

The **Way of God** is specifically characterized in several proverbs:

Hear, my son, and be wise, and **direct your heart in The Way (derek)**.

For the **commandment** is a lamp and the **teaching (torah)** a light,
and the reproofs of discipline are **the way (derek) of life** ...

Whoever **heeds instruction** is on the **path (‘orah) to life** ...

Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in **a righteous life**.

Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; **he who despises his ways (derek) will die**.

(Proverbs 23:19, 6:23, 10:17a, 16:31, 19:16 ESV see also 4:11, 10:29, 12:28, 15:10, 19, 24, 20:24)

In the first group of proverbs, “**wisdom**” is personified in chapter 1 verses 20-33 and all of chapter 8. “**Wisdom**” is extolled in chapter 3 verses 13-20 and chapter 9 verse 1-12. “Wisdom” is revealed to have been integral to the Plan of God. **YHWH inherently possessed “wisdom”** at the creation of the universe:

[YHWH] possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old.
Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

When he established the heavens, **I was there**;
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then **I was beside him**, like a master workman,

³⁵³ See Holliday page 249

³⁵⁴ See footnote 197

³⁵⁵ See 1:10,15, 2:1, 3:1,11,21, 4:10,20, 5:1,20, 6:1,3,20, 7:1; see also “O sons” 4:1, 5:7, 7:24, 8:32

³⁵⁶ See Proverbs 22:6

³⁵⁷ This is the “protasis”.

³⁵⁸ This is the “apodosis”.

and **I was daily his delight**, rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world and **delighting in the children of man**.

And now, **O sons**, listen to me: **blessed are those who keep my ways (derek)**.
Hear instruction and **be wise**, and do not neglect it.
(Proverbs 8:22-23, 27a, 29b-33 ESV see also 3:19-20)

When “wisdom” speaks, it is speaking for God. Through “wisdom”, God promises understanding of the Way of God and **the path to eternal life**. Through “wisdom”, God calls sinners to repent and learn the Way of God:

How long, O simple ones, **will you love being simple?**

How long will **scoffers** delight in their scoffing and **fools hate knowledge?**

If you turn at my reproof, behold, **I will pour out my spirit to you;**

I will make my words known to you.

Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of [YHWH],
would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof,
therefore **they shall eat the fruit of their way (derek)**, and have their fill of their own devices.

To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man.

O simple ones, **learn prudence**; O fools, **learn sense**.

Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right,
for **my mouth will utter truth**;

All the words of my mouth are righteous;

I walk in the **way (‘orah) of righteousness**, in the **paths (n^ethibah) of [justness] (mish^apat)** ...

For **whoever finds me finds life** and obtains favor from [YHWH] ...

(Proverbs 1:22-23, 29-31, 8:4-7a, 8a, 20, 35 ESV)

Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!

To him who lacks sense she says,

“... **Leave your simple ways,**³⁵⁹ **and live,** and **walk in the way (derek) of insight.**”

Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser;

teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

The **fear of [YHWH]** is the beginning of **wisdom**, and the **knowledge of the Holy One is insight**.

Blessed is the one who finds **wisdom**, and the one who gets **understanding** ...

Her **ways (derek)** are **ways (derek)** of pleasantness, and all her **paths (n^ethibah)** are peace.

She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.

(Proverbs 9:4, 6, 9-10, 3:13, 17-18 ESV)

As in the Psalms, the phrase “**the righteous**”³⁶⁰ is frequently used in Proverbs for **True Worshipers**.

Frequently the phrase is used in conjunction with one of the words for the Way of God – the implication being, that “**the way of the righteous**” is **living by the Way of God**:

So you will **walk in the way (derek) of the good** and **keep to the paths (‘orah) of the righteous (tzaddiq)**.

For the upright will inhabit the [earth],³⁶¹ and those with integrity will remain in it ...

But **the path (‘orah) of the righteous (tzaddiq)** is like the light of dawn,
which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

Ponder the **path (ma^agal)** of your feet; then all your **ways (derek)** will be sure.

The **righteousness (tz^adaqah) of the blameless keeps his way straight** ...

The righteousness (tz^adaqah) of the upright delivers them ...

The righteous (tzaddiq) is delivered from trouble ...

... by knowledge **the righteous (tzaddiq)** are delivered.

Whoever is **steadfast in righteousness (tz^adaqah) will live** ...

... **those of blameless ways (derek)** are his delight.

The **fruit of the righteous (tzaddiq) is a tree of life**, and whoever captures [lives] is wise.

The **father of the righteous (tzaddiq)** will greatly rejoice; he who fathers **a wise son** will be glad in him.

Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice.

My son, **give me your heart**, and let your eyes **observe my ways (derek)**.

(Proverbs 2:20-21, 4:18, 26, 11:5a,6a,8a,9b,19a,20b,30, 23:24-26 ESV see also 13:5-6,9, 15:28-29)

³⁵⁹ The Hebrew word is פְּתִי -pethi, “simple person”, “young person”, “naïve person”; see Holladay page 301;
it is used also in verses 1:4,22,32, 7:7, 8:5, 9:4,16, 14:15,18, 19:25, 21:11, 22:3, and 27:12.

³⁶⁰ Note: in Proverbs chapter 10, the phrase occurs 13 times; in chapter 11, 10 times.

³⁶¹ Here, אֶרֶץ - ‘eret, is better translated “earth”; see Psalm 37:9,11,22,29,34, Matthew 5:5.

The Way of God, the way of *mish^epatim*, is carefully laid out in the Book of Proverbs. This is what every True Worshipper must strive for, but **there are pitfalls along the path to life**. The most dangerous is to begin to **trust in one's own righteousness**. This was Job's problem.³⁶² The Book of Proverbs is not without **warnings about self righteousness**:

Trust in [YHWH] with all your heart, and **do not lean on your own understanding**.

Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.

Whoever trusts in his riches will fall ...

Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.

There is **a way (derek) that seems right to a man**, but its end **is the way (derek) to death**.

Every way (derek) of a man is right in his own eyes, but [YHWH] weighs the heart.

All **the ways (derek) of a man are pure in his own eyes**, but [YHWH] weighs the spirit.

(Proverbs 3:5, 28:26, 11:28a, 25:19, 14:12 (// 16:25), 21:2, 16:2 ESV see also 12:15, 22:17-19)

A major theme of the Book of Proverbs is to **avoid the way of the world**,³⁶³ the way of sin and death.

Most often, the way of the world is **contrasted with the Way of God**:

My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

If they say,

“Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason;
like [the grave] let us swallow them alive, and whole, like those who go down to the pit;
we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder;
throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse”—

my son, **do not walk in the way (derek) with them**; hold back your foot from **their paths (n^ethibah)**,

... but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an **ambush for their own lives**.

Such are **the ways (‘orah) of everyone who is greedy** for unjust gain;

it takes away the life of its possessors.

Do not enter the path (‘orah) of the wicked, and **do not walk in the way (derek) of the evil**.

The **way (derek) of the wicked** is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

The wicked accepts a **bribe** in secret to **pervert the ways (‘orah) of justice (mish^epat)**.

Make no friendship with **a man given to anger**, nor go with a wrathful man,

lest you learn his ways (‘orah) and entangle yourself in a snare.

Better is **a poor man** who walks in his integrity than **a rich man who is crooked in his ways (derek)**.

Whoever misleads the upright into an evil way (derek) will fall into his own pit,

but the blameless swill have a goodly inheritance.

(Proverbs 1:10-15, 18-19, 4:14, 19, 17:23, 22:24-25, 28:6, 10 ESV

see also 3:31, 10:9, 13:15, 15:9, 19:3, 21:8, 22:5)

A significant sub-theme of the Book of Proverbs is the **avoidance of adultery**.³⁶⁴ While “physical adultery” is certainly in view, **the most important application is “spiritual adultery”**, spiritual whoredom: **idolatry**.³⁶⁵

So you will be delivered from **the forbidden woman**,

from **the adulteress** with her smooth words,

who forsakes the companion of her youth and **forgets the covenant of her God**;

for her house sinks down to death, and **her paths (ma^egal) to the departed**;

none who go to her come back, nor do they **regain the paths (‘orah) of life**.

For the lips of a forbidden woman **drip honey**, and her speech is smoother than oil,

but in **the end** she is **bitter as wormwood**, sharp as a two-edged sword.

And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth.

Let not your heart turn aside to her ways (derek); do not stray into **her paths (n^ethibah)**,

for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng.

Her house is the way to [the grave], going down to **the chambers of death**.

(Proverbs 2:16-19, 5:3-4, 7:24-27 ESV see also 5:5-6, 6:24-35, 7:5-23, 9:13-18)

³⁶² See the discussion in subsection “*Righteous Acts*” in section **3.5.1 The Book of Job**; see also the discussion of “*self righteousness*” in section **3.1.2.3 The Way of the World**.

³⁶³ See section **3.1.2 Rejecting the Way of the World**

³⁶⁴ For a general discussion of the Biblical view on “adultery”, see section **5.8 Adultery** in the paper “*The Human Condition*” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

³⁶⁵ See the discussion in section **6. Spiritual Whoredom** in the paper “*The Human Condition*” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

The Book of Ecclesiastes

The Book of Ecclesiastes has traditionally been ascribed to Solomon.³⁶⁶ **The Book is in fact anonymous** – the author claims only to be “a preacher”, a descendant of David, and to be a king in Jerusalem:

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
(Ecclesiastes 1:1 ESV)

If Solomon is the author, the Book of Ecclesiastes would seem to reflect his understanding late in life after his apostasy³⁶⁷ and **having repented**. **The Preacher had lived a long life and experienced much**. He had experienced life apart from God and he had experienced living by the Way of God. In the end, he concluded that **the only thing of value is to live by the Way of God**:

Vanity of vanities, **says the Preacher**, vanity of vanities! **All is vanity**.

What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.

And I applied my heart to **seek and to search out by wisdom** all that is done under heaven.

It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.

I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, **all is vanity** and a **striving after wind**.

And **I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly**.

I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. ...

Then I saw that **there is more gain in wisdom than in folly**, as **there is more gain in light than in darkness**.

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth ... **The end of the matter**; all has been heard.

Fear God and keep his commandments, for **this is the whole duty of man**.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

(Ecclesiastes 1:2-3, 13-14, 17, 2:13, 12:1a, 13-14 ESV)

The Preacher determined that “**it is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man**” – life apart from God has no real meaning. **To learn to live by the Way of God is the only real value in life**, but **living by the Way of God provides a person the best possible life** here and now on this earth:

There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil.

This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

For to the one who pleases him **God has given wisdom** and **knowledge** and **joy** ...

Behold, what I have seen to be **good and fitting** is to eat and drink

and **find enjoyment** in all the **toil** with which one toils under the sun

the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.

Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions land power to enjoy them,

and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—**this is the gift of God**.

In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider:

God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.

And **I commend joy**, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.

Go, eat your bread with joy, and **drink your wine with a merry heart**,

for **God has already approved what you do**.

Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because **that is your portion in life** and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might,

for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in [the grave], to which you are going.

So **if a person lives many years**, let him **rejoice in them all**;

but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth.

Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes.

But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

(Ecclesiastes 2:24-26a, 5:18-19, 7:14, 8:15, 9:7-10, 11:8-9 ESV)

This is what Jesus meant, as reported by the **Apostle John**:

I came that they may have life and **have it abundantly**.

(John 10:10b ESV)

³⁶⁶ See the commentaries and introductions for discussions of date and authorship.

³⁶⁷ See 1 Kings 11:1-8

The Song of Solomon

As with Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon has traditionally been ascribed to Solomon.³⁶⁸ **The Song reads like script for a play.** The setting is **two young people in love preparing for their wedding.** There are two main actor, **the bride**, a young Shulammite woman,³⁶⁹ a “country girl”, and **the groom**,³⁷⁰ a “king”.³⁷¹ There is also an unspecified “**chorus**” which occasionally sings comments:

SHE:

Let my beloved come to his garden,
and eat its choicest fruits.

HE:

I came to my garden, my sister, **my bride,**
I gathered my myrrh with my spice,
I ate my honeycomb with my honey,
I drank my wine with my milk.

OTHERS:

Eat, friends, drink,
and **be drunk with love!**

(Song of Solomon 4:16b, 5:1 ESV)

The Song of Solomon is a realization of the injunction from Ecclesiastes:

Enjoy life with the wife whom you love,
all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun,
because **that is your portion in life** ... (Ecclesiastes 9:9a ESV)

The beauty of a marriage between a man and woman is the most precious thing God has given to human beings in this physical life.³⁷² God uses the “**marriage relationship**” as a **metaphor for the relationship he requires with True Worshipers.** This began with the ancient nation of Israel. YHWH asserts that the Sinai Covenant made him the “husband” of Israel:

... **the covenant** that I made with their fathers on the day **when I took them** by the hand
to bring them **out of the land of Egypt,**
my covenant that **they broke, though I was their husband,** declares [YHWH].
(Jeremiah 31:32 ESV)

In dealing with the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom, the **Prophet Hosea** reports the words of YHWH that **Isarel’s “adultery” had terminated the marriage relationship:**

Plead with your mother, plead—for **she is not my wife,**
and **I am not her husband—**
that she put away **her whoring** from her face, and **her adultery** from between her breasts;
(Hosea 2:2 ESV)

In dealing with the Southern Kingdom some 150 years later, the **Prophet Jeremiah** reports YHWH’s allusion to the **divorce of the Northern Kingdom** and the **similar current situation with Southern Kingdom:**

[YHWH] said to me in the days of King Josiah:
“Have you seen what she did, that **faithless one, Israel,**
how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there **played the whore?**
And I thought, ‘After she has done all this she will return to me,’
but she did not return, and her **treacherous sister Judah** saw it.
She **saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one,** Israel,
I had sent her away with a decree of divorce.
Yet her **treacherous sister Judah** did not fear, but she too went and **played the whore.**
Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land,
committing adultery with stone and tree.
Yet for all this her treacherous sister **Judah did not return** to me with her whole heart,
but in pretense, declares [YHWH].”

³⁶⁸ Again, see the commentaries and introductions for discussion of date and authorship.

³⁶⁹ See Song of Solomon 6:13; this likely implies she was from the village of Shunem in the tribal territory of Issachar.

³⁷⁰ The allusions to “Solomon” do NOT necessarily imply that he is the groom; see Song of Solomon 1:1,5, 3:7,9,11, 8:11,12.

³⁷¹ See Song of Solomon 1:4,12, 7:5

³⁷² For a discussion of the Bible’s perspective on marriage, see section **5.5 Marriage** in the paper “**The Human Condition**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Surely, as a treacherous wife leaves her husband, so have you been treacherous to me,
O house of Israel, declares [YHWH].
(Jeremiah 3:6-10, 20 ESV)

The **Prophet Ezekiel** reports two large allegories from YHWH to express the adulterous relationship of Israel with God.³⁷³ The **Prophet Isaiah** looks to a time when YHWH will restore the marriage relationship with the New Israel:

For your Maker is your husband, [YHWH] of hosts is his name;
and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

For [YHWH] has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit,
like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God.

For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you.

In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you,

but with everlasting [hesed] I will have compassion on you, says [YHWH], your Redeemer.

(Isaiah 54:5-8 ESV)

The **Apostle Paul** explicitly applies the metaphor of marriage to the relationship of Jesus Christ with the New Testament Church:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife
even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,
that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
that she might be holy and without blemish.

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it,
just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh.” (citing Genesis 2:24)

This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

(Ephesians 5:22-32 ESV)

The point at which Jesus “might present the church to himself in splendor” is of course the **First Resurrection**. The “marriage” between Jesus Christ and the New Testament Church is described in Revelation chapter 19:

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,

“Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,

for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” —

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

And the angel said to me,

“Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

(Revelation 19:6-9 ESV)

The Prophet Ezekiel

The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel contains a large section of “wisdom material” – chapters 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19; as well as a large “allegory” in chapter 23. Ezekiel’s purpose was to identify those persons among his fellow exiles whom God was calling, and to bring them to repentance.³⁷⁴ **The exiles firmly believed in the “inviolability” of the Temple and the City of Jerusalem.** For about seven years, Ezekiel brought God’s word to the people that the city would be destroyed. **The sins of the people in violating the Way of God required this punishment.** Ezekiel, uniquely among the Writing Prophets, uses the genre of “wisdom literature” to support his preaching.

³⁷³ See Ezekiel chapters 16 and 23, and the discussion in the next sub-section.

³⁷⁴ See the discussion of this in section **2.3.3 The Purpose of the Restoration** in the paper “Pillar Two - The Plan of God” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

In Chapter 15, Ezekiel reports **the parable of the “Wood of the Vine”**. The point being that due to the **people’s faithlessness to the Way of God**, they, like vine wood, are useless:

And the word of [YHWH] came to me:

“Son of man, **how does the wood of the vine surpass any wood** ...
Is wood taken from it to make anything? ...”

Therefore thus says the Lord [YHWH]:

“Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel,
so have **I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem**. ...

And I will make the land desolate, **because they have acted faithlessly**,
declares the Lord [YHWH].”

(Ezekiel 15:1-2a, 3a, 6, 8 ESV)

Chapter 16 is an extended allegory, “YHWH’s Faithless Bride”. Israel is identified as an abandoned child whom God salvaged (verses 1-7). The child grew into a beautiful young woman whom God took as a wife (verses 8-14). **The “Bride” fell into the most grievous sin, self righteousness**, which led into **abominable idolatry**:

But **you trusted in your beauty** and played the whore because of your renown ...

And you took your **sons** and your **daughters**, whom you had borne to me, and **these you sacrificed** ...
you slaughtered my children and delivered them up **as an offering by fire** ...

(Ezekiel 16:15a, 20a, 21 ESV)

The details of the “whoredom” are particularized in verses 23-36. God’s judgement and impending punishment are given in verses 37-43. In verse 44-52, the allegory is expanded: **Jerusalem** is caste as the “middle sister” between **Samaria** and **Sodom**. Her punishment is fitting:

Not only did you walk in their ways and do according to their abominations;

within a very little time **you were more corrupt** than they in all your ways. ...

Behold, this was the guilt of your sister **Sodom**: she and her daughters had **pride**, **excess** of food,
and **prosperous ease**, but **did not aid the poor and needy**.

They were **haughty** and did an **abomination** before me.

You bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations, declares [YHWH].

For thus says the Lord [YHWH]: I will deal with you as you have done,

you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant ...

(Ezekiel 16:47, 49-50a, 58-59 ESV)

Chapter 17 contain the **parable of “Two Eagles and a Vine”**. It describe the treachery and punishment of Zedekiah. The chapter ends with a Messianic prophecy: the line of Jehoiachin through Zerubbabel will lead to the Messiah.³⁷⁵

Chapter 18 commences with **a proverb** and goes on to discuss **“individual responsibility”**.³⁷⁶

The word of [YHWH] came to me:

“What do you mean by repeating **this proverb** concerning the land of Israel,

‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’?

As I live, declares the Lord [YHWH], **this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel**.

Behold, all [lives] are mine; the [life] of the father as well as the [life] of the son is mine:

the [person] who sins shall die. ...”

(Ezekiel 18:1-4 ESV)

Chapter 19 is a **“lament”** over the demise of the Davidic Dynasty.

Chapter 23 is Ezekiel’s other extended allegory. **Samaria** is represented by **“Oholah”**, and **Jerusalem** is represented by **“Oholibah”**; two “sisters” who became whores in their youth in Egypt and continued their whoredom into adulthood (verses 1-21). The sisters became “wives” of YHWH:

They became mine, and they bore sons and daughters.

(Ezekiel 23:4b)

³⁷⁵ See Matthew 1:12-13, Luke 3:27

³⁷⁶ See the discussion of this in sub-section **“Individual Responsibility”** of section **3.4.2.2 The Sins of Israel**.

Oholah was punished by the Assyrians (verses 9-10). Oholibah is about to be punished by the Babylonians (verses 22-35). **Judgement is passed on Oholah and Oholibah for gross violations of the Way of God:**

[YHWH] said to me:

“Son of man, will you **judge Oholah and Oholibah**? Declare to them their abominations.

For they have **committed adultery**, and **blood is on their hands**.

With their idols they have committed adultery,

and they have even **offered up** to them for food the **children** whom they had borne to me.

Moreover, this they have done to me: they have **defiled my sanctuary** on the same day

and **profaned my Sabbaths**.

For when they had **slaughtered their children in sacrifice to their idols**,

on the same day **they came into my sanctuary to profane it**.

And behold, this is what they did in my house. ...”

(Ezekiel 23:36-39 ESV)

In all the Wisdom Literature, the Way of God is the main theme:

- **Job** had to come to a true understanding of the relationship God required of him – then he repented and was in a state to attain *mish^epatim*, the godly understanding, wisdom, and discernment that comes from living by the Way of God.
- Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, **King David** invented the literary genre “psalm”. King David’s Psalms as well as the Psalms of **later Psalmists** are a treasure trove of godly understanding, wisdom, and discernment. The Psalms provide True Worshipers with some of the deepest insight into the Way of God.
- The **Book of Proverbs** personifies “Wisdom” showing it to be an inherent property of the Nature of God. The themes of godly understanding, wisdom, and discernment are reiterated from the perspective of practical living.
- The **Book of Ecclesiastes** looks at life from every perspective and concludes that the only thing of value is to learn to live by the Way of God.
- The **Song of Solomon** foreshadows the “marriage” relationship of Jesus Christ with the New Testament Church at the First Resurrection. Those persons who participate in the marriage will be those who successfully learned to live by the Way of God thus establishing their candidacy for the gift of eternal life.
- The **Prophet Ezekiel** uniquely used the genre of “wisdom literature” to document Israel’s failure to adhere to the Way of God.

4. God is Love

When the **two Divine Beings** in eternity **created their Plan**, their most fundamental motivation was “love”. They desired to share their existence with other Beings like themselves – so **they created the concept of a “family”**, a group of like individuals bound together by the principle of “love”. The **Apostle John** describes it this way:

Beloved, let us love one another, for **love is from God**,

and whoever loves has been [begotten] of God and knows God.

Anyone who does not love does not know God, because **God is love**.

In this **the love of God was made manifest** among us, that **God sent his only Son into the world**,

so that we might live through him. **In this is love**, not that we have loved God

but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Beloved, **if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another**.

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, **God abides in us** and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because **he has given us of his Spirit**.

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and **whoever abides in love abides in God**, and **God abides in him**.

By **this is love perfected** with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

We love because he first loved us.

If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar;
for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.
And this commandment we have from him: **whoever loves God must also love his brother.**
(1 John 4:7-21 ESV)

The **Apostle Paul** elaborates on the characteristics of “love”:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, **but have not love**, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith,
so as to remove mountains, **but have not love**, I am nothing.

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, **but have not love**, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; **love does** not envy or boast; **it is not** arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way; **it is not** irritable or resentful;

it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but **rejoices with the truth.**

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends.

As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

... So now **faith, hope, and love** abide, these three; but **the greatest of these is love.**

(1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13 ESV)

God’s love is described by the Hebrew word: חֶסֶד - hesed, “covenant love”.³⁷⁷ The concept of “covenant” is fundamental to “love”.³⁷⁸ God has repeatedly used the marriage relationship to exemplify the relationship he desires with human beings. **A “marriage” is based on a “covenant”.** The New Testament **rite of baptism** enters a True Worshipper into a “covenant” relationship with God. This relationship is metaphorically a “marriage” relationship.³⁷⁹ **The God Family is bound together by hesed, covenant love.**

In order for a human being to become part of the God Family, that person must take on the Nature of God. All that is evil in a person must be purged out by the Holy Spirit and replaced by godly character attributes. **That can only be accomplished by living by the Way of God.** The **Plan of God** was created so that there would be a path for human beings to walk upon at any point in history and have the ability to live by the **Way of God**. Developing godly character is NOT an automatic or mechanical process – it requires a lifelong commitment to learning and living by the **Way of God**.

An outcome of living by the Way of God is to acquire true “reverence” for God.³⁸⁰ This is what it means to **“know God and be known by God”**. True reverence for God is the antithesis of “self righteousness”. As human beings there is a vast gulf between what we are and what the Great Creator God is. In the **parable of “Lazarus and the Rich Man”**, Jesus emphasized the gulf:

And besides all this, **between us and you a great chasm has been fixed,**
in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able,
and **none may cross from there to us.**

(Luke 16:26 ESV)

To **“know God”** is to know how great he is, how much above us he is, how different **Divine Nature** is from human nature. Realization of this is the beginning of conversion, but **it takes a lifetime of living by the Way of God to fully comprehend it.** Moses was clear that is necessary to **“know God and be known by God”**:

Moses said to [YHWH],

“See, you say to me, ‘Bring up this people,’

but you have not let me know whom you will send with me.

Yet you have said, **‘I know you by name,** and you have also found favor in my sight.’

Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight,

please **show me now your ways, that I may know you** in order to find favor in your sight. ...”

And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

³⁷⁷ See the discussion of *hesed* in section **1.4.3 Attributes of God’s Character** in the paper “**First Pillar - The Nature of God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

³⁷⁸ See the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

³⁷⁹ See the discussion in sub-section **The Song of Solomon**.

³⁸⁰ See **Excursus 5 – Reverence** נִתְּנָה in the paper “**True Worship of the True God**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

And [YHWH] said to Moses,
“This very thing that you have spoken I will do, for you have found favor in my sight,
and I know you by name.”
(Exodus 33:12-13a, 14, 17 ESV)

King David prays on behalf of True Worshipers:

Oh, continue your [hesed] to those who know you, and your righteousness to the upright of heart!
(Psalm 36:10 ESV)

The **Apostle Paul** reminds the new converts in Galatia of their change in status:

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.
But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God ...
(Galatians 4:8-9 ESV)

In his final prayer, reported by the **Apostle John**, Jesus prays for the Apostles and for all who would become True Worshipers through the efforts of the Apostles in the New Testament Church:

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said,
“Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,
since you have given him authority over all flesh,
to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.
And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.
They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.
Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ...
I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you,
that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you,
and these know that you have sent me.
I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known,
that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”
(John 17:1-3, 16-17, 20-21, 25-26 ESV)

The length and breadth and depth of the mind of God are so vast that they cannot be plumbed.

King David recognized this:

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!
(Psalm 139:17 ESV)

The **Apostle John** recognized the futility of attempting to capture the extent of Jesus’ life and work in a finite form:

Now there are also many other things that Jesus did.
Were every one of them to be written,
I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.
(John 21:25 ESV)

This is the lesson of “mish^epatim”. The teaching of God is infinite – it CANNOT be encapsulated in physical form. The Bible is vast – a human lifetime is NOT sufficient to master it, but it is only the beginning. The Plan of God continues after the Bible stops. The mind of God is integral to the **Nature of God**. Living by the Way of God is to learn the mind of God. The word “mish^epatim” entails how those to whom God sees fit to grant the gift of eternal life will be able to extend the understanding, wisdom, and discernment learned by living by the Way of God. In order grow in grace and knowledge in eternity, it will be necessary to move on from what our physical minds can comprehend and expand into the spiritual minds provided by the transformation from physical to spiritual. The word “mish^epatim” explains this expansion:

And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your [mish^epatim].
(Psalm 119:43 ESV)

Epilogue

This completes, **“The Way of God”**, the third part of the three-part document covering **“The Three Pillars of Revelation”**.

Part One **“The Nature of God”**, carefully goes through the various parts of the Bible and presents a systematic analysis of the Nature of God. Specifically, it analyzes the basic existence of God – “What is God”. Then it discusses God’s self-revelation – “Who is God”. The spiritual dwelling place of God is “eternity” – God interacts with humanity from that location. More than a dozen specific character attributes of God are discussed in detail, and the paper ends with a discussion of the Holy Spirit.

Part Two, **“The Plan of God”**, discusses God’s purpose for human beings and how God is accomplishing that purpose. Specifically, it discusses “The God Family”, the nature of “Salvation”, the history of God’s working with human beings – “Salvation History”, and “The Role of Prophecy” in announcing and accomplishing the Plan of God.

Please take the time to also read parts one and two!

Excursus 1 – Devoted to Destruction: *ḥaram*

The verbal root **חָרַם** - ḥaram, carries a range of meaning including “devote to destruction”, “utterly destroy”. The derivative noun **חֵרֶם** - ḥerem, carries a range of meaning including “devoted thing”, “decree of destruction”.³⁸¹ There are also several homonyms with quite different meanings – these are NOT discussed in this excursus.

N. Lohfink provides the following more precise definitions:

The hiphil of *ḥrm* means “consecrate something or someone as a permanent and definitive offering for the sanctuary; in war, consecrate a city and its inhabitants to destruction; carry out the destruction; totally annihilate a population in war; kill.”

The hophal means “be condemned to capital punishment with certain additional conditions; the execution of the punishment; confiscation of property.”

The noun *ḥērem* “the object or person consecrated in the sense of the hiphil or condemned in the sense of the hophal or contaminated by entering into their deadly sphere; the act of consecration or of extermination and killing.”

(TDOT volume V page 188)

Lohfink’s first nuance, **“consecrate something or someone as a permanent and definitive offering ...”**, brings out the complexity of this analysis. **The concept of “ḥaram” is integrally associated with the concept of “qadash”, “to be holy”**. The concept of “qadash” is discussed in sections **1.4.1 God is Holy** and **Holiness** **חָדַשׁ** - *qadash* in the paper **“First Pillar - The Nature of God”** located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>.

Seminal Scriptures

God gave to Moses the scriptures which define ḥaram:

Whoever **sacrifices to any god**, other than [YHWH] alone, shall be **devoted to destruction (ḥaram)**. (Exodus 22:20 ESV)

But **no devoted thing (herem)** that a man **devotes (ḥaram)** to [YHWH], of anything that he has, whether **man** or **beast**, or of his inherited **field**, shall be sold or redeemed; **every devoted thing (herem) is most holy (qodesh qadashim)**³⁸² to [YHWH].

No one devoted (herem), who is to be devoted for destruction (ḥaram) from mankind, **shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death.**

(Leviticus 27:28-29 ESV)

Then **[YHWH] spoke to Aaron,**

“Behold, I have given you charge of the contributions made to me,

all the consecrated things (qodesh) of the people of Israel.

I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual due.

³⁸¹ See TWOT article 744 pages 324-325; TDOT volume V pages 180-199; BDB pages 355-356

³⁸² See the discussion of this phrase in **Excursus 3 – Survey of qodesh qadashim** in the paper **“Seventy Periods Prophecy”** located at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>.

This shall be yours of **the most holy things (qodesh qadashim)**, reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs, every grain offering of theirs and every sin offering of theirs and every guilt offering of theirs, which they render to me, shall be **most holy (qodesh qadashim)** to you and to your sons.

In a most holy place (qodesh qadashim) shall you eat it.

Every male may eat it; **it is holy (qodesh) to you.**

Every devoted thing (herem) in Israel shall be yours. ...

(Numbers 18:8-10, 14 ESV see also Ezekiel 44:29)

When [YHWH] your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you, and **when [YHWH] your God gives them over to you**, and you defeat them, then **you must devote them to complete destruction (haharem taharim)**³⁸³. You shall **make no covenant** with them and **show no mercy** to them.

The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire.

You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for **it is an abomination** to [YHWH] your God.

And **you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house** and **become devoted to destruction (herem)** like it.

You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for **it is devoted to destruction (herem)**. (Deuteronomy 7:1-2, 25-26 ESV)

Analysis of the definition of *haram*:

- Persons who are under *haram* for cause must be killed, **“one devoted, who is to be devoted for destruction”, “shall surely be put to death”**
- The most basic reason for *haram* is “idolatry”, **“sacrifices to any god”, “devoted to destruction”**
- Because the inhabitants of the promised land, **“when YHWH your God brings you into the land”**, were fully committed to “idolatry”, *haram* had to be applied to them, **“when YHWH your God gives them over to you”, “devote them to complete destruction”**
- Chattels and animals can be placed under *haram*, **“a man devotes”, “field”, “beast”**
- All chattels and animals, to which *haram* was applied, were placed under stewardship of the High Priest, **“YHWH spoke to Aaron”, “all the consecrated things”, “every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours”**
- Items of value placed under *haram*, **“it is devoted to destruction”**, were acknowledged as a temptation, **“you shall not covet the silver or the gold”, “it is an abomination”**
- Acquisition of items under *haram*, rendered the acquirer under *haram*, **“you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house”, “become devoted to destruction”**

Leviticus 27:28 implies that a person can have *haram* applied for other than cause:

But **no devoted thing (herem)** that **a man devotes (haram)** to [YHWH], of anything that he has, whether **man** or beast, or of his inherited field, shall be sold or redeemed; (ESV)

This would seem to apply to the “firstborn son”.³⁸⁴

... you shall set apart to [YHWH] all that first opens the womb.

All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be [YHWH's].

Every firstborn of a donkey you shall **redeem with a lamb**,

or **if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck.**

Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

(Exodus 13:12-13 ESV)

And [YHWH] spoke to Moses, saying,

“Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the people of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the people of Israel.

The Levites shall be mine, for **all the firstborn are mine.**

On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt,

I consecrated (qadash) for my own all the firstborn in Israel, **both of man and of beast.**

They shall be mine: I am [YHWH].”

(Numbers 3:11-13 ESV)

³⁸³ This is an idiomatic expression, literally “to destruction you shall destroy”, implying utter destruction.

³⁸⁴ See the discussion in *Excursus 7 – The Firstborn Son* in the paper “True Worship of the True God” locate at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

Everything that opens the womb of all flesh, whether man or beast, which they offer to [YHWH], shall be yours.
 Nevertheless, the firstborn of man you shall redeem,
 and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.
 And their redemption price (at a month old you shall redeem them) you shall fix at five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.
 But the firstborn of a cow, or the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy (qodesh).
 You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar and shall burn their fat as a fire offering, with a pleasing aroma to [YHWH].
 (Numbers 18:15-17 ESV)

Analysis of “firstborn” male:

- All the “firstborn”, man and animal, are claimed by God, “set apart to YHWH all that first opens the womb”, “all the firstborn are mine”
- The “firstborn” are holy, “I consecrated for my own all the firstborn”, the same as persons or things under *haram*, “every devoted thing is most holy”
- All persons are to be redeemed, not killed, “every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem”
- Firstborn of clean animals are to be killed in sacrifice, “cow ... sheep ... goat”, “you shall not redeem; they are holy”, “a fire offering”
- Firstborn of unclean animals are to be redeemed, “firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem”, or killed, “if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck”, as with a person under *haram* for cause, “no one devoted, who is to be devoted for destruction from mankind, shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death”
- Redemption appears to be either in kind, “redeem with a lamb”, or in silver, “redemption price ... five shekels in silver”

After they had crossed into the Promised Land, Moses enjoined the Israelites to be internally vigilant against idolatry. **If an Israelite city fell into idolatry, *haram* was to be applied:**

If you hear in one of your cities, which [YHWH] your God is giving you to dwell there, that certain worthless fellows have gone out among you and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying,

‘Let us go and serve other gods,’

which you have not known, then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently.

And behold, **if it be true and certain that such an abomination has been done among you,** you shall surely **put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, devoting it to destruction (haram),** all who are in it and its cattle, with the edge of the sword.

You shall **gather all its spoil** into the midst of its open square and **burn the city and all its spoil** with fire, **as a whole burnt offering** to [YHWH] your God. It shall be a heap forever. It shall not be built again.

None of the devoted things (herem) shall stick to your hand ...

(Deuteronomy 13:12-17a ESV)

The case of “Achan” is an object lesson in the “holiness” of item placed under *haram*:

But **the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things (herem),** for **Achan** the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, **took some of the devoted things (herem).**

And the anger of [YHWH] burned against the people of Israel.

[YHWH] said to Joshua,

“Get up! Why have you fallen on your face?”

Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; **they have taken some of the devoted things (herem);** they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings.

Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies.

They turn their backs before their enemies,

because **they have become devoted for destruction (herem).**

I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things (herem) from among you.

Get up! **Consecrate the people** and say,
 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow; for thus says [YHWH], God of Israel,
"There are devoted things (herem) in your midst, O Israel.
 You cannot stand before your enemies
 until you **take away the devoted things (herem)** from among you."
 And **he who is taken with the devoted things (herem) shall be burned with fire,**
 he and all that he has, because he has transgressed the covenant of [YHWH],
 and because he has done an outrageous thing in Israel."

(Joshua 7:1, 10-13, 15 ESV)

All persons, animals, and chattels in Ai were under **haram**. Achan took some items and hid them in his tent, **"they have taken some of the devoted things"**, **"there are devoted things in your midst"**. These items being among the camp of Israel rendered all Israel under **haram**, **"Israel has sinned"**, **"they have become devoted for destruction"**. Israel was in an "unclean" state so further contact with God was impossible, **"I will be with you no more"**. Only purging under **haram** could restore Israel to a "clean" state, **"consecrate the people"**. The devoted chattels had to be destroyed or placed under stewardship of the High Priest, **"destroy the devoted things from among you"**, **"take away the devoted things"**. The persons responsible remained under **haram**, and, so, faced death, **"he who is taken with the devoted things shall be burned with fire"**.

Anything that is in an "unclean" state cannot come into contact with something that is "holy".³⁸⁵ If an "unclean thing" does come into contact with something that is "holy", it must be destroyed; it is placed under **haram**. Things are made "holy" by consecration from God:

Seven days you shall **make atonement for the altar and consecrate it,**
 and **the altar shall be most holy.**
Whatever touches the altar shall become holy.

I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar.

Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests.

I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God.

(Exodus 29:37, 44-45 ESV)

Only "clean" animals could be sacrificed. Anything which is "clean", and which touches something "holy", becomes "holy", **"whatever touches the altar shall become holy"**. Sacrifices became "holy" by placing them on the altar, they could never be returned to "common" use, so they must be consumed by fire on the altar: the application of **haram**. Priests had to be accounted "holy" to perform their duties in the Tabernacle. A sin offering was required for God to account a person "holy". The classic object lesson related to "holiness" is the incident of Nadab and Abihu:³⁸⁶

Now **Nadab** and **Abihu**, the sons of Aaron,
 each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it
 and **offered unauthorized fire** before [YHWH], which **he had not commanded them.**
 And fire came out from before [YHWH] and consumed them, and **they died** before [YHWH].

Then Moses said to Aaron,

"This is what [YHWH] has said:

'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified,
 and **before all the people I will be glorified.'**"

And Aaron held his peace.

(Leviticus 10:1-3 ESV)

Clearly Nabab and Abihu were NOT in a proper state of "holiness". Perhaps they had not performed a sin offering. In any case, their action, they **"offered unauthorized fire"**, was an innovation, something that God **"had not commanded them"**. They were considered to be in an "unclean" state. When they came into contact with something holy, the Tabernacle tent, they were placed under **haram**, and **"they died"**. The object lesson is clear: True Worshippers are to learn and **live by the Way of God**, to do what God says, **"among those who are near me I will be sanctified"**. Furthermore, the Levitical Priesthood as a type of all True Worshippers, had the responsibility to carry the Way of God to all the world, **"before all the people I will be glorified"**:

³⁸⁵ For further discussion, see section 6. *Holiness* in the paper "To Be a Priest" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

³⁸⁶ See further discussion of this incident in section 10.2 *Corruption of Sacrifices* in the paper "True Worship of the True God" located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

You are to distinguish between the holy and the common,
and between the unclean and the clean,
and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that [YHWH] has spoken to them by Moses.
(Leviticus 10:10-11 ESV)

The meaning of *haram* is clear: for persons or animals placed under *haram* for cause, death; consumable chattels are to be burned; non-consumable chattels, like precious metals, are consigned to the High Priest. All “firstborn” are under *haram*: persons must be redeemed; unclean animals can be redeemed or killed; clean animals must be sacrificed, according to the prescriptions in Leviticus chapters one through seven.

The Application of *haram*

By the end of the Wilderness Period, the Israelites were beginning to “get” what God was teaching them. As they were about to leave Kadesh-barnea, the King of Arad attacked them possibly relishing a result like thirty-eight years previous:

But Moses said,

“Why now are you transgressing the command of [YHWH], when that will not succeed?
Do not go up, for [YHWH] is not among you, lest you be struck down before your enemies.
For there the Amalekites and the Canaanites are facing you, and you shall fall by the sword.
Because you have turned back from following [YHWH], [YHWH] will not be with you.”

But they presumed to go up to the heights of the hill country,
although neither the ark of the covenant of [YHWH] nor Moses departed out of the camp.

Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them and pursued them, even to Hormah.

(Numbers 14:41-45 ESV)

When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the Negeb,
heard that Israel was coming by the way of Atharim,
he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive.

And Israel vowed a vow to [YHWH] and said,

“If you will indeed give this people into my hand,
then I will devote (*haram*) their cities to destruction.”

And [YHWH] heeded the voice of Israel and gave over the Canaanites,
and they devoted (*haram*) them and their cities to destruction.

So the name of the place was called Hormah.

(Numbers 21:1-3 ESV)

Moses’ instructions from God were clear regarding the territory to be taken for an inheritance:

But in the cities of these peoples that [YHWH] your God is giving you for an inheritance,
you shall save alive nothing that breathes,

but you shall devote them to complete destruction (*haharem taharim*).³⁸⁷

the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites,
as the [YHWH] your God has commanded,

that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices

that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against [YHWH] your God.

(Deuteronomy 20:16-18 ESV)

When the Israelites conquered the Amorite kings Sihon and Og east of the Jordan *haram* was applied:

And [YHWH] said to me,

‘Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you.

Begin to take possession, that you may occupy his land.’

Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Jahaz.

And [YHWH] our God gave him over to us, and we defeated him and his sons and all his people.

And we captured all his cities at that time

and devoted to destruction (*haram*) every city, men, women, and children. We left no survivors.

(Deuteronomy 2:31-34 ESV)

So [YHWH] our God gave into our hand Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people,
and we struck him down until he had no survivor left.

And we devoted them to destruction (*haram*), as we did to Sihon the king of Heshbon,
devoting to destruction (*haram*) every city, men, women, and children.

(Deuteronomy 3:3, 6 ESV)

³⁸⁷ This is an idiomatic expression, literally “to destruction you shall destroy”, implying utter destruction.

Starting with Jericho and proceeding through the southern and northern campaigns, **Joshua faithfully applied *haram***. See Joshua 6:17-18,21, 8:26, 10:1,28,35,37,39,40, 11:10-15,20-21. At the beginning of the Judges' period, Israel continued to exterminate the Canaanites, see Judges 1:17.

By the time of King Saul, there appears to have been some confusion as to the carrying-out of *haram*:

Thus says [YHWH] of hosts,

'I have noted **what Amalek did to Israel**

in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt.

Now **go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction (*haram*) all that they have.**

Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant,

ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'

So Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand men on foot, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley. ... And **Saul defeated the Amalekites** from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt.

And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive

and **devoted to destruction (*haram*) all the people** with the edge of the sword.

But **Saul and the people spared Agag** and **the best** of the **sheep** and of the **oxen**

and of the fattened **calves** and the **lambs**, and **all that was good**,

and **would not utterly destroy (*haram*) them.**

All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction (*haram*).

The word of [YHWH] came to Samuel:

"I regret that I have made **Saul** king, for he has turned back from following me and **has not performed my commandments.**"

And [YHWH] sent you on a mission and said,

'Go, **devote to destruction (*haram*) the sinners, the Amalekites,** and fight against them until they are consumed.'

Why then did you not obey the voice of [YHWH]?

Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of [YHWH]?"

And Saul said to Samuel,

"I have obeyed the voice of [YHWH].

I have gone on the mission on which [YHWH] sent me.

I have brought Agag the king of Amalek,

and **I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction (*haram*).**

But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen,

the **best of the things devoted to destruction (*haram*), to sacrifice** to [YHWH] your God in Gilgal."

(1 Samuel 15:2-5, 7-11a, 18-21 ESV)

Because the Amalekites were idolators, "**the sinners, the Amalekites**", and had a history of enmity towards Israel, "**what Amalek did to Israel**", they were placed under *haram*. Each and everyone of them was to be killed. **Saul's confusion** is manifest in that he thought he could bring the king back alive, "**Saul and the people spared Agag**". All the animals were to be destroyed. Again Saul thought it was okay "**pounce on the spoil**" – he allowed his soldiers to keep "**the best ... sheep ... oxen ... calves ... lambs ... all that was good**". Then he tried to justify his actions by suggesting his motivation was sacrifice to YHWH, "**best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice**".

During the conquest, the *haram* was applied literally and mercilessly against the **Canaanites**. Their culture was so evil it was marked for eradication by God as **a type of all sin for all time**. Later on, the application of *haram* became more selective.

The Metaphoric Use of *haram*

In later usage, the concept of *haram* came to be used for just "killing", the destruction of a foe. The first instance of this is in the time of **Ahab**. Ahab was an idolatrous king, one of the worst kings of Israel; nevertheless, **God set him on a mission to defeat Ben-hadad king of Aram**. There were two battles, both successful. But **rather than kill Ben-hadad, Ahab entered into treaty with him** and was **condemned by a prophet**:

And behold, **a prophet** came near to Ahab king of Israel and said,

"Thus says [YHWH], 'Have you seen all this great multitude?

Behold, I will give it into your hand this day, and **you shall know that I am [YHWH].**"

And each struck down his man. **The [Arameans] fled**, and Israel pursued them, but Ben-hadad king of [Aram] escaped on a horse with horsemen. ...

And they encamped opposite one another seven days. Then on the seventh day the battle was joined. And the people of Israel struck down of the [Arameans] 100,000 foot soldiers in one day. ...

Ben-hadad also fled and entered an inner chamber in the city.

So they tied sackcloth around their waists and put ropes on their heads and went to the king of Israel and said,

"Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please, let me live.'"

And he said, "Does he still live? He is my brother."

And Ahab said, "I will let you go on these terms."

So he made a covenant with him and let him go.

So **the prophet** departed and waited for the king ... And he said to him,

"Thus says [YHWH], 'Because you have let go out of your hand

the man whom I had devoted to destruction (haram),

therefore your life shall be for his life, and your people for his people.'"

(1 Kings 20:13, 20, 29, 30b, 32, 34b, 38a, 42 ESV)

In the time of **King Hezekiah**, in the words of the Rabshakeh, **Sennacherib**, King of Assyria, demonstrated some understanding of Israelite history by using the word **haram** in the context of **Assyria's destruction of other kingdoms**:

The Rabshakeh returned, and found the **king of Assyria** fighting against Libnah,

for he heard that the king had left Lachish. ... So he sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying,

"Thus shall you **speak to Hezekiah king of Judah**:

'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you

by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Behold, you have heard what **the kings of Assyria have done to all lands,**

devoting them to destruction (haram).

And shall you be delivered? ..."

(2 Kings 19:8, 9b-11 ESV // Isaiah 37:8-11, 2 Chronicles 32:9-14)

The usage is similar in 1 Chronicles 4:41 and 2 Chronicles 20:23. In Ezra 10:8, **haram** is used of property to be confiscated. In Micah 4:13, the wealth of the nations is **haram** to God. In Isaiah 11:15, **haram** is used to describe the drying up of the Nile.

Isaiah demonstrates the most common metaphoric use by the Writing Prophets – to depict God's wrath on a nation or people:

For [YHWH] is enraged against **all the nations**, and furious against all their host;

he has devoted them to destruction (haram), has given them over for slaughter.

For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens;

behold, it descends for judgment **upon Edom**,

upon the people I have devoted to destruction (haram).

Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary,

and **deliver Jacob to utter destruction (haram)** and Israel to reviling.

(Isaiah 34:2, 5, 43:28 ESV see also Jeremiah 25:9, 50:21, 26, 51:3, Daniel 11:44)

In one of the Bible's most famous prophecies, **God threatens to apply haram to the whole earth**:³⁸⁸

Behold, I will send you **Elijah** the prophet before the great and awesome day of [YHWH] comes.

And he **will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers,**

lest I come and strike the [earth] with a decree of utter destruction (herem).

(Malachi 4:5-6 ESV)

Fortunately, **"Elijah" is successful**, and **Zechariah** is able to prophesize:

But Jerusalem shall remain aloft ... And it shall be inhabited,

for **there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction (herem).**

Jerusalem shall dwell in security.

(Zechariah 14:10bα, 11 ESV)

The metaphoric use of **haram** did soften its impact somewhat; but this cannot be taken to indicate any lessening of God's hatred for sin. Ultimately, **haram** will be vigorously applied to all sin, and sin will be eradicated.

³⁸⁸ See the discussion of this prophecy in section **8. The Prophecy of Malachi** in the paper **"The Work of Elijah"** located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

The New Covenant and *haram*

Under the Old Covenant, the application of *haram* was physical, **physical death**. Under the New Covenant, the application of *haram* is spiritual, **Jesus' propitiating sacrifice is sufficient to cover all sin**. Repentance and forgiveness are available to all. However, because the New Covenant is spiritual, the stakes are higher. When any person makes the choice of "death", i.e., **refusal to repent** and refusal to learn to live by the Way of God, that person effectively places himself/herself under "**spiritual haram**", resulting in eternal death.

As with the entire teaching of the Old Testament, **the Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' day had utterly corrupted the concept of *haram***. Since it is clear from the Old Testament, that nothing "holy" can come into contact with anything "unclean", they reasoned that due to their heritage from Abraham, they were inherently "holy". The "Gentiles", on the other hand, were inherently "unclean"; therefore, according to their corrupt interpretation, **Jews could have no contact with Gentiles**:

A **woman from Samaria** came to draw water.

Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

(For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him,

"How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?"

(For **Jews have no dealings with Samaritans**.)

(John 4:7-9 ESV)

And he said to them,

"You yourselves know

how **unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation** ..."

(Acts 10:28a ESV)

During his ministry, **Jesus repeatedly "shoved it in the face" of the Pharisees and scribes that he went out of his was to associate with those considered "unclean" by the Pharisees and scribes**.³⁸⁹

And as he reclined at table in his house,

many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples,

for there were many who followed him.

And the **scribes of the Pharisees**, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples,

"Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

And when **Jesus** heard it, he **said to them**,

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

(Mark 2:15-17 ESV // Matthew 9:10-13, Luke 5:30-32, see also Luke 19:1-7)

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him,

and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table.

And behold, **a woman of the city, who was a sinner**,

when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when **the Pharisee** who had invited him saw this, he **said to himself**,

"If this man were a prophet,

he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."

And **Jesus answering** said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

"A certain moneylender had two debtors.

One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both.

Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt."

And he said to him, **"You have judged rightly."**

³⁸⁹ See also Mark 7:24-30 // Matthew 15:21-28, Matthew 8:5-13 // Luke 7:1-10, Matthew 11:16-19 // Luke 7:31-35
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Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon,
“Do you see this woman?
I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet,
but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.
You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.
You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.
Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much.
But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”
(Luke 7:36-47 ESV)

Jesus whole point in the parable of the Good Samaritan is that the scribes and Pharisees were corrupt in their interpretations:

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying,
“Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
He said to him, “What is written in the [nomos]?³⁹⁰ How do you read it?”
And he answered,
“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your [being]
and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”
(citing Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18b)
And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”
But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”
Jesus replied,
“A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers,
who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.
Now by chance a priest was going down that road,
and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.
So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.
But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him,
he had compassion.
He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.
Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.
And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying,
‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’
Which of these three, do you think,
proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?”
He said, “The one who showed him mercy.”
And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”
(Luke 10:25-37 ESV)

The “lawyer”, being a good Pharisee, considered Samaritans to be “unclean”. He knew the teaching of God by rote, “what is written ... how do you read it”, but his mind was crippled by his own preconceptions, like the “priest” and the “Levite”. However the “unclean Samaritan” understood the meaning of the teaching and “had compassion”; he “proved to be a neighbor”. The Way of God is NOT about rote learning and “do’s and don’ts” – the Way of God is about how one lives, “you go, and do likewise”.

The whole purpose of Peter’s vision prior to meeting Cornelius was to make sure Peter understood the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, and specifically the corruption of the teaching of the Pharisees. Peter had grown up under the teaching of the Pharisees as had all the original members of the Church – being Jews. The extension of salvation to “Gentiles” was a very difficult concept. **Only through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit did Peter, the other Apostles, and the True Worshipers understand**. The vision given to Peter was staggering:

The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city,
Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.
And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it,
he fell into a trance and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending,

³⁹⁰ See footnote 4

being let down by its four corners upon the earth.
In it were **all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air.**
And there came a voice to him: **“Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”**
But **Peter said**, “By no means, Lord; for **I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.**”
And the voice came to him again a second time, **“What God has made clean, do not call common.”**
This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.
(Acts 10:9-16 ESV)

The concept of eating filthy animals was intended to be shocking to Peter, **“I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean”**, as was the concept that his cherished preconceptions were completely wrong, **“what God has made clean, do not call common”**. As Peter travelled to Caesarea, God gave him the understanding of the vision:

The next day [Peter] rose and went away with them,
and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.
And on the following day they **entered Caesarea.**
Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.
And [Peter] said to them,
“... **God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.** ...”
(Acts 10:23b-24, 28aα, 28b ESV)
Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard
that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ...
But Peter began and explained it to them in order:
“... As I began to speak, **the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us** at the beginning.
And **I remembered the word of the Lord**, how he said,
‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’
If then **God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us**
when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ,
who was I that I could stand in God’s way?”
When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying,
“Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”
(Acts 11:1, 4, 15-18 ESV)

The propitiating sacrifice of Jesus Christ is available to all persons called by God – race, status, position wealth, and all other human measures of worth mean nothing to God. **All human beings are inherently sinful and under the death penalty**, “under *ḥaram*”. God calls people as and when he sees fit. Once called, repentance is the first step in learning to live by the Way of God:

... the righteousness of God **through faith [of] Jesus Christ** for all who believe.
For there is no distinction: for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God,
and are justified by his grace as a gift, through **the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**,
whom God put forward as **a propitiation by his blood**, to be received by faith.
This was to show God’s righteousness,
because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.
(Romans 3:22-25 ESV see also Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2, 4:10)

The **Apostle John** summarizes the distinction between living by the Way of God and living by the way of the world. **John also reports Jesus’ words** that True Worshipers are NOT part of the world:

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 **desires of the flesh** and the **desires of the eyes** and **pride of life**—is not from the Father but is from the world.
And the world is passing away along with its desires, but **whoever does the will of God abides forever.**
(1 John 2:15-17 ESV)

I have manifested your name to **the people whom you gave me out of the world.** ...
And I am no longer in the world, but **they are in the world**, and I am coming to you. ...
I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because **they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.**
I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.
They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.
As you sent me into the world, so **I have sent them into the world.** ...
I do not ask for these only, but also for **those who will believe in me** through their word ...
(John 17:6a, 11a, 14-18, 20 ESV)

To choose the “way of the world” is to reject the Way of God, to reject God’s calling, **to choose death**.

This places a person under **“spiritual haram”**, which ends in **eternal death in the lake of fire**:

For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and **have shared in the Holy Spirit**, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and **then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance**, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and **its end is to be burned**. (Hebrews 6:4-8 ESV)

For **if we go on sinning** deliberately **after receiving the knowledge of the truth**, **there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins**, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:26-27 ESV see also 2 Peter 2:20-22, 1 John 5:16-18)

Therefore I tell you, **every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people**, but the **blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven**. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. (Matthew 12:31-32 ESV // Mark 3:28-30, see also Luke 12:10)

Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.

This is the second death, the lake of fire.

And **if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire**. (Revelation 20:14-15 ESV)

The spiritual application of **haram** is permanent. **Physical death will be reversed** for the vast majority of humanity **in the Second Resurrection**. These people will then be given a chance to repent and learn the Way of God. **Each and every human being must look God in the face and state their choice, “life or death”**. Those who choose **“life”**, must demonstrate their choice by a life of **living by the Way of God**. Those who choose **“death”**, place themselves under **“spiritual haram”**.

Excursus 2 – The Book of Hebrews

The Book of Hebrews is the only **“anonymous”** book of the New Testament. The problem of its authorship has been debated for centuries.³⁹¹ The **recipients of the Book of Hebrews are never explicitly identified**. The **purpose** of the Book’s having been written **can only be inferred** from its contents.

Internal Evidence of Authorship

The most important statements by the author, concerning himself are:

- The author did NOT personally hear Jesus’ teaching:
... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?
It was declared at first by the Lord, and **it was attested to us by those who heard** ... (Hebrews 2:3 ESV)

The author was a second-generation teacher, like Luke:
Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as **those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses** and ministers of the word **have delivered them to us** ... (Luke 1:1-2 ESV)

The Apostle Paul emphatically states that he was directly taught by Christ:

For I would have you know, brothers, that **the gospel that was preached** by me is not man’s gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but **I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ**. (Galatians 1:11-12 ESV)

³⁹¹ For a summary of the debate, see Guthrie page 685-698.

- The author was among those who had “fled for refuge”:
... **we who have fled for refuge** might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.
(Hebrews 6:18b ESV)

The Book of Hebrews contains no explicit information on this “flight”; but see the discussion in section **The Flight of the Jerusalem Church to Pella**.

- The author had recently been with the recipients of the book:
Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.
I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order **that I may be restored to you the sooner**.
(Hebrews 13:18-19 ESV)

This may suggest that the author had been part of the “leadership group”:

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God.
Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ...
Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your [lives], as those who will have to give an account.
Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.
(Hebrews 13:7, 17 ESV)

Of the persons named in the New Testament who **could satisfy the above three criteria**, the most likely possible authors of the Book of Hebrews are **Apollos** and **Aquila**, likely in conjunction with **Priscilla**. Both of them worked with Paul. Both are attested as credible teachers:

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

And he found **a Jew named Aquila**, a native of Pontus, **recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla**, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.

And **he went to see them**, and because he was of the same trade **he stayed with them** and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.
(Acts 18:1-3 ESV)

Now a Jew named **Apollos**, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus.

He was **an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures**.

He had been instructed in the way (hodos) of the Lord.

And being fervent in spirit, **he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus**, though he knew only the baptism of John.

He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when **Priscilla and Aquila** heard him, they took him aside and **explained to him the way (hodos) of God more accurately**.
(Acts 18:24-26 ESV see also 1 Corinthians 3:1-9)

The suggestion that the Apostle Paul is the author is very ancient, but it **is impossible by Paul’s own statement** that he was personally taught by Christ. Many commentators claim to find “**echoes of Pauline teaching**” in the Book of Hebrews. **This would be perfectly to be expected if the author were someone** like Apollos or Aquila **who had worked closely with Paul**.

The Sitz-im-Leban of the Book of Hebrews

The author of the Book of Hebrews **quotes extensively from the Old Testament**. His argumentation is all based on **allusions to the Old Testament**. He appeals frequently to **Old Testament persons**, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Melchizedek, with no explanation of who they were or what was their role. In the “**catalogue of heroes**” in chapter eleven, all are from the Old Testament. There is no hint of division or competition between “Jewish” and “Gentiles” factions.³⁹² This all implies that **the recipients of the Book were Jewish Christians** in a Church with few Gentiles. This describes the **Jerusalem Church**.

The recipients of the Book of Hebrew were clearly True Worshipers, **Christians of standing**, but they were currently **wavering in faith and commitment**:

Therefore, **holy brothers**, you **who share in a heavenly calling**, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, **who was faithful to him who appointed him ... Christ is faithful over God’s house** as a son.
And **we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope**.

³⁹² Contrast this with the Book of Romans, where it is a major theme.

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.
... how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

(Hebrews 3:1-2a, 6, 2:1, 3a ESV)

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands,
let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them,
because they were not united by faith with those who listened. ...

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil,
unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today,"
that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ...

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth,
there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins ...

(Hebrews 4:1-2, 11, 3:12-13, 10:26 ESV)

About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers,
you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. ...

Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved,
we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.

For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love
that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.

And we desire each one of you

to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end ...

(Hebrews 5:11-12a, 6:9-11 ESV)

The author of Hebrews goes on to remind the recipients of their past Christian lives, their service, and
their suffering for the Way of God, exhorting them to rekindle the past works:

But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened,
you endured a hard struggle with sufferings,

sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction,

and sometimes being partners with those so treated.

For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property,
since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

For you have need of endurance,

so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

(Hebrews 10:32-36 ESV)

... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,

with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some,

but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

(Hebrews 10:22-25 ESV)

... let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely,

and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,

who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,
and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself,

so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and

make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God;

that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled ...

See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.

For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth,

much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

(Hebrews 12:1b-3, 12-15, 25)

The recipients of the Book of Hebrews were in a very precarious position. They had been called by God. They had repented and received the Holy Spirit. Now through external circumstances, their faith was wavering. They were in danger of falling away from the Living God:

For **it is impossible**, in the case of **those who have once been enlightened**, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and **have shared in the Holy Spirit**, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and **then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance**, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. (Hebrews 6:4-6 ESV)

The author of the Book of Hebrews does everything he can to draw the recipients back from this precarious position.

The Flight of the Jerusalem Church to Pella³⁹³

All the internal evidence of the Book of Hebrews points to the Jerusalem Church having fled to Pella as the most likely recipients of the book of Hebrews:

- The Jerusalem Church was almost totally of Jewish background:
And **all who believed** were together and had all things in common. ...
And day by day, **attending the temple together** and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.
And **the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved**.
(Acts 2:44, 46-47 ESV)
And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him,
“You see, brother,
how many **thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed**.
They are all zealous for the [nomos]³⁹⁴ ...”
(Acts 21:20 ESV)
- The Jerusalem Church had suffered persecution:
And as they were speaking to the people, the **priests** and the **captain of the temple** and the **Sadducees** came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they **arrested them and put them in custody** until the next day, for it was already evening.
But the **high priest** rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the **Sadducees**), and filled with jealousy they **arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison**.
(Acts 4:1-3, 5:17-18 ESV)
Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him.
And **the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul**.
And as they were **stoning Stephen** ... And Saul approved of his execution. ...
And **there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem** ...
(Acts 7:58-59a, 8:1a ESV)
- The **destruction of the Temple and Temple Service** would have been a severe psychological blow to Jewish Christians – hence, the wavering in faith and commitment
- The **flight to Pella without** the subsequent fulfillment of the prophecies of **the Parousia** would have been a further blow to faith
- Later history associates the Christians who fled to Pella with a group called the “**Ebionites**” who fell into grievous heresies

The author of Hebrews does NOT explicitly discuss the Temple or the Temple service. His discussion of the Temple Service is all with relation to the **Tabernacle** – this is consistent with the author’s being **a Jew of the Diaspora**, very familiar with the Writings of Moses, but having **no first-hand experience with the actual Temple or the Temple Service**. His main point in relation to the Tabernacle and the Tabernacle service is that it is **superseded by Jesus Christ**:

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and **an earthly place of holiness**.

For **a tabernacle** was prepared, **the first section**, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called **the Holy Place**.

³⁹³ For a discussion of this event, see *Excursus Three – Destruction of Jerusalem 70AD* in the paper “**The Olivet Prophecy**” located at www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca.

³⁹⁴ This was part of their problem – **they continued to adhere to the Pharisaic interpretations**.

Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.
Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tabernacle (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
(Hebrews 9:1-7, 11-14 ESV)

The Jewish Christians of the Jerusalem Church could have had great trouble with this concept. They would have assumed the Temple Service to continue. They would have seen no need for Christ's sacrifice to obviate the Temple sacrifices. With the termination of the Temple sacrifices, there confidence in the power of God would have been shaken – it is the age-old problem of "the inviolability of the Temple".

When the Jerusalem church fled to Pella, the members of the Church were no doubt confident that they were fulfilling the Olivet Prophecy:

But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
(Mark 13:14 ESV)

So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
(Matthew 24:15-16 ESV)

But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.
(Luke 21:20-22 ESV)

An integral part of the Olivet Prophecy is the promise that "this generation" will see the fulfillment:

So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
(Mark 13:29-31 ESV)

So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
(Matthew 24:33-35 ESV)

So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.
(Luke 21:31-33 ESV)

As time went on without the Parousia, the members of the Jerusalem Church in Pella could easily have fallen into doubting the prophecies and generally loosing faith. The meaning of "this generation" has of course been debated down through the centuries. Obviously, Jesus did NOT mean his contemporary generation. At some point, there will be a generation which does see all the prophecies fulfilled.

Much of the content of the Book of Hebrews is dedicated to demonstrating the superiority of Jesus Christ and his ministry. A clear objective of the book, as discussed in the next sub-section, is to restore faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. But it seems that a significant portion of the Jerusalem

Church in Pella did NOT accept the exhortations of the author of the Book of Hebrews. **Eusebius is apparently the first to associate the Jerusalem Church in Pella with the Ebionites of later times:**

“Eusebius ... is the first to connect them with the Christians who left Jerusalem and fled to Pella ...”
(A.F.J. Klijn EAC volume one page 766)

The most grievous heresy they fell into was to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ:

“... **they accepted Jesus as a mere man** ...” (Ibid.)

“The Church Fathers generally agree on key points about the Ebionites, such as their voluntary poverty and rejection of proto-orthodox Christian beliefs in Jesus' divinity, pre-existence, and virgin birth; they argue **the Ebionites believed that Jesus was a mere man, born the natural son of Joseph and Mary,** who, by virtue of his righteousness in perfectly following the Law of Moses, was adopted as the son of God to be a Messiah.”
(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebionites>)

If some or most of the recipients of the Book of Hebrews rejected the exhortations of the author, **the Ebionite heresy can easily be projected from the state of the recipients when the Book of Hebrews was written.**

The Purpose of the Book of Hebrews

The overall purpose of the Book of Hebrews is to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus Christ: his divinity, the efficacy of his sacrifice, the security of his role as High Priest, and the blessing of his New Covenant. The author addresses certain **specific issues** which apparently **existed among the recipients.** The author is painfully aware of the danger his recipients face. Their faith and commitment are flagging. **The recipients** have been struck with extreme circumstances, and they **need to see Jesus and the promises of God as a living hope.**

The first issue is “angelology”. Apparently, some were confused about the relationship of Jesus with angels. The author counters this by demonstrating the **superiority of Jesus over angels:**

For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? (citing Psalm 2:7)

Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? (citing 2 Samuel 7:14a)

But **of the Son** he says,

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,

the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;

therefore God, your God, has anointed you

with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” (citing Psalm 45:6-7)

And to which of the angels has he ever said,

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? (citing Psalm 110:1)

Are they not all **ministering spirits** sent out **to serve** for the sake of **those who are to inherit salvation**?
(Hebrews 1:5, 8, 13-14 ESV)

Next the author addresses the reason for **Christian calling** and **Jesus' role** in relation to that calling. God's purpose for Christians is to be part of the Family of God, **“putting everything in subjection under his feet”**. This can only happen through **Jesus' propitiating sacrifice** and his subsequent role as **“high priest”**:

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to **what we have heard** ...
how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

It has been testified somewhere,

“What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?

You made him for a little while lower than the angels;

you have crowned him with glory and honor, **putting everything in subjection under his feet.**”

(citing Psalm 8:4-6)

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control.

At present, **we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.**

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely **Jesus,** crowned with glory and honor because of the **suffering of death,** **so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.**

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect,

so that he might become a **merciful and faithful high priest** in the service of God,

to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
(Hebrews 2:1a, 3a, 6-9, 17 ESV)

The author of Hebrews enjoins **faith in God's promises by trusting in Jesus** in contrast with the Israelites refusal to trust in Moses. The Israelites refused to trust God's promises through Moses, "**do not harden your hearts**". God held out the Promised Land as "**rest**", but lack of faith condemned the whole Exodus generation, "**they were unable to enter because of unbelief**":

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, **consider Jesus,**
the apostle and high priest of our confession, **who was faithful to him who appointed him,**
just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

"Today, if you hear his voice, **do not harden your hearts** as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years.
Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said,

'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways (hodos).'

As I swore in my wrath, '**They shall not enter my rest.**'" (citing Psalm 95:7b-11)

So we see that **they were unable to enter because of unbelief.**
(Hebrews 3:1-2, 7-11, 19 ESV)

As with the Exodus generation, the recipients of the Book of Hebrews were in danger of losing sight of **the objective of their calling**, the "true rest", **the Kingdom of God**. The author uses the Sabbath as a type of the Kingdom of God:

Therefore, **while the promise of entering his rest still stands,**
let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

"And **God rested on the seventh day** from all his works." (citing Genesis 2:2)

So then, **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God** ...

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, **so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.**
(Hebrews 4:1, 4b, 9, 11 ESV)

With their Jewish background, the recipients continued to adhere to **the efficacy of the old sacrificial system**. Through Jesus' sacrifice, **the old sacrificial system is obsolete** because Jesus' blood covers all sins. **Through his own blood**, Jesus presented himself to God the Father; and, now, **Jesus sits in eternity as High Priest, intercessor, and Advocate of Christians:**

Since then **we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,**
let us hold fast our confession.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one **who in every respect has been tempted as we are,** yet **without sin.**

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace,
that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Now the point in what we are saying is this: **we have such a high priest,**
one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places,
in the true Tabernacle that the Lord set up, not man.

For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices;
thus **it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.**

They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.

For when Moses was about to erect the Tabernacle, he was instructed by God, saying,

"See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."
(citing Exodus 25:40)

But **when Christ appeared as a high priest** of the good things that have come,
then through the greater and more perfect Tabernacle (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation)
he entered once for all into the holy places, **not by means of the blood of goats and calves**
but **by means of his own blood,** thus securing an eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer,
sanctify for the purification of the flesh, **how much more will the blood of Christ,**
who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God,
purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.
(Hebrews 4:14-16, 8:1-3, 5, 9:11-14 ESV)

Next the author of Hebrews demonstrates **the superiority of Jesus, as High Priest, over the Aaronic Priesthood**; thus rendering the Aaronic Priesthood obsolete:

For **every high priest chosen from among men** is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ... **he himself is beset with weakness**. Because of this **he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins** just as he does for those of the people.

Now **if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood** ... what further need would there have been for another priest to arise ... rather than one named after the order of Aaron?

This becomes even more evident when **another priest arises** ... who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but **by the power of an indestructible life**.

The former priests were many in number, because they **were prevented by death from continuing in office**, but **he holds his priesthood permanently**, because **he continues forever**. Consequently, **he is able to save to the uttermost** those who draw near to God through him, since **he always lives to make intercession** for them.

For it was indeed fitting that **we should have such a high priest**, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

He has no need, like those high priests, **to offer sacrifices daily**, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since **he did this once for all when he offered up himself**.
(Hebrews 5:1, 2b-3, 7:11, 15a, 16, 23-27 ESV)

Finally, the author of Hebrews demonstrates **the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant**. The New Covenant is only possible through Jesus Christ:

But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as **the covenant he mediates is better**, since it is enacted on better promises.

For **if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second**.

For **he finds fault with them** when he says:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when **I will establish a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, **not like the covenant** that I made with their fathers on the day **when I took them** by the hand to bring them **out of the land of Egypt**.

For **they did not continue in my covenant**, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord:

I will put my [nomos]³⁹⁵ into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, **‘Know the Lord,’**

for **they shall all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest.

For **I will be merciful** toward their iniquities, and **I will remember their sins no more**.”
(citing Jeremiah 31:31-34)

In speaking of a new covenant, **he makes the first one obsolete**.

And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

(Hebrews 8:6-13, 7:22 ESV)

The Book of Hebrews climaxes in chapter eleven. The previous chapters have considered in some detail the specific issues that were dragging down the recipients. The author has in no uncertain terms demonstrated to **superiority of Jesus Christ** to all that came before. He has concretely identified Jesus Christ, the **High Priest**, **Advocate**, and **intercessor**. Jesus Christ is the **reason for faith**, **commitment**, and **hope in the promises of God**. In chapter eleven, the author details an extensive array of persons from the Bible who had faced extreme circumstances, like the recipients, and come through trusting in God:

Now **faith is the assurance of things hoped for**, the **conviction of things not seen**.

For by it the people of old received their commendation.

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

³⁹⁵ This refers to the whole teaching of God, the *torah*, the Way of God.

By faith **Noah**, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen,
in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.
By this he **condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith**.
By faith **Abraham** obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.
And he went out, not knowing where he was going.
By faith he went to live in the land of promise, **as in a foreign land**,³⁹⁶
living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.
For he **was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God**.
These all died in faith, not having received the things promised,
but having seen them and greeted them from afar,
and having acknowledged that they were **strangers and exiles on the earth**.
For people who speak thus make it clear that they are **seeking a homeland**.³⁹⁷
If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out,
they would have had opportunity to return.
But as it is, they desire **a better country**, that is, **a heavenly one**.
Therefore **God** is not ashamed to be called their God, for he **has prepared for them a city**.³⁹⁸
... who **through faith** conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises,
stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword,
were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.
Women received back their dead by resurrection.
Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, **so that they might rise again to a better life**.
Others suffered **mocking** and **flogging**, and even chains and imprisonment.
They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword.
They went about in skins of sheep and goats, **destitute, afflicted, mistreated**
—of whom the world was not worthy
—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.
And **all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised**³⁹⁹ ...
(Hebrews 11:1-3, 7-10, 13-16, 33-39 ESV)

The Book of Hebrews is a treasure trove of exhortation and encouragement from God through the Holy Spirit and the pen of an anonymous author for Christians of all ages, but especially as we **“see the Day drawing near”**. We cannot be sure of the fate of the original recipients of the Book of Hebrews, but we can draw faith from the words of the author. The author poured out his heart and mind to bring them to a position of saving faith. **All Christians of all ages can draw strength from the author’s words**.

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³⁹⁶ An allusion to the status of the recipients in the Greek Decapolis.

³⁹⁷ The recipients had lost their “homeland” when they fled from Judea.

³⁹⁸ These references to a “better city” are a direct allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.

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