

## The Human Condition

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In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ... **The times of ignorance God overlooked**, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent ... (Acts 14:16, 17:30 ESV)

This was to show God's righteousness, because **in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins**. ... for **sin indeed was in the world** before the [nomos]<sup>1</sup> was given, **but sin is not counted where there is no [nomos]**. ... **He does not deal with us according to our sins** ... (Romans 3:25b, 5:13, Psalm 103:10a ESV)

**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever**. (Hebrews 13:8 ESV)

But **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. (2 Peter 3:18a ESV)

Many people are confused by **the apparent contradiction** of an all powerful, loving, Creator God and the conditions of suffering, corruption, and squalor in which we find the world today. God created human beings to become members of his Family. God created this earth as a beautiful home for the human race to develop into Sons and Daughters of God. What happened? How has God dealt with human beings over the millennia? Why has God dealt with human beings in such a way? How can we reconcile the world around us with the clear purpose of God? How will God ultimately accomplish his purpose? This paper is about **the Nature of God** and his love for his creation – human beings. Nevertheless, we find human beings in general in **a condition of isolation from God** – **“the human condition”**.

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<sup>1</sup> The English word “law” is indeed a correct translation of the Greek word “nomos”. However, **“nomos” is NOT a correct translation of the Hebrew word “torah”**, which means “teaching”, “instruction”, “direction”. Unfortunately in many cases, the New Testament authors use “nomos” with reference to “torah”. However, to a first century Jew, the word “nomos” always included the Pharisaic interpretations. **The English word “law” is completely misleading**. For further discussion See **Excursus 3 – torah** in the paper **“Covenants of Grace”** and **Excursus 8 – torah and nomos** in the paper **“True Worship of the True God”** located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca).

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## 1. The Foundation of the World

**Before there was a physical universe, before there was time,** two Divine Beings, who inhabit eternity,<sup>2</sup> created a plan:

In the beginning was **the Word**, and the Word was **with God**, and **the Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. **All things were made through him**, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **In him was life**, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5 ESV)

The plan required the creation of a physical universe:

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

Prior to the creation of the physical universe, **a host of “angelic” beings had been created**. They rejoiced at the physical creation:

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,

when **the morning stars sang together** and **all the sons of God shouted for joy**? (Job 38:4-7 ESV)

**The earth required a “steward”** – one of the created angelic beings to administer it on behalf of the two Divine Beings. One of the premier angelic beings was selected, Isaiah refers to him as הֵלֵל בֶּן-שָׁחַר - helel ben shahar, “Day Star son of Dawn”.<sup>3</sup> The Steward had an exalted position in the divine hierarchy:

You were the signet of **perfection**, full of **wisdom** and perfect in **beauty**.

... **every precious stone was your covering**, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings.

**On the day that you were created they were prepared.**

**You were an anointed guardian cherub.**

I placed you; **you were on the holy mountain of God**;

in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. (Ezekiel 28:12b-14 ESV)

The Bible tells us little about the stewardship of this being, but the fossil record informs us of giant monsters, some of which were nothing more than fierce killing machines, and decrepit humanoid creatures who were little more than animals. Eventually the Steward became jealous of his Masters and convinced a large number of other angelic beings to join him in revolt:

**You were blameless** in your ways from the day you were created, **till unrighteousness was found in you**.

In the abundance of your trade **you were filled with violence** in your midst, and you sinned;

so **I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God**,

and I banished you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

**Your heart was proud because of your beauty;**

**you corrupted your wisdom** for the sake of your splendor. (Ezekiel 28:15-17a ESV)

**How you are fallen from heaven**, O Day Star, son of Dawn!

How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!<sup>4</sup>

**You said in your heart**, ‘I will ascend to heaven;

above the stars of God I will set my throne on high;

I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north;

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;

**I will make myself like the Most High.**’ (Isaiah 14:12-14 ESV)

Following the rebellion, the Steward became known as **“Satan”, the Adversary**.<sup>5</sup> The Divine Being who became Jesus Christ affirmed the fall of Satan:

And he said to them, **“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ...”** (Luke 10:18 ESV)

The attack of Satan on the two Divine Beings resulted in the destruction of the surface of the earth:

**The earth was without form and void**, and **darkness was over the face of the deep**. (Genesis 1:2a ESV)

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<sup>2</sup> See Isaiah 57:15

<sup>3</sup> See Isaiah 14:12

<sup>4</sup> The reference to the “nations” is prophetic of subsequent action of Satan.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew, שָׂטָן - satan, “adversary”; Greek, Σατανᾶς - Satanas, “adversary”; see Job 2:3-7, Zechariah 3:1-2, 1 Peter 5:8

Although Satan was now disgraced, God allowed him to continue in his position as Steward of the earth: Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. **The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."** (Job 1:6-7 ESV)

The plan of the Divine Beings now moved on to the creation of **physical beings who could develop into beings that could become Divine Beings and join their Creators in eternity**. This required the **recreation of the surface of the earth**, which is described in Genesis chapter one verses three through twenty-five. Then human beings were created:

Then God said, **"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."** 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."** (Genesis 1:26-28 ESV)

**The Creators desired many beings to join them in eternity**. Satan was pushed aside, but remained in his position as Steward – he determined to thwart the Plan of God for the human beings:

You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

**You were in Eden, the garden of God;** (Ezekiel 28:12b-13a ESV)

**Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast** of the field that the LORD 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. ..."** (Genesis 3:1-4 ESV)

Satan appeared as a "serpent" to Eve, discredited the Creators, and convinced her of **the big lie: "you will not surely die"**. The Apostle Paul affirms the actions of "the serpent", and the Book of Revelation affirms the identity of "the serpent":

But I am afraid that **as the serpent deceived Eve** by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:3 ESV)

And the great dragon was thrown down, **that ancient serpent**, who is called **the devil and Satan**, the deceiver of the whole world ... And he seized the dragon, **that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan** ... (Revelation 12:9, 20:2 ESV)

The deception of Eve and the ensuing sin of Adam has resulted in the human race being forced to live in a **world under the stewardship of Satan the Devil**:

**And to Adam he said,**

**"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,'**

**cursed is the ground** because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

**By the sweat of your face** you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:17-19 ESV)

**This is the "foundation of the world", "the human condition"**. Because of Adam's sin, the whole human race has been consigned to struggle with sin in a world under the control of Satan the Devil:

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 ... for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God** ... For **the wages of sin is death** ... (Romans 5:12, 3:23, 6:23a ESV)

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 ... for even **Satan disguises himself as an angel of light**. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, 11:14 ESV)

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** in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature **children of wrath, like the rest of mankind**.

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **stand against the schemes of the devil**. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic **powers over this present darkness**, against the **spiritual forces** of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 2:1-3, 6:11-12 ESV)

The Plan of God does NOT allow “the human condition” to be permanent. The world that has been created by Satan the Devil will be changed:

Now is the judgment of this world; **now will the ruler of this world be cast out.** (John 12:31 ESV)

## 2. The Plan of God

**The Plan of God provided for the removal of Satan as the “steward”, the “god of this world”.** The Divine Being identified by the Apostle John as **“the Word” became known as “YHWH”**. In this role he began to work with select human beings – beginning with Cain and Abel. YHWH was pleased with Abel, but NOT with Cain:

And the **LORD had regard for Abel and his offering**, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. (Genesis 4:4b-5a ESV)

By faith **Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice** than Cain, through which **he was commended as righteous**, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (Hebrews 11:4 ESV)

Cain killed Abel and set the course of “the world”<sup>6</sup> along a path of “sin” – living by the “way of Satan”: **human beings under the influence of Satan determining for themselves what is “right and “wrong”** – the “knowledge of good and evil”:

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, **the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.** (Genesis 3:22a ESV)

Ever since then God has worked with a small number of people, **NOT the mainstream of the world**, always “a remnant”.<sup>7</sup> The worldly civilization created by Cain’s descendants became so corrupt that they had to be destroyed:

The LORD saw that **the wickedness of man was great in the earth**, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, **“I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the [earth] ...”** (Genesis 6:5-7a ESV)

The line through which God was working was traced through Seth ben Adam to Noah.<sup>8</sup> YHWH saved Noah and his family from **“the Flood”** and the earth was repopulated by the descendants of Noah’s sons.<sup>9</sup> **Again the mainstream of the world fell under the influence of Satan and came to live by their own determination of right and wrong.**<sup>10</sup> Now the line through which YHWH was working was traced through Shem ben Noah to Abram.<sup>11</sup> **With Abram, the Plan of God moved into full operation.**

For three generations, the descendants of Abram (whose name was changed to Abraham) lived as travelers and foreigners in the land that God had promised to the descendants of Abraham.<sup>12</sup> **The “remnant” comprised the family of Abraham**, through whom alone of all people on earth, God was working:

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, 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. (Hebrews 11:8-10 ESV)

**God then led Jacob and his family to Egypt where they multiplied under the beneficence of Joseph.**<sup>13</sup> With the change of pharaonic dynasty in Egypt, Asiatics in Egypt became feared and were enslaved.<sup>14</sup> God removed the Israelites and formed them into his vassal nation by the Sinai Covenant.<sup>15</sup> **Israel was one small nation, a remnant, among the great and powerful nations of the world.** God’s intention for Israel was that they would become an example nation to teach the Way of God to all nations of the

<sup>6</sup> The beginnings of “worldly” society are described in Genesis 4:18-24.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of “the remnant”, see the Bible study notes “The Remnant & Second Exodus” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>8</sup> See Genesis 5:6-31

<sup>9</sup> See Genesis chapters seven, eight, nine, and ten

<sup>10</sup> See Genesis 11:1-9

<sup>11</sup> See Genesis 11:10-26

<sup>12</sup> See Genesis 12:1,6-9, 15:7, 26:1-4a,6,23, 33:17-18, 35:1, 37:1,12,17, 38:12, 46:1

<sup>13</sup> See Genesis chapters 46 and 47

<sup>14</sup> See Exodus chapter 1

<sup>15</sup> See Exodus chapters 7 through 15 and 19:1-8a

world.<sup>16</sup> Israel was faithful to God for one generation after they entered the Promised Land.<sup>17</sup> After that, the nation of Israel repeatedly broke the covenant by embracing idolatry.<sup>18</sup> Eventually God had to terminate the nation.<sup>19</sup>

However, at the perigee of Israel's existence, the time of King David, **God began to work with isolated individuals within the nation.** These individuals formed a class of people, a remnant, known to King

David as חַסִּידִים - ḥasid, or קְדוֹשִׁים - qadosh: "the godly", "saints", "those who fear YHWH":

But know that **the LORD has set apart the [hasid] for himself** ... (Psalm 4:3 ESV)

**With the [hasid]** you show yourself merciful;

with **the blameless** man you show yourself blameless;

with **the purified** you show yourself pure ... (Psalm 18:25-26a ESV)

Turn away from evil and do good; **so shall you dwell forever.**

For the LORD loves [mish'pat]<sup>20</sup>; **he will not forsake his [hasid].**

They are **preserved forever** ... (Psalm 37:27-28 ESV)

All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and **all your [hasid] shall bless you!**

**They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom** and tell of your power,

to **make known to the children of man** your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

**The LORD is righteous in all his ways and [hasid] in all his works.**

The LORD is near to all **who call on him**, to all who call on him **in truth.**

He fulfills the desire of **those who fear him**; he also hears their cry and **saves them.**

(Psalm 145:10-12, 17-19 ESV)

**As for the [qadosh] in the land**, they are the excellent ones, **in whom is all my delight.** (Psalm 16:3 ESV)

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is **the man who takes refuge in him!**

Oh, **fear the LORD, you his [qadosh]**, for **those who fear him** have no lack! (Psalm 34:8-9 ESV)

**At the time of Ahab and Jezebel, about a century after the time of David, unknown to Elijah, this remnant comprised some seven thousand persons:**

But [Elijah] went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And **he asked that he might die**, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." ... He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For **the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant**, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and **I, even I only, am left**, and they seek my life, to take it away." ... And the LORD said to him, "... Yet **I will leave** seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." (1 Kings 19:4, 10, 15a, 18 ESV)

The words "**I will leave**" are translated from הִשָּׁאֲרֵתִי - hish'ar'eti, a verb, **hiphil**, waw-consecutive + **perfect** first common singular,<sup>21</sup> from שָׁאַר - sha'ar, "remain", "be left over". The "**hiphil**" stem implies "causative" action; "**perfect**" implies completed action; so, **it would be better translated "I have left"**.

The related noun שָׁאֲרָא - she'ar, is used by Isaiah as technical term for "**the remnant**":

In that day the **remnant (she'ar)** of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. A **remnant (she'ar)** will return, the **remnant (she'ar)** of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a **remnant (she'ar)** of them will return. (Isaiah 10:20-22a ESV)

In the later Psalms, we also find allusions to the remnant of True Worshipers.<sup>22</sup> By the time of the destruction of the nation, there were apparently very few if any.<sup>23</sup> Ezekiel's commission was to identify those individuals being called by God and to bring them to repentance to form a new remnant to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.<sup>24</sup> He was apparently successful, because the True Worshipers were there to form a community into which the Messiah could come.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Exodus 19:5-6a, 34:10

<sup>17</sup> See Joshua 24:31, Judges 2:7, 11-15, Jeremiah 2:3, Hosea 9:10, 11:1-2

<sup>18</sup> See Judges 3:7, 6:25,28-32, 10:6, 1 Samuel 7:3-4, 1 Kings 11:1-8, 33, 12:28-30, 14:22-24, 16:30-33, 22:51-53, 2 Kings 21:2-7,21,

<sup>19</sup> 2 Kings 17:6-20, 25:1-10

<sup>20</sup> Here, *mish'pat*, is character attribute of God which he requires True Worshipers to develop, "justness".

<sup>21</sup> [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org), Hebrew Word Detail

<sup>22</sup> See Psalms 50:5, 79:2, 85:9, 97:10, 116:15, 132:9,16

<sup>23</sup> See Jeremiah 25:3, Jeremiah went on preaching for more than 20 years, and no one responded.

<sup>24</sup> See Ezekiel 2:5,7, 3:11,17, 18:30-32, 24:24

<sup>25</sup> See Luke 1:5-6,28-30,38, 2:25,36

When the time came for the Messiah, **Jesus Christ**, to commence his ministry, his **first business** was to **depose Satan the Devil** from his position as “steward of the earth”:

In those days **Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan**. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “**You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.**” **The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness**. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being **tempted by Satan**. ... 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 1:9-13a, 14b-15 ESV)

When Jesus says, “**the kingdom of God is at hand**”, he is implying that the door is now open. The “god of this world” has been disqualified. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, YHWH, has qualified to assume his role as **King of kings** and **bring the Kingdom of God to this earth**. However, a few things must occur prior to the final accomplishment.

#### **The Apostle Matthew greatly elaborates on the battle:**

Then **Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil**. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “**If you are the Son of God**, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “**It is written**,

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but **by every word** that comes from the mouth of God.”  
(Deuteronomy 8:3)

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “**If you are the Son of God**, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“He will command his angels concerning you,”  
and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.”  
(Psalms 91:11-12)

Jesus said to him, “Again **it is written**,

“**You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.**” (Deuteronomy 6:16)

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “**All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.**” Then Jesus said to him, “**Be gone, Satan! For it is written**,

“You shall worship the Lord your God and **him only shall you serve.**” (Deuteronomy 6:13)

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.  
(Matthew 4:1-11 ESV, see also Luke 4:1-13)

The Divine Being identified by the Apostle John as **the Word**, who became known as **YHWH** in dealing with the nation of Israel, became the **Messiah, Jesus Christ**. In the battle, the final volley of Satan, the god of this world, was to offer all the world to Jesus at the price of worship. **Jesus, the Word, used the words he had inspired to be recorded in the Writings of Moses to defeat Satan the Devil**. Jesus has qualified to become the King of kings, but Satan the Devil has been still left in charge of the earth; however, his removal is certain:

I will no longer talk much with you, for **the ruler of this world is coming**. He has no claim on me ... **the ruler of this world is judged**. ... **now will the ruler of this world be cast out** ...  
(John 14:30, 16:11b, 12:31b ESV)

**Satan the Devil has been the god of this world throughout the history of mankind**. Adam chose the way of sin – following Satan. God has left humanity under Satan to prove that all of the ways of man cannot work. **Satan’s agenda is death** – physical death through the most horrible means human beings can devise, but more importantly **spiritual death for those who willfully choose the way of sin** in spite of the grace of God has freely offered to all human beings. Satan will be removed and his influence over this world will be eradicated:

Now war arose in heaven, **Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon**. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

**And the great dragon was thrown down**, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—**he was thrown down to the earth**, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “**Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come**, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And **they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb** and **by the word of their testimony**, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But **woe to you, O earth and sea**, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because **he knows that his time is short!**”



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 ... and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur ... (Revelation 12:7-12, 20:1-3a, 10a ESV)

Until Satan is removed, human beings must survive in a world under his control. **True Worshipers of God must live in this world.** God requires us to learn to live by the Way of God. He requires us to learn about him, what the Nature of God is so that we can make it our nature. **The Plan of God is crystal clear to True Worshipers living at the end-time.** However, **we cannot perfectly implement the Way of God in this world.** This has been the situation for human beings that God has called and worked with since the death of Abel. **This is the “human condition”.**

**God is NOT now trying to fix this world.** God has NOT been trying to fix this world since the sin of Adam. God is allowing human beings, under the influence of Satan the Devil, to devise all forms of living imaginable. **The mainstream of the human race has been left alone to determine “right and wrong”, “the knowledge of good and evil”.** In the end, **this will prove that only the Way of God is viable.** God is allowing this world to bring itself to the brink of annihilation, then for the sake of the few “True Worshipers”, the “elect”, **he will save the world:**

For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. And **if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved.** But **for the sake of the elect**, whom he chose, **he shortened the days.**

(Mark 13:19-20 ESV see also Matthew 24:21-22)

Remember the [torah] of my servant Moses, the statutes and [mish<sup>e</sup>patim]<sup>26</sup> that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD 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.**” (Malachi 4:4-6 ESV)<sup>27</sup>

This is the “human condition” – **the world into which human existence has been consigned.** The mainstream of humanity goes on oblivious to the wiles of Satan the Devil. The mainstream of humanity has developed untold systems of government and philosophies of life – all inspired by Satan. The True Worshipers of God down through history have had to live in this world. **God has made no provision for his elect to change the world at this time.** True Worshipers have been required to live by the revelation of God available to them and remain faithful in spite of their circumstances with respect to the world – not an easy challenge.

### 3. The True Worshiper in the World of Satan

As outlined in the previous section, God has always worked with a small group of True Worshipers. Down through history, most of these people remain unknown. Even among one’s contemporaries no human being can determine who is or who is not among the True Worshipers with whom God is working – **only God knows who has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:**

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.** ... For **all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.** (Romans 8:9, 14 ESV)

Fortunately, God has recorded for us in the Bible information about many people from past ages with whom he has worked – people in whom was the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. God has a purpose in recording the lives of these people:

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)

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)

**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 he

<sup>26</sup> Here “mish<sup>e</sup>patim” implies the discernment and understanding only available through living by the Way of God as specified by the teaching of Moses.

<sup>27</sup> For a detailed discussion of this prophecy, see the paper “**The Work of Elijah**” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)  
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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)

**All these people interacted with Satan's world.** They had to live in the world that existed at the time they lived, as we must live in the world as it is today. All we know about these people is what the Bible tells us. All we know about the environments in which they lived is what we can ascertain from history and archeology. **To make inferences or assumptions beyond these sources of information is illogical.** In particular, it is illogical to take preconceptions based on later revelation or "modern assumptions" and project them backwards into historical situations. God plainly says that what is recorded the Bible is sufficient for our instruction. Valid exegesis of the Biblical material yields the understanding intended by God – this allows us to

... **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** (2 Peter 3:18a ESV)

The following sub-sections review the material we have regarding an exemplary subset of people mentioned in the Bible. Each example can teach us something about God's revelation and the reaction of a True Worshipper to the historical circumstances of his times.

### 3.1 Abraham

**Abraham grew up in the southern Sumerian city of Ur.** He lived in the tenth generation after the Flood.<sup>28</sup> The Biblical material we have in Genesis chapters one through eleven was certainly known to him – the very tablets upon which it was originally written may well have been in his possession as the patriarch of the line descended from Shem. Clearly, Abram, as his name was originally, knew of YHWH and was familiar with his family heritage. Yet, God revealed through Joshua that NOT all in the patriarchal line were True Worshipers:<sup>29</sup>

And Joshua said to all the people, "**Thus says the LORD**, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, **your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates**, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and **they served other gods.**

Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan ...'" (Joshua 24:2-3a ESV)

**When Abram was called,** he had moved to the northern city of **Haran** with his father Terah, his brother Nahor, and his nephew Lot. God required Abram to separate from his family so that he could learn to worship only the True God. Abram responded immediately to the calling of YHWH:

Now **the LORD 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 the LORD had told him** ... (Genesis 12:1, 4a ESV)

**YHWH worked with Abram and instructed him.** We have no details regarding ethical and moral teaching provided by YHWH to Abram. The emphasis in the Genesis narratives is the promises upon which God would work out his Plan:

When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem ... **Then the LORD appeared to Abram** and said, "**To your offspring I will give this land.**" **So he built there an altar to the LORD**, who had appeared to him. From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And **there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD.** (Genesis 12:5b-6a, 7-8 ESV)

Abram became a True Worshipper of YHWH, yet **his education, training, and world view were Sumerian.** He was well travelled and now lived in a foreign land among people of a completely foreign culture. **The Genesis narratives contain some summary statements regarding the moral and ethical values required by YHWH and embraced by Abraham.** From these we can infer the instruction given to Abram/Abraham foreshadowed the revelation from God through Moses:

And he believed the LORD, and **he counted it to him as righteousness.** (Genesis 15:6 ESV)

... the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; **walk before me**, and **be blameless**, that I may make my covenant between me and you ..." (Genesis 17:1b-2a ESV)

<sup>28</sup> Assuming there are no "gaps" in the recorded genealogical record.

<sup>29</sup> A related example of this is the incident Laban's "*t'raphim*" in Genesis 31:19, 30-35. Most likely Rachel attached value to these figures as representing inheritance rights.

For I have chosen him, that **he may command his children and his household** after him to **keep the way of the LORD** by **doing righteousness and [mish<sup>e</sup>pat]**<sup>30</sup> ... (Genesis 18:19a ESV)

... Abraham **obeyed my voice** and **kept my charge**, my **commandments**, my **statutes**, and my **[torah]**. (Genesis 26:5 ESV)

In the last citation, the words מִשְׁמֶרֶת - mish<sup>e</sup>mereth, “charge”; מִצְוָה - mitz<sup>e</sup>wah, “commandments”; חֻקֵּי - huqqah, “statutes”; and תּוֹרָה - torah, “teaching”, imply a very broad understanding of the moral and ethical teaching of God. In particular, the word *mitz<sup>e</sup>wah* is the normal word for the Ten Commandments. **The word torah is an all-inclusive term encompassing all the teaching of God.** The huqqah are particular prescriptions and proscriptions – they have much in common with the so called “legal codes” of many ancient nations.<sup>31</sup> The word *mish<sup>e</sup>mereth* implies specific instructions regarding an obligation. The quote from Genesis 18:19a indicates this is what he was to teach to his “children and household”.

The most important lesson Abraham had to learn was the meaning of *hesed*.<sup>32</sup> The most important word describing the Nature of God is *hesed*. Abraham was familiar with the word, but it took him many life lessons to learn its meaning. He requested it of Sarai:<sup>33</sup>

And when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, I said to her, ‘**This is the [hesed] you must do me:** at every place to which we come, say of me, “He is my brother.”’ (Genesis 20:13 ESV)

**Abraham had many problems dealing with the world in which he lived.** Twice he allowed his wife to be taken into the harem of a pagan king **because he was afraid:**

When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, “I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then **they will kill me**, but they will let you live. (Genesis 12:11-12 ESV)

And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. ... Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, ‘There is no fear of God at all in this place, and **they will kill me** because of my wife.’ (Genesis 20:2, 11 ESV)

**Abraham justified his “subtle prevarication”** by the fact that Sarah was technically his half sister:

Besides, she is indeed my sister, **the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother**, and she became my wife. (Genesis 20:12 ESV)

Abraham’s heritage as a Sumerian meant that he believed in monogamous marriage.<sup>34</sup> **This practice did NOT preclude the maintenance of concubines.**<sup>35</sup> During most of his life Sarah was his only wife. When she died, it is possible that one of his concubines, Keturah, was raised to the status of wife. **The Bible is clear Abraham maintained concubines during his life:**

The sons of **Keturah, Abraham’s concubine (pilegish)**:<sup>36</sup> she bore Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. (1 Chronicles 1:32 ESV)

Abraham took **another wife (‘ishshah)**, whose name was **Keturah**. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

But **to the sons of his concubines (pilegish)** Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country. (Genesis 25:1-2, 6 ESV)

**The six sons of Keturah could NOT have been born after her status was raised to wife** – this occurred when Abraham was 137 years old.<sup>37</sup> It had been a great miracle when Isaac was born when Abraham was a hundred years old. **No such “great miracles” are recorded for Keturah’s sons.** In addition,

<sup>30</sup> The word *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* in the singular derives its meaning from the character attribute of “justness” of God – God is absolutely fair in all his dealings. There is no shade of corruption, favouritism, or prejudice in God’s nature. For a discussion of *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*, see *Excursus 1 – mish<sup>e</sup>pat* in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of *huqqah* and ancient law codes see *Excursus 4 – Statutes and Ancient Law Codes* in the paper “The Writings of Moses” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>32</sup> For a discussion of *hesed*, see *Excursus 2 – hesed*, in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of Abraham’s learning the meaning of *hesed*, see section **3.2 To Live by Faith** in the paper “Covenants of Grace” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>34</sup> See the discussion in section **5.5.1 Marriage Customs in the Ancient World**.

<sup>35</sup> Note Abraham’s brother Nahor also maintained at least one concubine, see Genesis 22:20-24. For further discussion see section **5.11 Concubinage**.

<sup>36</sup> See the discussion in section **5.11 Concubinage**.

<sup>37</sup> See Genesis 17:17, 23:1

Abraham had sons of other “**concubines**”,<sup>38</sup> to whom he also gave gifts when he sent them to the east country.

Sarah’s use of Hagar to produce children for her was an accepted practice in the Ancient World.<sup>39</sup> **The Bible contains no censure of Sarah for using Hagar in this way** and **there is no censure of Abraham for producing a child in this way**. Hagar remained Sarah’s slave. Ishmael was legally Sarah’s son, Abraham’s firstborn son. **Abraham’s treatment of Ishmael clearly demonstrates Ishmael’s status**, in contrast to the status of the sons of concubines:

And Abraham said to God, “**Oh that Ishmael might live before you!**” ... **As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him** and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. ... Then **Abraham took Ishmael his son** and all those born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and **he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins** that very day, as God had said to him. (Genesis 17:18, 20a, 23 ESV)

While there is no censure of the practice of using slaves as surrogates, the narrative in Genesis points out some of the **difficulties that arise from complicated family relationships**:

And when [Hagar] saw that she had conceived, **she looked with contempt on her mistress**. And **Sarai said to Abram**, “May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my [slave] (shiph<sup>e</sup>hah)<sup>40</sup> to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. **May the LORD judge between you and me!**” But **Abram said to Sarai**, “**Behold, your [slave] (shiph<sup>e</sup>hah) is in your power**; do to her as you please.” Then **Sarai dealt harshly with her**, and **she fled from her**. (Genesis 16:4b-6 ESV)

And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. **But Sarah saw the son of Hagar** the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, **laughing in mockery**. So she said to Abraham, “**Cast out this slave woman (‘amah) with her son**, for the son of this slave woman (‘amah) shall not be heir with my son Isaac.” And **the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son**. (Genesis 21:8-11 ESV)

Abraham is noted in the New Testament as the “**Father of the Faithful**”.<sup>41</sup> God began to implement his Plan of Salvation with Abraham. Still Abraham had many life lessons to learn, and God did NOT put onto him any requirements that he could not fulfill. He lived in the world as it was, by the best understanding of the Way of God that he had, but **he had far from the complete revelation**. In spite of these limitations, he accomplished his calling:

For **he was looking forward to the city that has foundations**, whose designer and builder is God. (Hebrews 11:10 ESV)

### 3.2 Jacob

**Jacob was born and raised in the land and culture of Canaan**. The Sumerian culture of his grandparents was remote and foreign to him. His was a different world. Abraham had been admonished to instruct his descendants in the Way of God:

For I have chosen him, that **he may command his children and his household** after him to **keep the way of the LORD** by **doing righteousness and [mish<sup>e</sup>pat]**<sup>42</sup> ... (Genesis 18:19a ESV)

As with most generations, the ways of the grandparents are not immediately inculcated by the grandchildren. As with Abraham when he was called, Jacob was aware of YHWH and the family history, but **he was not personally committed to serving YHWH**. It took many lessons over many years for Jacob to respond to God’s calling and become converted.

**Jacob understood the significance of the “birthright”** – the firstborn son was entitled to certain benefits. Esau and Jacob were twins – **Esau, the firstborn**. Rebekah, their mother, had been given a prophecy that “**the older shall serve the younger**”.<sup>43</sup> Rebekah favoured Jacob; while Isaac favoured

<sup>38</sup> See also the discussion of Genesis 14:14 in section [5.1.1 War in the Old Testament](#).

<sup>39</sup> See the discussion in section [5.6 Slaves as Surrogates](#).

<sup>40</sup> For the Hebrew word, see the discussion in section [5.2 Slavery](#).

<sup>41</sup> See Galatians 3:7-9, Romans 4:16, Hebrews 2:16, James 2:21

<sup>42</sup> The word *mish<sup>e</sup>pat* in the singular derives its meaning from the character attribute of “justness” of God – God is absolutely fair in all his dealings. There is no shade of corruption, favouritism, or prejudice in God’s nature. For a discussion of *mish<sup>e</sup>pat*, see [Excursus 1 – mish<sup>e</sup>pat](#) in the paper “[Covenants of Grace](#)” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>43</sup> See Genesis 25:23

Esau,<sup>44</sup> the firstborn. Rebekah do doubt communicated the prophecy to Jacob, because when Jacob saw opportunity, he was quick to wrest the “firstborn” status from his brother:

Once when **Jacob was cooking stew**, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, **“Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!”** ... **Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright now.”** **Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?”** Jacob said, “Swear to me now.” So he swore to him and **sold his birthright to Jacob**. (Genesis 25:29-33 ESV)

**This was a legitimate “sale”**, but clearly the seller was under duress and the purchase price was far below the actual value – **a dirty business deal**. We do not know how old Jacob and Esau were when the birthright transaction was made, but **when the next significant event occurs, Jacob is a mature man**, but clearly unconverted.<sup>45</sup> Esau’s marriages to “Hittite” women had “made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah”.<sup>46</sup> When Isaac planned to bless Esau as his firstborn, **Rebekah plotted with Jacob to further fulfill the prophecy**:

When Isaac was old and **his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called Esau** his older son and said to him, “My son”; and he answered, “Here I am.” He said, “Behold, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me, and prepare for me delicious food, such as I love, and bring it to me so that I may eat, **that my [being] may bless you before I die.**”

Now **Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau**. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, **Rebekah said to her son Jacob**, “I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, ‘Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the LORD before I die.’ **Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you.** ...” (Genesis 27:1-8 ESV)

The rest of the story is well known. Rebekah prepares a goat and disguises Jacob who passes himself off as Esau. In the process Jacob directly lies to his father, Isaac, three times.<sup>47</sup> In the end he receives the blessing from Isaac.<sup>48</sup> This sets the course of Jacob’s life for many years. He learns in no uncertain terms what it is like to be on the wrong end of a dirty business deal. He also learns what it is like to be lied to and swindled. While this happening, God calls him and he becomes converted.<sup>49</sup> It all begins with his flight to Haran, home of Laban, Rebekah’s brother, and a real shyster.<sup>50</sup>

The most significant events in Haran are Jacob’s marriages to Leah and Rachel, (this is discussed in section **5.5.2 Marriage Customs in the Bible**), and the birth of Jacob’s first eleven sons (this is discussed in the section **5.6 Slaves as Surrogates**). Of significance related to Jacob’s wives is the tension between them. **The situation of taking two sisters as wives is later proscribed**:

When **the LORD saw that Leah was hated**, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. ... she said, “Because the LORD has looked upon my affliction; for **now my husband will love me.**” She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Because the LORD has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also.” ... Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, “Now **this time my husband will be attached to me**, because I have borne him three sons.”

When **Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister**. She said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I shall die!” (Genesis 29:31, 32b-33a, 34a, 30:1 ESV)

And **you shall not take a woman as a rival wife to her sister**, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive. (Leviticus 18:18 ESV)

It is worth noting that **only Rachel’s death is explicitly documented**.<sup>51</sup> After her death, her slave, Bilhah, who was the mother of Jacob’s sons Dan and Naphtali, required change of status. While Rachel lived, Bilhah remained her property, but with Rachel’s death **Bilhah became a concubine of Jacob** so that she could remain in the household.<sup>52</sup>

While Israel lived in that land, Reuben went and lay with **Bilhah his father’s concubine (pilegish)**. (Genesis 35:22a ESV)

<sup>44</sup> See Genesis 25:28

<sup>45</sup> At Jacob’s birth, Isaac is around 60 (Genesis 25:26); Esau married at 40, so Isaac is around 100 (Genesis 26:34); Isaac lived to 180 (Genesis 35:28); so, several years may well have passed by before “he was old and his eyes were dim” – Jacob is certainly over 40, perhaps as much as 60 (Genesis 27:1).

<sup>46</sup> See Genesis 26:35

<sup>47</sup> See Genesis 27:19,20,24

<sup>48</sup> See Genesis 27:9-29

<sup>49</sup> For the events of Jacob’s calling and conversion, see Genesis 28:10-22, 31:5,10-13, 32:1-2,9-12,22-32, 35:1-4,9-15, 46:1-4, 48:3-4

<sup>50</sup> For the life lessons Jacob learns in his dealings with Laban see Genesis 29:15-30, 30:27-35, 31:4-7,44-53

<sup>51</sup> See Genesis 35:16-20

<sup>52</sup> Note that in Genesis 37:2, both Bilhah and Zilpah are generally grouped as **“Jacob’s women”**, *‘ishshah*.

**The death of Leah is not reported**, but she died in Canaan before Jacob migrated to Egypt:

Then [Jacob] commanded them and said to them, “I am to be gathered to my people; **bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite**, in the cave that is in the field at Machpelah, to the east of Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite to possess as a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and **there I buried Leah**—the field and the cave that is in it were bought from the Hittites.” (Genesis 49:29-32 ESV)

**While Leah was still alive**, before Joseph was sold into Egypt, **Jacob alludes to Leah as Joseph’s “mother”**,<sup>53</sup> since **she was the last remaining “wife” of the household**:

**Then [Joseph] dreamed another dream** and told it to his brothers and said, “Behold, I have dreamed another dream. Behold, **the sun, the moon**, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, **his father rebuked him** and said to him, “What is this dream that you have dreamed? **Shall I and your mother** and your brothers indeed come to **bow ourselves to the ground before you?**” (Genesis 37:9-10 ESV)

**Jacob became known as “Israel”, the eponymous ancestor of the nation, and metaphorically of all persons called to the Family of God, “Spiritual Israel”**. When he responded to his calling, he had much to repent of; yet God worked with him and accomplished his purpose through him. The tribal patriarchs of the Nation of Israel were born through **a family relationship that in no way measures up to later standards**. Yet God used Jacob’s family to accomplish his plan – no stigma is attached to Jacob or his sons. **The state of revelation available to Jacob gave him no way to know that his family situation would be later proscribed**.

### 3.3 Joseph

The story of Joseph requires no reiteration or elaboration. Within the context of this paper the most significant incident is with **Potiphar’s wife** – this incident is discussed in section **5.8.1 Adultery in the Ancient World**.

One other point of interest is that **Joseph had to become thoroughly “Egyptianized” in order to accomplish the work required by God**. When Joseph first arrived in Egypt, he was identifiable as a “Hebrew”.<sup>54</sup> There is no indication how the identification was made – possibly through dress and speech. **Once he was lifted to a high position, he could not be seen as a foreigner**:

“... You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. **Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you**.” And **Pharaoh said to Joseph**, “See, **I have set you over all the land of Egypt**.” Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and **clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck**. And he made him ride in his second chariot. And they called out before him, “Bow the knee!” Thus he set him over all the land of Egypt. Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, and **without your consent no one shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt**.” (Genesis 41:40-44 ESV)

**Joseph was given an Egyptian wife, Asenath**, the daughter of Potiphar a pagan priest of On, one of the ancient Egyptian temple complexes.<sup>55</sup> Joseph would have had to adapt to many cultural differences in her outlook and she would have had significant influence on the upbringing of Manasseh and Ephraim.

When his brothers came to Egypt, **they could not distinguish Joseph from an actual Egyptian**:

Now Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And **Joseph’s brothers came and bowed themselves before him** with their faces to the ground. **Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them**, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. “Where do you come from?” he said. They said, “From the land of Canaan, to buy food.” And Joseph recognized his brothers, but **they did not recognize him**. (Genesis 42:6-8 ESV see also 43:26-28)

Joseph assumed Egyptian customs:

Joseph said to them, “What deed is this that you have done? **Do you not know that a man like me can indeed practice divination?**” ... Then Judah went up to him and said, “Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord’s ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant, for **you are like Pharaoh himself**. ... And **Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father**. So the physicians

<sup>53</sup> Rachel was Joseph’s physical mother, see Genesis 30:22-24; Joseph was the last born in Haran.

<sup>54</sup> See Genesis 39:14, 41:12

<sup>55</sup> See Genesis 41:45



embalmed Israel. Forty days were required for it, for that is how many are required for embalming. (Genesis 44:15, 18, 50:2-3a ESV)

For Joseph to be indistinguishable from actual Egyptians implies that he was fully assimilated to Egyptian ways. But clearly, **he did not forget his heritage or his association with YHWH the God of his Fathers:** And **Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”** Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, **“God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.”** (Genesis 50:24-25 ESV)

Nevertheless, **Joseph’s ability to live by the Way of God while he was effectively an Egyptian would have been greatly constrained.** This did not prevent God from using him in a powerful way to accomplish his purpose – he did the best he could with the knowledge and circumstances he was given.

### 3.4 Moses

Moses was raised as the son of a Pharaoh’s daughter.<sup>56</sup> The Bible says little about his early career as an Egyptian Prince. Other sources make reference to **his leading a campaign south of Egypt into Cushite territory.**<sup>57</sup> There is only speculation as to how it occurred, but **Moses apparently married a Cushite Princess.** Possibly she arrived at Horeb as the Israelites were preparing to leave: Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of **the Cushite woman whom he had married,** for he had married a Cushite woman. (Numbers 12:1 ESV)

**Moses’ second wife, Zipporah, a Midianite woman, had arrived at Horeb soon after they got there:** **Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses’ father-in-law,** heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel his people, how the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt. Now Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, had taken **Zipporah, Moses’ wife,** after he had sent her home, along with **her two sons.** The name of the one was **Gershom** ... and the name of the other, **Eliezer** ... Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, **came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness where he was encamped at the mountain of God.** (Exodus 18:1-5 ESV)

**No where is there any censure of Moses for his having two wives.** There is no proscription in the Writings of Moses regarding two wives.

### 3.5 David

David’s first wife was Michal, the daughter of Saul. **David immediately grasped the political significance of this marriage,** although Saul had ulterior motives:

Now **Saul’s daughter Michal loved David.** And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. **Saul thought,** “Let me give her to him, that **she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.**”

Therefore Saul said to David a second time, **“You shall now be my son-in-law.”** And Saul commanded his servants, “Speak to David in private and say, ‘Behold, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you. Now then become the king’s son-in-law.’” And Saul’s servants spoke those words in the ears of David. And **David said, “Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king’s son-in-law,** since I am a poor man and have no reputation?”

And the servants of Saul told him, “Thus and so did David speak.” Then Saul said, “Thus shall you say to David, **‘The king desires no bride-price except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines,** that he may be avenged of the king’s enemies.’” Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. And when his servants told David these words, **it pleased David well to be the king’s son-in-law.** (1 Samuel 18:20-26 ESV)

David apparently never divorced Michal, even though Saul gave her to another man in David’s absence. **David insisted on having her back when the opportunity arose:**

**Saul had given Michal his daughter, David’s wife, to Palti** the son of Laish, who was of Gallim. (1 Samuel 25:44 ESV)

And **Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf,** saying, “To whom does the land belong? Make your covenant with me, and behold, **my hand shall be with you to bring over all Israel to you.**” And he said, “Good; I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you; that is, **you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul’s daughter,** when you come to see my face.” (2 Samuel 3:12-13 ESV)

<sup>56</sup> Exodus 2:5-15, Acts 7:20-22

<sup>57</sup> See Josephus Book 2, Chapter 10; Artapanus, in OTP volume 2 pages 898-899; see also Rohl’s discussion in TT pages 310-318, EE pages 184-187

**The political significance of this cannot be overstated.** In the Ancient world, **having a woman from the previous king or dynasty was very important to the establishment of a new king or dynasty.** This is demonstrated again at Solomon's accession. Adonijah had been lobbying to become king.<sup>58</sup> David made Solomon co-regent just before his death and with the help of the Prophet Nathan and certain others, Solomon retained the throne.<sup>59</sup> **Adonijah was temporarily spared,<sup>60</sup> but he connived again to gain a claim to the throne through Abishag, David's final "concubine".<sup>61</sup>** Adonijah was immediately executed:

Then **Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon.** And she said, "Do you come peacefully?" He said, "Peacefully." Then he said, "I have something to say to you." She said, "Speak." He said, "You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel fully expected me to reign. However, the kingdom has turned about and become my brother's, for it was his from the LORD. And now **I have one request to make of you; do not refuse me.**" She said to him, "Speak." And he said, "**Please ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife.**" (1 Kings 2:13-17 ESV)

**King Solomon answered his mother,** "And **why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also,** for he is my older brother, and on his side are Abiathar the priest and Joab the son of Zeruiah." Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, "**God do so to me and more also if this word does not cost Adonijah his life!** Now therefore as the LORD lives, who has established me and placed me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house, as he promised, **Adonijah shall be put to death today.**" (1 Kings 2:22-24 ESV)

During the wandering years, David acquired **Ahinoam of Jezreel** and **Abigail of Carmel** as wives. There is no information regarding the acquisition of Ahinoam, but **the acquisition of Abigail is quite instructive.** Abigail was married to a rich man named Nabal. David and his band of mercenaries had been policing the area in which Nabal operated and had protected his interests. As recompense, David requested some provisions from Nabal.<sup>62</sup> Nabal arrogantly refused, and David prepared to eliminate him.<sup>63</sup> Abigail became aware of the situation and humbly brought provisions to David.<sup>64</sup> **David is impressed with Abigail** and expresses his gratitude:

And **David said to Abigail,** "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! **Blessed be your discretion,** and **blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt** and from working salvation with my own hand! For as surely as the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, who has restrained me from hurting you, unless you had hurried and come to meet me, truly by morning there had not been left to Nabal so much as one male." Then David received from her hand what she had brought him. And he said to her, "**Go up in peace to your house.** See, **I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition.**" (1 Samuel 25:32-35 ESV)

Almost immediately, YHWH strikes Nabal with a deadly heart attack.<sup>65</sup> Nabal was rich, so Abigail as widow, could have lived off his wealth, but most likely he had adult sons who were heirs. If any of them were at all like Nabal, Abigail was probably only too happy for an out. When **David made the offer to take her into his household as a "wife",** she humbly jumped at it:

Then **David sent and spoke to Abigail, to take her as his wife.** When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they said to her, "David has sent us to you to take you to him as his wife." **And she rose and bowed with her face to the ground and said,** "Behold, **your handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord.**" And **Abigail hurried** and rose and mounted a donkey, and her five young women attended her. She followed the messengers of David and became his wife. (1 Samuel 25:39b-42 ESV)

During the years as king in Hebron David took four more "wives":

And **sons were born to David at Hebron:** his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam of Jezreel; and his second, Chileab, of Abigail the widow of Nabal of Carmel; and the third, Absalom the son of **Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur;** and the fourth, Adonijah the son of **Haggith;** and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of **Abital;** and the sixth, Ithream, of **Eglah,** David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron. (2 Samuel 3:2-5 ESV)

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<sup>58</sup> See 1 Kings 1:5-10

<sup>59</sup> See 1 Kings 1:11-40

<sup>60</sup> See 1 Kings 1:49-53

<sup>61</sup> See 1 Kings 1:1-4

<sup>62</sup> See 1 Samuel 25:1b-8.

<sup>63</sup> See 1 Samuel 25:9-13

<sup>64</sup> See 1 Samuel 25:14-31

<sup>65</sup> See 1 Samuel 25:36-38



In Jerusalem, David increased his household:

And David took more **concubines** and **wives** from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron, and more sons and daughters were born to David. (2 Samuel 5:13 ESV)

These were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan and Solomon, **four by Bath-shua**, the daughter of Ammiel; **then** Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet, **nine**. All these were David's sons, **besides the sons of the concubines**, and Tamar was their sister. (1 Chronicles 3:5-9 ESV, see also 1 Chronicles 14:3-5)

**David's concubines are never named** and the only "wife" identified from Jerusalem is Bathsheba also known as Bath-shua. Note that **David had nine sons from other wives after he took Bathsheba as a wife**. The storey of David and Bathsheba requires no recounting. David is never censured for taking many wives and concubines – **even taking Bathsheba after the death of Uriah is NOT censured**. **David is censured for adultery and murder** – he illegally took Bathsheba while she was married to another man: the definition of adultery. Then he connivingly arranged the death of Uriah: blatant murder:

**Nathan said to David**, "You are the man! **Thus says the LORD**, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And **I gave you** your master's house and **your master's wives ('ishshah) into your arms** and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? **You have struck down Uriah the Hittite** with the sword and **have taken his wife ('ishshah) to be your [woman] ('ishshah) and have killed him with the sword** of the Ammonites.

Now therefore **the sword shall never depart from your house**, because you have despised me and have taken the wife ('ishshah) of Uriah the Hittite to be your [woman] ('ishshah).'

Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, **I will raise up evil against you out of your own house**. And I will take your [women] ('ishshah) before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your [women] ('ishshah) in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'" (2 Samuel 12:7-12 ESV)

The feminine noun *'ishshah* occurs several times in this passage. **The broadest meaning of the word is a woman who is in a legitimate sexual relationship with a man: wife, concubine, surrogate, or slave.**

In the first instance YHWH asserts that David was given *'ishshah* of Saul. We have no other information on this, but apparently, some *'ishshah* who had been in Saul's harem were taken by David into his harem. When *'ishshah* is used with Uriah, it refers to Bathsheba as his legal wife. When *'ishshah* refers to David and Bathsheba, **it is used sarcastically** as she was the object of his adultery. When *'ishshah* refers to David's legitimate *'ishshah* it refers to his actual wives and/or concubines.

David of course repented deeply<sup>66</sup> and God did NOT apply the prescribed death penalty. **The second and third paragraphs in the above citation are a prophecy outlining the punishment that would be incurred by David:**

- **"the sword shall never depart from your house"** this began to be fulfilled with the Absalom rebellion, but the consequences continued throughout the Davidic Dynasty
- **"I will raise up evil against you out of your own house"** this began with the "Tamar incident";<sup>67</sup> was intensified by the murder of Amnon;<sup>68</sup> continued with the banishment of Absalom;<sup>69</sup> became critical with Absalom's conspiracy;<sup>70</sup> and culminated in the rebellion and death of Absalom<sup>71</sup>
- **"I will take your [women] ('ishshah) before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your [women] ('ishshah) in the sight of this sun"** this is very specific prophecy: as David was fleeing Jerusalem, he left ten concubines (*'ishshah*) as caretakers of the palace:  
So the king went out, and **all his household** after him. And **the king left ten concubines ('ishshah pilegesh) to keep the house**. (2 Samuel 15:16 ESV)  
**"all his household"** includes his wives and other concubines;<sup>72</sup> the **ten who were left** met the prophesized unpleasant fate:

<sup>66</sup> See 2 Samuel 12:13, Psalm 51

<sup>67</sup> See 2 Samuel 13:1-14

<sup>68</sup> See 2 Samuel 13:23-33

<sup>69</sup> See 2 Samuel 13:34-39

<sup>70</sup> See 2 Samuel 15:1-12

<sup>71</sup> See 2 Samuel 15:13-16, 18:15

<sup>72</sup> That David had more than the ten concubines is explicit in the words of Joab after the return to Jerusalem, see 2 Samuel 19:5

Ahithophel said to Absalom, “**Go in to your father’s concubines (pilegish),** whom he has left to keep the house, and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself a stench to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened.” **So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the roof. And Absalom went in to his father’s concubines (pilegish) in the sight of all Israel.** (2 Samuel 16:21-22 ESV)

**David was a “man after God’s own heart”, but he made a lot of mistakes,** some of which are set up in the Bible as object lessons from which God expects True Worshipers to learn. **David is never censured for taking wives or concubines** – although his family life was clearly far from happy. **David is censured for blatant sin,** which he knew was sin as soon as Nathan confronted him. It is illogical to apply later standards, that are the result of fuller revelation, to David’s situation.

### 3.6 Solomon

**Solomon’s wisdom and wealth are of course proverbial, as is his enormous harem.** Solomon is never censured for the size of his harem. He is censured for its composition, “**foreign women**”, and the effect the woman had on him:

Now **King Solomon loved many foreign women (‘ishshah),** along with the daughter of Pharaoh: **Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian,** and **Hittite** women,<sup>73</sup> from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “**You shall not enter into marriage with them,** neither shall they with you, for surely **they will turn away your heart after their gods.**” Solomon clung to these in love.

**He had 700 wives (‘ishshah), who were princesses, and 300 concubines (pilegish).** And **his wives (‘ishshah) turned away his heart.** For when Solomon was old his wives (‘ishshah) turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

For **Solomon went after Ashtoreth** the goddess of the Sidonians, and **after Milcom** the abomination of the Ammonites. So **Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD** and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon **built a high place for Chemosh** the abomination of Moab, **and for Molech** the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives (‘ishshah), who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. (1 Kings 11:1-8 ESV)

**The size of Solomon’s harem was certainly in violation of the teaching of Moses:**

When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘**I will set a king over me,** like all the nations that are around me,’ **you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose.** One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ And **he shall not acquire many [women] (‘ishshah) for himself, lest his heart turn away,** nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. (Deuteronomy 17:14-17 ESV)

The warning “**lest his heart turn away**” was certainly also applicable. **The censure of Solomon was for falling into idolatry:**

And **the LORD was angry with Solomon,** because **his heart had turned away from the LORD,** the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had **commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods.** But **he did not keep what the LORD commanded.** Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, “Since **this has been your practice** and **you have not kept my covenant and my statutes** that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.” (1 Kings 11:9-13 ESV)

**God’s assessment of Solomon is a clear example of God’s being concerned about the “big” issue, while being less concerned about secondary issues.**

### 3.7 Cornelius

**Cornelius was a professional Roman Soldier,** an officer, a Centurion. **He and his household were the first “Gentiles” to be converted.** The conversion was attended by great miracles from God so that it was apparent that God was doing something new:

<sup>73</sup> The word “women” is here supplied by the translator.  
Wednesday, April 12, 2023

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. 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. 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. ...

Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon’s house, stood at the gate and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there. And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.” ...

The next day he 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. ...

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. ...”

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. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days. (Acts 10:1-5, 9-11, 17-20, 23b-24, 34-35, 44-48 ESV)

**Caesarea was the administrative center of the occupying Roman army.** It was a hotbed of paganism. The rapaciousness of Roman soldiers was famous:

... the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ... And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” ... Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.” (Luke 3:2b-3, 10, 14, ESV)

**Jesus’ teaching on military service for Christians is clear** – see section [5.2.2 War in the New Testament](#).

Cornelius is the first Gentile converted to Christianity. He is a career Roman Soldier. **He could NOT resign his commission.** There is no suggestion anywhere in the New Testament that his calling was inconstant with his profession. **This is a clear example of Paul’s accommodation to the Corinthians:**

Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. ... Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God. (1 Corinthians 7:17, 20-24 ESV)

**This is clearly an example of not being able to fully implement the highest standard in a particular circumstance.** Cornelius was a soldier when he was called; he remained a soldier after his conversion. Jesus’ teaching on military service proscribes entry into a career as a soldier, but Paul’s accommodation makes it clear that Cornelius’ situation was acceptable.

### [3.8 Philemon](#)

**Philemon was a wealthy Christian living in Colossae.** As with all wealthy people in the Roman Empire, **he owned slaves**. One of his slaves, Onesimus, ran away. At the discretion of the owner, this was punishable by death. Onesimus became converted and was befriended by Paul, who was under house arrest, in Rome. **Paul sends Onesimus back to Philemon with a plea for his manumission:**

Accordingly, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required, yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you—I, Paul, an old man and now a prisoner also for Christ Jesus—I appeal to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I became in my imprisonment. (Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful to you and to me.) I am sending him back to you, sending my very heart.

I would have been glad to keep him with me, in order that he might serve me on your behalf during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent in order that your goodness might not be by compulsion but of your own accord. For this perhaps is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back forever, no longer as a bondservant but more than a bondservant, as a beloved brother—especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. (Philemon 8-16 ESV)

There is no questioning Philemon's right to own Christian slaves. There is no appeal to higher moral or ethical standards. Slavery was a fact of life.<sup>74</sup> Paul appeals as a friend, as one Christian to another. His appeal was apparently successful, as Onesimus soon shows up working with Paul:

Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts, and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you of everything that has taken place here. (Colossians 4:7-9 ESV)

### 3.9 Christians in the World Today

As Christians living under the New Covenant, Jesus, the Head of the Body, holds us to a higher standard than True Worshipers who lived under the Old Covenant. We are NOT required to try to fix the world now, but we are definitely required NOT to be part of the world.<sup>75</sup> The Apostle Paul made the point explicitly to the Church at Corinth:

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. (1 Corinthians 5:9-10 ESV)

True Christians must live in this world as it is today. The filth and corruption will be removed in due time, but the challenge is to "remain unstained":

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:17 ESV)

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. (James 1:27 ESV)

Everything about his world is designed to bring people into the way of sin, the way of Satan the Devil.

Satan's primary target is True Worshipers:

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. (1 Peter 5:8-9 ESV)

YHWH, Jesus Christ, gave Moses explicit instructions on how to deal with the world. They are equally applicable today:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am the LORD 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]<sup>76</sup> and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my [mish'patim]; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 18:1-5 ESV)

Living by the Way of God, "walk in them", requires recognizing the ways of the world, "you shall not do as they do", and avoiding them. True Worshipers must understand God's teaching, "keep my statutes". Then through living the Christian life, "if a person does them, he shall live by them", a True Worshiper comes to the maturity and depth of understanding and discernment, "follow my mish'patim", only available through living according to the teaching of God. This allows God to consider the Christian as a candidate for the gift of eternal life. This is the definition of the "Christian Life". This is what raises True Worshipers above the "human condition".

The Christian life in Satan's world is characterized by this constant tension between the ideal and the reality. The ideal is the complete teaching of God, epitomized by the New Testament authors. The reality is a world of sin. God requires Christians to live in this world, to understand the causes of the sins

<sup>74</sup> See section 5.2.3 Slavery in New Testament Times

<sup>75</sup> See the discussion of this in section 5.2.2 War in the New Testament.

<sup>76</sup> Here "mish'patim" is more or less equivalent to the phrase "Way of God".

which corrupt this world, but remain apart from the world. **When the Kingdom of God is inaugurated and the gift of eternal life is granted, then as full members of the Family of God, the resurrected saints, the True Worshippers down through all history, will ensure that a world of sin cannot happen again.**

**The most important theme of the Gospel of John is eternal life:**

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but **these are written so that you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that **by believing you may have life (zōē)** in his name. (John 20:30-31 ESV)

The Greek word for “life” is ζωή - zōē. **The Apostle John uses it almost exclusively with the meaning of “eternal life”.** The Greek word for eternal is αἰώνιος - aiōnios. John uses the two words together seventeen times. Another favourite word of John is φῶς - phōs. It means “light” or “fire”. It is used throughout the New Testament in metaphoric sense for “truth” or “righteousness”. John uses *phōs* as a defining characteristic of God the Father and Jesus Christ:

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that **God is light (phōs)**, and in him is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5 ESV)

Again **Jesus spoke** to them, saying, **“I am the light (phōs) of the world.** Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the **light (phōs) of life (zōē).”** (John 8:12 ESV)

In his Gospel, **the Apostle John is very specific to bring out the tension of the Christian life.** John starts his Gospel by identifying the nature of Jesus Christ:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.** He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **In him was life (zōē), and the life (zōē) was the light (phōs) of men.** **The light (phōs) shines in the darkness,** and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5 ESV)

The Apostle John then goes on to discuss John the Baptist<sup>77</sup> and his role to **witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ:**

I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And **I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.** (John 1:33-34 ESV)

Next, the Gospel of John reports the identification of the first disciples, John, Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael.<sup>78</sup> This leads into the report of **the Wedding at Cana.**<sup>79</sup> **The wedding was a worldly event.** Jesus’ family was invited. Some or all of his early disciples also attended.<sup>80</sup> It was a large celebration, and the wine ran out. Mary, Jesus’ mother, rather out-of-placidly, requests Jesus to perform a miracle. Jesus’ first reaction is that he would not:

And Jesus said to her, “Woman, **what does this have to do with me?** **My hour has not yet come.”** (John 2:4 ESV)

But apparently realizing no harm would come, i.e., to participate implied no sin, Jesus produces the wine and uses it as **a witness to some wedding staff** and as **an object lesson of faith for his disciples:**

When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (**though the servants who had drawn the water knew**) ... This, the first of his signs,<sup>81</sup> Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and **manifested his glory.** And **his disciples believed in him.** (John 2:9a, 11 ESV)

**To further emphasize the tension with the world,** John next reports a rather unpleasant incident in the Temple in Jerusalem:

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.”** (Psalm 69:9)

<sup>77</sup> See John 1:6-32, see the paper “John the Baptist - More Than a Prophet”, located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>78</sup> See John 1:35-51

<sup>79</sup> See John 2:1-11; this event is also discussed in section [5.5.2 Marriage Customs in the Bible](#).

<sup>80</sup> See John 2:1-2

<sup>81</sup> For a discussion of Jesus’ “signs” see the Bible Study Notes, “The Miracles of the Gospel of John” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

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)

John is here contrasting a situation where the world has introduced a corruption – money changing and selling in the Temple. Jesus does NOT tolerate it. He uses it as an object lesson for his disciples, and for us, to understand when to challenge the ways of the world. The reaction of the “Jews” is typical – “who are you tell us what to do?” Jesus’ response is enigmatic, but prophetic.<sup>82</sup> The disciples did not understand the full significance until after Jesus was resurrected. By this explicit allusion to the resurrection, the Apostle John leads into the topics of Christian living and eternal life. But first John summarizes the two object lessons:

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man. (John 2:23-25 ESV)

People “believed”, but the time had not yet come that they might be converted. These early object lessons were for the disciples. Of those who “believed”, perhaps God would call some, but their time would come later, after the first Christian Pentecost, when the “disciples”, turned “Apostles”, would teach them the true Way of God. Jesus was NOT prepared to teach these people at that time.

The next incident John reports is the famous encounter with Nicodemus.<sup>83</sup> This whole incident hinges on the two words γεννάω - gennaō and ἀνωθεν - anōthen. The verb gennaō carries the whole range of meaning from “procreation” through “giving birth”, as well as derived metaphoric uses.<sup>84</sup> The adverb anōthen carries the range of meaning “from above”, “from the beginning”, “for a long time”, “again”, “anew”.<sup>85</sup> John uses this incident to establish his main theme of eternal life. Jesus appears to recognize potential in Nicodemus<sup>86</sup> because he immediately hits him with a hard saying:

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born (gennaō) again (anōthen) he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born (gennaō) when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born (gennaō)?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born (gennaō) of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born (gennaō) of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born (gennaō) of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:3-6 ESV)

As a Pharisee, Nicodemus was familiar with the concept of the resurrection. Nicodemus is very clear on understanding that Jesus is talking about the process of procreation through birth – it is not a point-in-time event. But, Nicodemus does NOT see how it can metaphorically apply to the resurrection. Jesus has to elaborate the spiritual process: water baptism to wash away sin; indwelling of the Holy Spirit to allow living by the Way of God; finally, the change from flesh to spirit. Jesus’ point, which John is keying on, is that it is a process. A person is NOT a candidate for the resurrection, for eternal life, until the person has gone through the process. Jesus ends the discussion with a reference to the Israelites in the Wilderness:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal (aiōnios) life (zōē). (John 3:14-15 ESV)

To alleviate the plague of poisonous snakes, Moses raised up a bronze serpent, the sight of which provided life.<sup>87</sup> Jesus uses this to foreshadow the crucifixion through which sins can be forgiven providing the path to life. Based on this teaching of Jesus, John summarizes Jesus’ mission on earth: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal (aiōnios) life (zōē). For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but

<sup>82</sup> See Mark 14:58 // Matthew 26:61, Mark 15:29 // Matthew 27:40

<sup>83</sup> See John 3:1-15

<sup>84</sup> See GEL page 154

<sup>85</sup> See GEL page 76

<sup>86</sup> Nicodemus does appear to have been later converted, see John 7:50, 19:39

<sup>87</sup> See Numbers 21:4-9



**whoever does not believe is condemned already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

And this is the judgment: **the light (phōs) has come into the world**, and **people loved the darkness rather than the light (phōs)** because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light (phōs) and does not come to the light (phōs), lest his works should be exposed. But **whoever does what is true comes to the light (phōs)**, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.” (John 3:16-21 ESV)

**This defines the contrast between the Way of God and the way of Satan, the way of the world, “the human condition”.** The objective of the Christian life is to be granted the gift of eternal life. To be a candidate for the gift of eternal life, a person must go through the prescribed process. This involves living in a dark world, the world of Satan, but learning how to eradicate the sins of the world, without being corrupted by the world. **This is the tension God has given to Christians to make us fit to stand before him and become fully members of the God Family.**

#### 4. Progressive Revelation

The Bible is the revealed Word of God written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.<sup>88</sup> The Bible is a complete, internally consistent, handbook from the Creator for his creation, human beings, to understand the **Nature of God**, the **Plan of God**, and the **Way of God**. **The entire revelation must be considered** in order to fully comprehend the teaching of God.

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 attempt to understand the Bible **based on their own set of preconceptions** – this approach cannot succeed. Popular teaching as well as scholarly literature is 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 the LORD 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)

**The role of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration of scripture and in understanding scripture is made explicit in the Gospel of John:**

**If you love me, you will keep my commandments**. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **Helper (parakletos)**,<sup>89</sup> 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 will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. **Because I live, you also will live**. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. **Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me**. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and **we will come to him and make our home with him**. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And **the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me**.”

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But **the Helper (parakletos), 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**. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. 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. And now **I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe**.

<sup>88</sup> See 2 Timothy 3:14-17

<sup>89</sup> The Greek word παράκλητος - paraklētos, means “helper”, “intercessor”, “advocate”, see GEL pages 623-624; it is applied to Jesus Christ in 1 John 2:1.



**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. **All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that [it] will take what is mine and declare it to you.** (John 14:15-29, 16:12-15 ESV)

The next two sub-sections look at two examples of how God has revealed the truth progressively throughout the Bible. **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.

#### 4.1 The Sacrificial System

**There is no record of what God taught Adam, Cain, and Abel about sacrifices.** Cain and Abel knew to offer a sacrifice to YHWH. The content of their offerings, grain and livestock, were, based on later prescriptions acceptable. Cain's problem was his attitude.<sup>90</sup>

The next example of sacrifice is Noah after he and his family had disembarked from the Ark. God made a distinction between "clean" and "unclean" animals as they boarded the Ark.<sup>91</sup> Noah knew to sacrifice only "clean" animals, and he understood the concept of "burnt" offering.<sup>92</sup> Still **there is no record of how he understood these things.** Similarly, throughout the entire patriarchal period, sacrifices and offerings are made but there is no record of general instruction.<sup>93</sup>

In Genesis chapter fifteen, **Abram is given instructions for a very special sacrifice** – covenant ratification. These are the first detailed instructions in the Bible regarding sacrifices:

And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess." But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He said to him, "Bring me **a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.**" And he brought him all these, **cut them in half,** and **laid each half over against the other.** But he did **not cut the birds in half.** And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. ... When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, **a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.** On that day the **LORD made a covenant with Abram** ... (Genesis 15:7-11, 17-18a ESV see also Jeremiah 34:18)

Once God had liberated Israel from Egypt, he provided the nation with an elaborate sacrificial system. **The purpose of the sacrificial system was to allow the nation and the individual Israelites to be accounted "holy" so that they could stand in God's presence, to be his people.** For further discussion of the sacrificial system, see section **10. The Role of Sacrifices** in the paper "**True Worship of the True God**" located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

**By the time of Samuel, the sacrificial system was corrupted by the Priests and Levites to the point where it was non-functioning:**

Now **the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the LORD.** The custom of the priests with the people was that when any man offered sacrifice, **the priest's servant would come,** while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand, and he would thrust it into the pan or kettle or cauldron or pot. **All that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself.** This is what they did at Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. Moreover, before the fat was burned, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, **"Give meat for the priest to roast,** for he will not accept boiled meat from you but only raw." And if the man said to him, "Let them burn the fat first, and then take as much as you wish," he would say, "No, **you must give it now, and if not, I will take it by force.**" Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD, for **the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt.** (1 Samuel 2:12-17 ESV)

Eli and his sons were killed, Shiloh was destroyed, and the Ark of the Covenant was captured at the Battle of Ebenezer in about 1050BC.<sup>94</sup> **Samuel had to revert to the patriarchal model of offering sacrifices.**<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> See Genesis 4:1-7

<sup>91</sup> See Genesis 7:1-3

<sup>92</sup> See Genesis 8:20-21

<sup>93</sup> See Genesis 12:7b,8b, 13:4,18, 22:1-9,13, 26:25, 31:54, 33:20, 35:1,3,7, 46:1

<sup>94</sup> See 1 Samuel 4:1b-22

<sup>95</sup> Note that Samuel was descended from the Levitical line of Kohath, see 1 Chronicles 6:27-28, 33-34

Now when the Philistines heard that **the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah**, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when **the people of Israel** heard of it, they **were afraid of the Philistines**. And the people of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines." **So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering** to the LORD. And Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. **As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering**, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But the LORD thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel. (1 Samuel 7:7-10 ESV see also 1 Samuel 13:8-11)

The Aaronic/Levitical Priesthood was reorganized by David.<sup>96</sup> When the Temple was built, Solomon restored the functioning of Aaronic/Levitical Priesthood.<sup>97</sup> But in his time **David was given deeper understanding regarding the concept of giving sacrifices and offerings**. In many of David's Psalms he expresses the understanding that **the attitude of the offeror is much more important than the offering itself**:

**I waited patiently for the LORD**; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

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 the LORD.

**Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust**,

who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!

You have multiplied, O LORD 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.

**In sacrifice and offering you have not delighted**, but you have given me an open ear.

**Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required**.

I delight to do your will, O my God; **your [torah] is within my heart**."

As for me, **I am poor and needy**, but the Lord takes thought for me.

(Psalm 40:1, 3-6, 8, 17a ESV)

O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me!

Give ear to my voice when I call to you!

**Let my prayer be counted as incense before you**,

and **the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice**! (Psalm 141:1-2 ESV)

Be angry, and do not sin;

**ponder in your own hearts** on your beds, and be silent.

**Offer right sacrifices**, and put your trust in the LORD. (Psalm 4:4-5 ESV)

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation,

and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

For **you will not delight in sacrifice**, or I would give it;

**you will not be pleased with a burnt offering**.

**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit**;

a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem;

**then will you delight in right sacrifices**, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings;

then bulls will be offered on your altar. (Psalm 51:14-19)

With the schism after the death of Solomon, the Northern Kingdom fell into corrupted worship.<sup>98</sup> The Southern Kingdom continued with the Temple Service established by Solomon, but the Priests, Levites, and people did NOT heed David's teaching. **The Temple sacrifices became perfunctory and meaningless. This state of affairs is lamented by the prophets**:

Hear the word of the LORD, **you rulers of Sodom**!

Give ear to the teaching of our God, **you people of Gomorrah**!

What to me is **the multitude of your sacrifices**? says the LORD;

**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. (Isaiah 1:10-13a ESV)

But **this is the one to whom I will look**:

he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

<sup>96</sup> See 1 Chronicles chapters 23, 24, 25, and 26

<sup>97</sup> See 1 Kings 8:3-11, 62-64, 2 Chronicle 5:5-14, 7:4-7, 8:12-15

<sup>98</sup> See 1 Kings 12:25-33

“He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man;  
he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog’s neck;  
he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig’s blood;  
he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol.

These have chosen their own ways, and their [mind] delights in their abominations;  
I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them,  
because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen;  
but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight.” (Isaiah 66:2b-4 ESV)

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.  
What use to me is frankincense that comes from Sheba, or sweet cane from a distant land?

Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing to me. (Jeremiah 6:19-20 ESV)

The LORD said to me: “Do not pray for the welfare of this people. Though they fast, I will not hear their cry, and though they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I will not accept them. But I will consume them by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence.” (Jeremiah 14:11-12 ESV)

The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, prophecy against the shepherds of Israel; prophecy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. ...” (Ezekiel 34:1-4 ESV)

For I desire steadfast love (hesed) and not sacrifice,  
the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. (Hosea 6:6 ESV)

The sacrificial system was destroyed with the nation in 586BC. Many of the survivors were taken in captivity to Babylon where a remnant was prepared to return to the Land of Israel. The first return was led by Sheshbazzar in 538BC.<sup>99</sup> A larger group soon followed under Zerubbabel.<sup>100</sup> These early returnees made an effort to restart the sacrificial system:

When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the [torah] of Moses the man of God. They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, burnt offerings morning and evening. (Ezra 3:1-3 ESV)

They made a start to rebuild the temple but ran into local opposition which delayed them.<sup>101</sup> Finally, with the encouragement of the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah,<sup>102</sup> the temple was completed, and the sacrificial system restarted in 515BC:

And the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses. (Ezra 6:16-18 ESV)

The date of the Book of Malachi is uncertain, but it seems to reflect conditions at the time of Nehemiah and Ezra, so probably about 425BC. The Book of Malachi indicates problems had developed in the offering of sacrifices:

A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’ By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’ By saying that the LORD’s table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? ... I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. ... you bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD. Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished. (Malachi 1:6-8a, 10b, 13b-14a ESV)

<sup>99</sup> See Ezra 1:5-11, 5:13-16; possibly “Shenazzar” is a variant of “Sheshbazzar”, see 1 Chronicles 3:18

<sup>100</sup> See Ezra 2:1-2, 1 Chronicles 3:17-19

<sup>101</sup> See Ezra 4:1-5, 24, 6:1-12

<sup>102</sup> See Ezra 3:8-13, 5:1-2, 6:13-15, and the Book of Haggai

There is no information on the remnant community after this until the time of the **Maccabees** starting in about 175BC. **Antiochus Epiphanes** issued a decree in 169BC unifying all religious practice, effectively outlawing “Judaism”.<sup>103</sup> The Temple Sacrifices were stopped and replaced with pagan sacrifices. The Jews under **Judas Maccabeus** resisted; the war was long and bloody, but the Jews prevailed and gained independence. **The sacrificial system was restored in 164BC.**<sup>104</sup>

The most important development of the war was the support a group known as the “**Hasidim**”, “the Righteous Ones”, or “the Holy Ones”.<sup>105</sup> They fought fiercely with the Maccabees in the beginning, but when the objectives of the Maccabees shifted from restoring religious freedom to obtaining political goals, the Hasidim opposed the Maccabees. Soon the Hasidim became known as the “**Pharisees**”, with whom we are very familiar from the New Testament.

By the time of Christ, the Priests and Levites had coalesced into the “party” known in the New Testament as the “**Sadducees**”. The Temple service was under their control, but they had more or less abdicated the role of “teachers”. **The Pharisees had taken over the “thought leadership” of the Jews.** The Pharisees are famous for their elaborate system of interpretation of Biblical texts.<sup>106</sup> **Jesus bitterly opposed their teaching.**<sup>107</sup> **The Sadducees and the Pharisees had rendered the sacrificial system utterly corrupt and devoid of value.**<sup>108</sup>

The Temple and the sacrificial system were finally destroyed by the Romans in 70AD. However, **the Jerusalem Church had remained very attached to the Temple and the sacrificial system:**

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ... And **day by day, attending the temple together** and breaking bread in their homes ...

Now **Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer,** the ninth hour. ...

But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, “**Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.**” And when they heard this, **they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.** ...

And **every day, in the temple** and from house to house, **they did not cease teaching and preaching** that the Christ is Jesus. ...

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],**<sup>109</sup> and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. ... Then **Paul took the men,** and the next day he purified himself along with them **and went into the temple,** giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and **the offering presented for each one of them.** (Acts 2:42, 46a, 3:1, 5:19-21, 21:20b-21, 26 ESV)

Just before the destruction by the Romans, the Jerusalem Church fled to **Pella** a city of the Decapolis on the east side the Jordan River.<sup>110</sup> The loss of the Temple and the sacrificial service was devastating to the Jewish Christians of the Jerusalem Church. **This is the most likely audience for the Book of Hebrews.** One of the main themes of the Book of Hebrews is **the superiority of Jesus’ sacrifice over the Temple sacrificial system,** which renders the Temple and its sacrificial system obsolete, which is why it was destroyed:

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (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.**

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<sup>103</sup> See 1 Maccabees 1:41-61

<sup>104</sup> See 1 Maccabees 4:52-59

<sup>105</sup> See Schürer Second Division volume II pages 25-26

<sup>106</sup> These were later written down in the Mishnah.

<sup>107</sup> See, for example, Matthew 23:13-36

<sup>108</sup> See Matthew 3:7, 5:20, 16:6-12, Luke 11:39, 16:14, John 12:42-43

<sup>109</sup> Luke quotes James here using *nomos* to include primarily the sacrificial system, but also the Pharisaic interpretations.

<sup>110</sup> For further discussion of this, see *Excursus Three – The Destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD* in the paper “*The Olivet Prophecy*” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

For since the [nomos]<sup>111</sup> has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.<sup>112</sup> 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 of me in the scroll of the book.' (Psalm 40:6-8 loosely based on LXX)

When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the [nomos]), then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 9:11-14, 10:1-10 ESV)

The entire sacrificial system pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It was designed to serve a purpose for ancient Israel. God revealed to David the true nature of sacrifices, but ancient Israel repeatedly failed to understand. The Plan of God had from the beginning looked to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Once it had occurred the old system was obsolete and defunct. It is gone. Jesus' sacrifice remains as the one and only way to attain propitiation for sin. But that does NOT imply all the teaching related to the sacrificial system is irrelevant. Much can be learned from the typology inherent in the sacrificial system.

## 4.2 The Sabbath

The seventh-day Sabbath was ordained by God at the recreation of the surface of the earth:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Genesis 2:1-3 ESV)

There is no further mention of the Sabbath until the time of the Exodus. The original tablets containing the creation account were presumably passed down the "righteous" line from Seth ben Adam to Noah and from Shem ben Noah to Abram. From Abram, they could have passed down the patriarchal line to Moses or through Abram's other sons to Reuel, and then to Moses. In any event, for True Worshipers, the knowledge of the Sabbath was clearly available at all times. However, we have no information on how the Sabbath was kept or by whom it was kept.

It is clear that the Israelites under slavery in Egypt lost track of the Sabbath. Soon after crossing Yam Suph, God had the Israelites encamp long enough to teach them about the Sabbath; probably they were encamped for several weeks:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my [torah] or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily."

And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.'"

So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none."

On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my [torah]? See! The LORD has given

<sup>111</sup> The author of Hebrews is using *nomos* here, primarily, with the sacrificial system in mind.

<sup>112</sup> This is an allusion to the Day of Atonement ritual.

you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.” So the people rested on the seventh day. (Exodus 16:4-5, 19-30 ESV)

When the Ten Commandments were given by YHWH at Mount Sinai, the prescription was to **“remember the Sabbath”**, and the emphasis is on the creation of the Sabbath:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD 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 the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:8-11 ESV)

After thirty-eight years of Sabbath observance in the wilderness, Moses words it differently, and emphasizes the revelation of the Sabbath on the exit from Egypt. The emphasis is that the Sabbath brings freedom:

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. (Deuteronomy 5:12-15 ESV)

YHWH mentions the Sabbath in the Covenant Code<sup>113</sup> and the Covenant of Performance.<sup>114</sup> During the delivery of the instructions to build the Tabernacle, the people are twice reminded to cease work on the Sabbath.<sup>115</sup> Note that in Exodus chapter thirty-one, the Sabbath is established as a “sign forever” and as a “covenant” looking back to the recreation of the surface of the earth and the creation of the Sabbath. Sabbath observance is enjoined several times in the Book of Leviticus.<sup>116</sup> One of the few incidents reported during the years of wandering is the execution of a Sabbath breaker as an object lesson of intentional sin:

But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the LORD, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the LORD and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be on him.

While the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation. They put him in custody, because it had not been made clear what should be done to him.

And the LORD said to Moses, “The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” And all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, as the LORD commanded Moses. (Numbers 15:30-36 ESV)

The teaching regarding the Sabbath was clear. The Sabbath is seldom mentioned over the history of Israel, but the few times it is mentioned make it clear that it was always part of the assumed culture.<sup>117</sup> Psalm ninety-two (non-Davidic) captures the essence of Sabbath worship:

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, 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.  
For you, O LORD, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy. How great are your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep!  
The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the LORD; 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 the LORD is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. (Psalm 92:1-5, 12-15 ESV)

<sup>113</sup> See Exodus 23:12

<sup>114</sup> See Exodus 34:21

<sup>115</sup> See Exodus 31:12-17, 35:1-3

<sup>116</sup> See Leviticus 19:3,30, 23:3,38, 26:2

<sup>117</sup> See 2 Kings 4:23, 11:4-19, 16:18, 1 Chronicles 9:32, 23:31, 2 Chronicles 2:4, 8:13, 23:4,8, 31:3, Nehemiah 13:15-22

The Psalmist identifies **characteristics of Sabbath worship**:

- Worship in the Temple, “the house of the LORD”, “the courts of our God”
- Worship involves music, “sing praises”, “to the music”
- Worship involves gratitude, “give thanks to the LORD”
- Worship continues all day, “in the morning”, “by night”
- Worship extolls the Nature of God, “your *hesed*”, “your faithfulness”, “the LORD is upright”
- Worship extolls the works of God, “the works of your hands”, “How great are your works”
- Worship extolls the teachings of God, “Your thoughts are very deep”
- Worship proclaims the Way of God, “to declare your”, “to declare that”
- True Worshipers flourish, “The righteous flourish”, “They still bear fruit in old age”
- Worship is rooted in faith, “he is my rock”

As with the Sacrificial System, **the Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah lamented the fact that Sabbath worship became perfunctory at best and often completely corrupted:**

**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 [times] my [being] 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. (Isaiah 1:12-15 ESV)

**Thus said the LORD to me**: “Go and stand in the People’s Gate, by which the kings of Judah enter and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem, and say: ‘**Hear the word of the LORD**, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates. **Thus says the LORD**: Take care for the sake of your lives, and **do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem**. And **do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work**, but **keep the Sabbath day holy**, as I commanded your fathers. **Yet they did not listen or incline their ear**, but stiffened their neck, that they might not hear and receive instruction. ...” (Jeremiah 17:19-23 ESV)

**Jeremiah goes on to prophesize the actual keeping of the Sabbath, first looking to the New Israel, but also a restored community after the exile, with one last warning:**

But **if you listen to me, declares the LORD**, and **bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the Sabbath day**, but **keep the Sabbath day holy and do no work on it**, then there shall enter by the gates of this city kings and princes who sit **on the throne of David**, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And **this city shall be inhabited forever**.

And **people shall come from the cities of Judah** and the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the Shephelah, from the hill country, and from the Negeb, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and frankincense, and bringing thank offerings to the house of the LORD.

**But if you do not listen to me, to keep the Sabbath day holy**, and not to bear a burden and enter by the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched. (Jeremiah 17:24-27 ESV)

**The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel look to a time when the Sabbath will be kept with the proper understanding:**

**Thus says the LORD**:

**“Keep [mish\*pat]<sup>118</sup>, and do righteousness,**

for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness 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 the LORD say,

“The LORD will surely separate me from his people”;

and let not **the eunuch** say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”

For thus says the LORD:

**“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** 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.

<sup>118</sup> Here, “*mish\*pat*”, in the singular alludes to the character attribute of God, “justice”; note that it is in parallel with God’s character attribute of “righteousness”.



“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, 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.” (Isaiah 56:1-7 ESV)

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 the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the LORD, 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 the LORD has spoken.

For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.

From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD. (Isaiah 58:13-14, 66:22-23 ESV)

Thus says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened. The prince shall enter by the vestibule of the gate from outside, and shall take his stand by the post of the gate. The priests shall offer his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening. The people of the land shall bow down at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the Sabbaths and on the new moons. The burnt offering that the prince offers to the LORD on the Sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish. (Ezekiel 46:1-4 ESV)

In ancient Israel, “foreigners” and “eunuchs” were expressly excluded from full participation in worship.<sup>119</sup> Isaiah, under inspiration from God, expressly alludes to them as individuals who can fully serve God by keeping the Sabbath. This is prophetic of the New Testament Church, but more fully in the World Tomorrow. With a complete understanding of the Sabbath, “all peoples” can come to God’s “holy mountain” – the New Testament Church and the New Israel, which are coterminous at the start of the Kingdom of God. “Their sacrifices will be accepted” is an allusion to “Christian sacrifices” outlined in the New Testament.<sup>120</sup> God’s clear intention is that “all flesh shall come to worship before me from Sabbath to Sabbath” – this will happen in the World Tomorrow. Ezekiel looks to a Temple in the World Tomorrow with a purified Sabbath service.

The origin of the Pharisees has been briefly discussed in the previous section, **4.1 The Sacrificial System**. By the time of the First Advent, they had completely corrupted the Sabbath. In their self righteousness, they determined to tell the people exactly how to keep the Sabbath. They ignored the plain teaching of God and introduced such picayune interpretations that the Sabbath had become a complete burden, a curse to the people. Jesus opposed the Pharisees at every possible opportunity, but their corruption of the Sabbath was his favourite target.

The Pharisees had determined that healing should NOT be done on the Sabbath. On many recorded occasions, Jesus deliberately healed in front of the Pharisees to challenge their position:

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.” And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him. (Mark 3:1-6 ESV // Matthew 12:9-4, Luke 6:6-11)<sup>121</sup>

**Jesus was very careful to establish the correct approach to Sabbath keeping:**

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

<sup>119</sup> See Exodus 12:43,45, Leviticus 21:20, Deuteronomy 23:1-3

<sup>120</sup> See the discussion of this in section **10.3 Christian Sacrifices** of the paper “**True Worship of the True God**” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>121</sup> See also Mark 1:21-28 // Luke 4:31-37, John 5:2-16, 9:1-16, Luke 13:10-16

Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence,<sup>122</sup> which it is not lawful<sup>123</sup> 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)

The Pharisees had determined that picking a few handfuls of grain was work and could NOT be done on the Sabbath. Jesus clearly established his right to determine that it was acceptable to pick grain to eat. Jesus, as **“lord of the Sabbath”**, defines how it should be kept. His determination is that the **“the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”** – the Sabbath is NOT to be a burden, but rather **“a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable.”**

The author of the Book of Hebrews uses an extended metaphor to emphasize the importance of the Sabbath keeping for Christians. First, loosely quoting Psalm ninety-five from the Septuagint, he establishes that the **entry into the promised land as a “rest”, is a type of keeping the Sabbath:**

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,<sup>124</sup>  
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.’  
As I swore in my wrath, **‘They shall not enter my rest.’** (Psalm 95:7b-11)  
(Hebrews 3:7-11 ESV)

The author of Hebrews is explicit that this is a warning to Christians:

**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 we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ... And **to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?** So we see that **they were unable to enter because of unbelief.**  
(Hebrews 3:12-14, 18-19 ESV)

The author of Hebrews then goes on to **extend the metaphor to entry into the Kingdom of God,** the reception of the gift of eternal life:

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. ... For **he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.”** ... For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. **So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,** for whoever has entered **God’s rest** has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore **strive to enter that rest,** so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:1-2, 4, 8-11 ESV)

**The Sabbath rest is a type of the true rest only to be attained by eternal life in the Kingdom of God.**

To be considered as a candidate for the gift of eternal life, Christians must learn to live by the Way of God. **The Sabbath is the cornerstone of the Way of God.**

To summarize, **the Sabbath was established at the time of the recreation,** but there is no record of how the Sabbath was kept until the time of Moses. Then specific instructions were given in the Ten Commandments, and with respect to the construction of the Tabernacle. A Psalmist captures the first description of God’s spiritual intent for Sabbath worship. The prophets make clear God’s full spiritual intent for keeping the Sabbath. Jesus establishes himself as **“lord of the Sabbath”** and defines the purpose of the Sabbath. **Christians keep the Sabbath looking to the gift of eternal life in the Kingdom of God.**

## 5. Specific Issues

**The following sub-sections consider various issues in which it is clear that “progressive revelation” has changed the perception of the issue.** In ancient times, and in the Old Testament, things were very

<sup>122</sup> See 1 Samuel 21:3-6

<sup>123</sup> It was the Pharisaic interpretation that it was “not lawful” to be eaten. In the instructions for the “bread of the presence” the priests are prescribed to eat it, but there is no proscription against others eating it; see Exodus 25:23-30, Leviticus 24:5-9.

<sup>124</sup> See Numbers 14:22-23, 27-30a, Deuteronomy 1:36, 12:9

different even from the teaching of the New Testament, but especially from our perspective in the modern world. To look at historic events and people and apply modern values to them is a great mistake. To understand the past, we must consider it in its own context in time and circumstances. We cannot apply our modern preconceptions to events and people of the ancient world. **This is clearly reflected in the text of the Bible.**

## 5.1 War and Military Service

William Shakespeare put the following words into the mouth of Mark Antony in the Roman Senate spoken at the assassination of Julius Caesar:

**“Cry Havoc!, and let slip the dogs of war.”**<sup>125</sup>

The words were further made famous by General Chang, (Christopher Plummer), in *Star Trek IV: The Undiscovered Country*, as his Klingon Bird of Prey attacked the Enterprise. The image of wild dogs on a killing rampage is indeed an apt description of war. War has been the unending scourge of humanity throughout history. **Israel as a nation of the world was required to participate in wars.** But the **prophets of Israel**, under inspiration of the Creator God, **look to a time when there will be no war:**

He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away;  
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks;

**nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore;**

And in that day, declares the LORD,

**I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots;** (Micah 4:3, 5:10 ESV)

**I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem;**

and the battle bow shall be cut off, and **he shall speak peace to the nations;**

his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:10 ESV)

You shall seek those who contend with you, but you shall not find them;

**those who war against you shall be as nothing at all.**

For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand;

it is I who say to you, **“Fear not, I am the one who helps you.”** (Isaiah 41:12-13 ESV)

Looking to the prophesized time when war is abolished, **Jesus’ teaching in the New Testament requires Christians to avoid participation in all the ways of the world,** including military activity and war.

The two most important verbal roots related to “war” are לָחָם - laḥam and צָבָא - tzava’. The basic meaning of *laḥam* is “fight”, “do battle”.<sup>126</sup> The basic meaning of *tzava’* “wage war”, “fight”, “serve”.<sup>127</sup> W.C. Kaiser states, **“The most significant usages of the verb laḥam, which occurs 171 times, pertain to God’s role in Israel’s wars.”**<sup>128</sup> The derivative noun from *laḥam*, מִלְחָמָה - milḥamah occurs 319 times. Its basic meaning is “war”, “battle”. The plural derivative noun from *tzava’*, צְבָאוֹת - tzava’oth, means “armies” or “hosts” – which can include any arrayed army,<sup>129</sup> the angelic beings in heaven,<sup>130</sup> or celestial bodies.<sup>131</sup> When combined with YHWH, or other Divine appellatives, it becomes a title of God, for example: (from 1 Samuel 17:45)

יִשְׂרָאֵל	מַעֲרֻכּוֹת	אֱלֹהֵי	צְבָאוֹת	יְהוָה
yiśra’el	ma’arēkoth	’elohey	tzava’oth	YHWH
Israel	battle lines of	God of	of hosts	YHWH

**“YHWH of hosts God of the armies of Israel”**

### 5.1.1 War in the Old Testament

**The first war recounted in the Bible is in Genesis chapter fourteen.** A coalition of Mesopotamian kings passed through the land east of the Jordan River to enforce suzerainty on recalcitrant vassals. They were met at the south end of the Dead Sea by a coalition of Canaanite Kings. The Mesopotamian coalition

<sup>125</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_dogs\\_of\\_war\\_\(phrase\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_dogs_of_war_(phrase))

<sup>126</sup> See BDB page 535, TWOT article 1104 page 476

<sup>127</sup> See BDB page 838, TWOT article 1865 pages 749-751

<sup>128</sup> See TWOT article 1104 page 476

<sup>129</sup> See Judges 4:2

<sup>130</sup> See 1 Kings 22:19

<sup>131</sup> See Deuteronomy 4:19

prevailed, and captives were taken including Abram's nephew Lot.<sup>132</sup> A guerrilla force was assembled to attempt to retrieve the captives. **The incident is significant because of the participation of Abram:**

Then **one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew**, who was living by the oaks of **Mamre** the Amorite, brother of **Eshcol** and of **Aner**. These were **allies of Abram**. When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, **he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them**, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.<sup>133</sup> And **he divided his forces against them by night**, he and his servants, **and defeated them** and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people. (Genesis 14:13-16 ESV)

Abram appears to be the leader of the guerrilla force. His strategy, an attack from multiple directions at night, is successful. **Abram's contingent in the force comprised "318 born in his house"**. This would consist of Abram's sons through concubines, possibly their sons, and slaves. The chronology of this incident is unknown, so there is no way to determine whether or not Ishmael and/or Isaac were old enough to participate. **Clearly God's blessing was with Abram and the guerrilla force**. With God's help they defeated the Mesopotamian coalition – **no doubt many were killed**.

**The most important war in the Old Testament is the Conquest of Canaan**. The Land of Canaan was promised by God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **Joseph's last request**, being also a prophecy, reconfirmed this:

And **Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."** Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, **"God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."** (Genesis 50:24-25 ESV)

Many years later, as YHWH was calling Moses, **the purpose of Moses' calling was identified as the task of acquiring the Promised Land for the people:**

Then the LORD 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** and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, **to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites**. And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, **I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.**" (Exodus 3:7-10 ESV)

**The first "war" was with Pharaoh and the "gods" of Egypt**. The battle lines were drawn up by God and Pharaoh took the challenge:

And **the LORD said to Moses**, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But **I will harden his heart**, so that he will not let the people go. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, **Israel is my firstborn son**, and I say to you, "Let my son go that he may serve me." **If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son.**"

But **Pharaoh said**, "**Who is the LORD**, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, **I will not let Israel go.**" (Exodus 4:21-23, 5:2)

**The plagues of Egypt**, and their systematic dismantling of the power of the "gods" of Egypt, culminating in the "death of the firstborn", **is a famous storey which requires no recounting**. The point of it is that God was always in control, **"I will harden his heart"**. **This the first example of God's fighting for Israel, a "Day of YHWH"** – it was a war in which many people, perhaps millions, died. **This was a "war of faith" for Israel – God did all the fighting**, Israel had only to watch and observe the power of God. **The power of God, in war, was confirmed at Yam Suph**.<sup>134</sup>

And Moses said to the people, **"Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD**, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. **The LORD will fight (laham) for you**, and you have only to be silent."

Thus **the LORD saved Israel** that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. **Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians**, so **the people feared the LORD**, and **they believed in the LORD** and in his servant Moses.

<sup>132</sup> See Genesis 14:1-12

<sup>133</sup> Note that "Dan" is an anachronism inserted by a later editor.

<sup>134</sup> **The term "Red Sea" is NOT a translation of Yam Suph**. "yam" means sea; "suph" means end: the "Sea of the End", or the Sea of the Boundary" – it refers to the body of water we call the Gulf of Aqaba. The identification with the Gulf of Suez, the "Red Sea", was made by the translators of the Septuagint due to their ignorance of geography. See the discussion in Fritz pages 84-105.

I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;  
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.  
The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation;  
this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.  
The LORD is a man of war (mil<sup>h</sup>amah); the LORD is his name. (Exodus 14:13-14, 30-31, 15:1b-3 ESV)

Soon after this, the first battle is fought in a war that would last for centuries:

Then Amalek came and fought (laham) with Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight (laham) with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought (laham) with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD Is My Banner, saying, "A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war (mil<sup>h</sup>amah) with Amalek from generation to generation." (Exodus 17:8-16 ESV)

The Amalekites were a kindred people to Israel. Their eponymous ancestor was Amalek a grandson of Esau.<sup>135</sup> In this first battle, Israelite soldiers were required to fight and kill Amalekites. God miraculously turned the tide of battle according to the position of Moses' hands. Israel prevailed with the sword but there would be many more battles with the Amalekites.<sup>136</sup> Ultimately God promises their elimination.<sup>137</sup>

In the Plains of Moab during his final speeches to the people, Moses recounts the wars that have already been fought to encourage the people in the imminent conquest:

Then I said to you, 'Do not be in dread or afraid of them. The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight (laham) for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.'

But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into your hand, as he is this day. And the LORD 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 (mil<sup>h</sup>amah) at Jahaz. And the LORD 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 every city, men, women, and children. We left no survivors.

And Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle (mil<sup>h</sup>amah) at Edrei. But the LORD said to me, 'Do not fear him, for I have given him and all his people and his land into your hand. And you shall do to him as you did to Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.' So the LORD 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, as we did to Sihon the king of Heshbon, devoting to destruction every city, men, women, and children.  
(Deuteronomy 1:29-31, 2:30-34, 3:1b-3, 6 ESV)

This was the pattern for the conquest under Joshua.<sup>138</sup>

- YHWH fought for Israel and gave them each victory
- Where necessary, YHWH would perform great miracles
- The "men of war", soldiers, had to fight and kill the enemy
- The "Canaanites", the old inhabitants of the land, were to be exterminated to the last man, woman, and child

In conjunction with this, Moses under the inspiration of God gave the Israelites instructions for on-going warfare with other nations, i.e., non-Canaanites, who were NOT to be exterminated:

<sup>135</sup> See Genesis 36:9-12, 1 Chronicles 1:35-36

<sup>136</sup> See, for example, Numbers 14:43-45, Judges 3:12-14, 6:33-35, 1 Samuel 15:2-3,7, 30:1-2,16-17

<sup>137</sup> See Deuteronomy 25:17-19

<sup>138</sup> See Joshua's summary in Joshua 24:8-13

**“When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.**

And when you draw near to the battle, **the priest shall come forward and speak to the people** and shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies: let not your heart faint. **Do not fear** or panic or be in dread of them, for **the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.**’

Then **the officers shall speak to the people,** saying, ‘**Is there any man who** has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. And **is there any man who** has planted a vineyard and has not enjoyed its fruit? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man enjoy its fruit. And **is there any man who** has betrothed a wife and has not taken her? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her.’ And the officers shall speak further to the people, and say, ‘**Is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted?** Let him go back to his house, lest he make the heart of his fellows melt like his own.’ And when the officers have finished speaking to the people, then **commanders shall be appointed** at the head of the people.

**“When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it.** And if it responds to you peaceably and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. But **if it makes no peace with you,** but makes war against you, **then you shall besiege it.** And **when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword,** but the women and the little ones, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, **you shall take as plunder for yourselves.** And you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you. **Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here.**

**But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes,** but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD 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 the LORD your God.

**When you besiege a city for a long time,** making war against it in order to take it, **you shall not destroy its trees** by wielding an axe against them. You may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field human, that they should be besieged by you? Only the trees that you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, that you may build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it falls. (Deuteronomy 20:1-20 ESV)

**When you are encamped against your enemies,** then you shall **keep yourself from every evil thing.** If any man among you becomes unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then **he shall go outside the camp.** He shall not come inside the camp, but when evening comes, **he shall bathe himself in water,** and as the sun sets, he may come inside the camp. **You shall have a place outside the camp,** and you shall go out to it. And you shall have a trowel with your tools, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it and turn back and cover up your excrement.

Because **the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp,** to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore **your camp must be holy,** so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you. (Deuteronomy 23:9-14 ESV)

**Why were the “Canaanites” to be destroyed?** The Divine Being who came to be known as “YHWH” is the Creator of the universe. **YHWH is the Creator of the earth** – he owns it, and everything in it, and everyone on it:

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;** (Exodus 19:5 ESV)

**The silver is mine,** and **the gold is mine,** declares the LORD of hosts. (Haggai 2:8 ESV)

**Behold, all [persons]<sup>139</sup> are mine;** (Ezekiel 18:4 ESV)

**YHWH claims the right to manage the earth and the people on it as he sees fit:**

Do you not know? Do you not hear?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

**Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?**

**It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,** and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; **who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.**

<sup>139</sup> The Hebrew word is נֶפֶשׁ - nephesh, **a living being;** the English word “soul” is unusable due to its association with the pagan idea of the “immortal soul”.

Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.  
All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.  
But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off";  
fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.  
(Isaiah 40:21-23, 15, 17, 41:8-10 ESV)

**God has elected to work through "Israel".** Originally the physical nation descended from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. That is the sovereign choice of YHWH, the Creator, Owner, and Sustainer of the earth and all peoples on it. God has deliberately chosen NOT to work with other nations:

"I have loved you," says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD. "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. ..." (Malachi 1:2-3a ESV)

At the time of Abraham, God could see Canaanite civilization developing in such a way as to make them incorrigible:

Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."  
(Genesis 15:13-16 ESV)

**By the time of the conquest, Canaanite civilization was utterly corrupt.** God's judgement, as with the pre-flood world, was complete destruction – death to all. God had chosen the land for Israel. The Canaanites were NOT fit to share the land with them. Ancient Israel was a physical nation in a world of nations under the sway of Satan the Devil. To accomplish the purpose of God, Israel had to fight in wars.

**God is the sovereign owner of the universe**, the earth, and everything and everyone on earth. It is his discretion to determine life and death. YHWH himself fought for Israel. The men of Israel were required to fight wars and personally kill men, women, and children. All of those people will be again given physical life in the Second Resurrection, and they will then be given the opportunity to learn the Way of God. All the war dead in all of man's wars will similarly be resurrected:

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne ... And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged ...  
(Revelation 20:12a, 13a ESV)

**To God, death is a temporary condition.** When it is required by the Plan of God for human beings to enter into that temporary state, God is willing to fight wars, and he is willing to have his True Worshipers fight wars.

### 5.2.2 War in the New Testament

The seminal scripture in the New Testament regarding participation in military activity is in John chapter eighteen:

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." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" (John 18:33-38 ESV)

**Jesus had plenty of "servants" who could have fought for him:**

And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its



place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" (Matthew 26:51-54 ESV)

A Roman Legion comprised about 6,000 men. Twelve Legions is a massive army. Jesus gave up his status as a Divine Being in eternity and became a human being – still fully Divine but also fully human; that is the miracle of the "incarnation". He was always aware of his purpose as a human being on earth:

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

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." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:41-49 ESV)

Jesus said to them,

My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.

I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

(John 4:34, 9:4, 17:4 ESV)

Jesus purpose on earth was to accomplish the next steps the Plan of God. The Plan of God for the ancient nation of Israel required fighting wars. The Plan of God at the First Advent required creating a Church of called-out individuals who would repent, come under the Covenant of Baptism, be granted the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and learn to live by the Way of God. These individuals would be prepared by God to participate in the next phase of the Plan of God.

True Christians are NOT part of this world. Christians do NOT participate in this world. Christians do NOT get involved in this world's wars. Jesus, in his prayer on the night of the first Christian Passover, makes plain the relationship of Christians to the world:

I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. 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.

I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. 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. 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 might be fulfilled.

But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 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. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

(John 17:6-19 ESV)

True Christians are daily fighting a spiritual warfare:

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4 ESV)

This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience.

(1 Timothy 1:18-19a ESV)

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (2 Timothy 2:3-4 ESV)

**What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?** Is it not this, that **your passions are at war within you.** You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because **you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.** You adulterous people! Do you not know that **friendship with the world is enmity with God?** Therefore **whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** (James 4:1-4 ESV)

Beloved, I urge you **as sojourners and exiles** to abstain from **the passions of the flesh**, which **wage war against your [life].** (1 Peter 2:11 ESV)

**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)

Finally, **be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.** Put on **the whole armor of God**, that you may be able to **stand against the schemes of the devil.** For **we do not wrestle against flesh and blood**, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Therefore **take up the whole armor of God**, that **you may be able to withstand in the evil day**, and having done all, to **stand firm.** **Stand therefore**, having fastened on **the belt of truth**, and having put on **the breastplate of righteousness**, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on **the readiness given by the gospel of peace.** In all circumstances take up **the shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take **the helmet of salvation**, and **the sword of the Spirit**, which is **the word of God**, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. (Ephesians 6:10-18a ESV)

**The Plan of God requires that True Christians be in the world but NOT of the world.** The ways of the world are NOT the ways of God. **This world is passing away. It is bringing itself to utter destruction**, but the Creator God will step in and stop the annihilation. When he does, **the returning King of kings, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, YHWH, will fight a war against his enemies**, those people who are currently destroying the earth:

Then **the seventh angel blew his trumpet**, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, **“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”** And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying,

We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was,  
for **you have taken your great power and begun to reign.**

The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged,  
and for **rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints**,  
and those who fear your name, both small and great,  
and for **destroying the destroyers of the earth.** (Revelation 11:15-18 ESV)

At the seventh trumpet, the First Resurrection will occur, and Jesus will commence his return to earth.<sup>140</sup> The seventh trumpet comprises the **“seven last plagues”**: these are **the “wrath of God” poured out on the earth to kill the enemies of God**, the “thought leaders” of this world and their political puppets, as well as all those who have actively rejected God and declared their enmity towards him:

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, **“Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”**

The third **angel poured out his bowl** into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say,

Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for **you brought these judgments.**

For **they have shed the blood of saints and prophets**,  
and you have given them blood to drink. **It is what they deserve!**

And I heard the altar saying,

Yes, Lord God the Almighty, **true and just are your judgments!** (Revelation 16:1, 4-7 ESV)

**After the seven last plagues are administered, the King of kings will appear to all the earth.**<sup>141</sup> The nations of the earth, under the influence of Satan the Devil will mount one last resistance to God. **An army of two hundred million will be assembled to fight.**<sup>142</sup> This massive army will be destroyed by the King of kings:

<sup>140</sup> See Matthew 24:30-31, 1 Corinthians 15:50-53, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

<sup>141</sup> See Mark 13:24-27 // Matthew 24:29-31 // Luke 21:25-28, Luke 17:24, Revelation 1:7

<sup>142</sup> See Revelation 9:13-16, 16:12-16

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.”

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh. (Revelation 19:11-21 ESV)

This is massive carnage – at least two hundred million die in this battle. The King of kings, Jesus Christ, personally kills them all. But note, “the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen” are the resurrected saints, from all ages since Abel, and including New Testament Christians, who in this world are NOT to participate in war. When the Plan of God again requires war, Christians will be required to be there:

They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful. (Revelation 17:14 ESV)

Jesus’ teaching for New Testament, True Worshipers, Christians, is to avoid the wars of this world. Christians are NOT of this world. The wars of this world remain one of the ugliest manifestations of the “human condition”, the way of Satan the Devil. Participation in any part of the world is participation in the way of Satan – this is the worst form of “idolatry”. Christians must remain unstained by the world and fight the daily spiritual battle which we will ultimately win, and then the ways of the world will be removed.

## 5.2 Slavery

Slavery has plagued humanity since the dawn of civilization. It is a very complex subject – much has been written about it.<sup>143</sup> The following sub-sections briefly survey slavery in the ancient world to contrast it with the prescriptions and proscription of the Old Testament. The concept of slavery in the “world” had changed little over the centuries until the time of the First Advent, except that in the Roman Empire the scope of slavery had assumed proportions never seen before. Jesus and the authors of the New Testament accepted this state of affairs, but they make it clear that the preference is true freedom. Finally, slavery is briefly considered from the perspective of a True Worshiper in the world today.

The most important word in the Old Testament related to slavery is עֶבֶד - ‘eved. It is derived from the root עָבַד - ‘avad, which carries the range of meaning “to do work”, “to serve”.<sup>144</sup> The noun ‘eved carries a very large range of meaning related to “slave” and “servant”.<sup>145</sup> The complexities come with the metaphoric usages. The basic meaning of “slave” is usually clear from the context. The noun אִמָּה - ‘amah is used specifically for “female slave” or “female servant”, but it can also be used for “concubine”.<sup>146</sup> A more or less synonymous word is שִׁפְחָה - shiph‘ah.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>143</sup> See the comprehensive article “Slavery” in EBM, volume 16, pages 853-866; and, the more recent article, on Wikipedia, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery>

<sup>144</sup> See Holladay page 261-262, TWOT article 1553 page 639-640

<sup>145</sup> See Holladay page 262, TWOT article 1553a page 639-640

<sup>146</sup> See Holladay page 19

<sup>147</sup> See Holladay page 380

**Greek is much more complicated.** The most important words are δοῦλος - doulos and παῖς - pais. The range of meaning of *pais* include “boy”, “girl”, “child”, “slave”, “servant”.<sup>148</sup> For *doulos*, the range of meaning includes “slave”, “servant”.<sup>149</sup> Both *doulos* and *pais* have very rich metaphoric meanings. There are also several other words related to *doulos* with a similar range of meaning:<sup>150</sup>

- δουλεία - douleia (noun),
- δουλεύω - douleuo (verb),
- δουλή - doule (noun, feminine of doulos),
- δοῦλος – doulos (adjective),
- δούλω - doulōo (verb).

### 5.2.1 Slavery in the Ancient World

With regard to early Sumerian/Babylonian civilization, H.W.F. Saggs states:

In the **Early Dynastic period** they were not a very significant social element and consisted largely of prisoners of war. Such slaves as there were, were in the earliest times obtained by raids into the hill country ... but from the time of the **Third Dynasty of Ur** ... cases are known of free citizens being reduced to slavery ... Such procedures had become very common by the **Larsa period** ... By the period of the **First Dynasty of Babylon**, the laws of **Hammurabi** imply that the main source of slaves was importation from abroad ... (Saggs page 172)

King Lipit-Ishtar of Isin (Larsa period) makes the following claim, which reflects a situation where **significant numbers of citizens had fallen into slavery**:

Verily, in those [days] I *procured* ... the [fre]dom of the [so]ns and daughters of [Nippur], the [so]ns and daughters of Ur, the sons and daughters of [I]sin, the [so]ns and daughters of [Sum]er (and) Akkad *upon whom* ... *slaveship* ... *had been imposed*. (ANET page 159)

The Laws of Eshnunna reflect **slavery as an accepted part of the culture**, with **slaves being commodities with no rights**:

16: To ... a slave a mortgage cannot be furnished.

22: If a man has no claim against a(nother) man, but (nevertheless) distrains the (other) man's slave-girl, the owner of the slave-girl shall [decla]re under oath: "Thou hast no claim against me" and he shall pay (him) silver in full compensation for the slave-girl.

33: If a slave-girl by subterfuge gives her child to a(nother) man's daughter, (if) its lord sees it when it has become older, he may seize it and take it back.

51 A slave or a slave-girl of Eshnunna which is marked ... shall not leave the gate of Eshnunna without its owner's permission. (ANET pages 162-163)

**Fugitive slaves** were a problem addressed by the Code of Hammurabi:

15: If a seignior has helped a male slave of the state or a female slave of the state or a male slave of a private citizen or a female slave of a private citizen to escape through the city gate, he shall be put to death.

16: If a seignior has harbored in his house either a fugitive male or female slave belonging to the state or a private citizen and has not brought him forth at the summons of the police, that householder shall be put to death. (ANET pages 166-167)

In the Code of Hammurabi, **injury to persons** was closely regulated according to class, **with slaves being of considerably less value**:

196: If a seignior has destroyed the eye of a member of the aristocracy, they shall destroy his eye.

197: If he has broken a(nother) seignior's bone, they shall break his bone.

198: If he has destroyed the eye of a commoner or broken the bone of a commoner, he shall pay one mina of silver.

199: If he has destroyed the eye of a seignior's slave or broken the bone of a seignior's slave, he shall pay one-half its value. (ANET page 175)

According to the Code of Hammurabi, **removing identifying marks from slaves was a serious business**:

226: If a brander cut off the slave-mark of a slave not his own without the consent of the owner of the slave, they shall cut off the hand of that brander.

<sup>148</sup> See GEL pages 609-610

<sup>149</sup> See GEL pages 204-205

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

227: If a seignior deceived a brander so that he has cut off the slave-mark of a slave not his own, they shall put that seignior to death and immure him at his gate; the brander shall swear, "I did not cut it off knowingly," and then he shall go free. (ANET page 176)

**The Code of Hammurabi is approximately contemporary with the Writings of Moses.** Lipit-Ishtar and "The Laws of Eshnunna" are earlier.

### 5.2.2 Slavery in the Old Testament

Slavery was an assumed part of the culture in the world of the Old Testament. **The prescriptions and proscriptions in the Writings of Moses are designed to make slavery within Israel more humane than in the world around.** The fourth commandment is explicit that **slaves are to be allowed to rest on the Sabbath:**

... **the seventh day is a Sabbath** to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, **your male [slave] ('eved)**, or **your female [slave] ('amah)** ... **Six days you shall do your work**, but **on the seventh day you shall rest**; that your ox and your donkey **may have rest**, and the **son of your [slave] woman ('amah)**, and the alien, may be refreshed.  
(Exodus 20:10a, 23:12 ESV see also Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

The Covenant Code contains the following general prescriptions and proscriptions for slaves:

- 1: Now these are the [mish<sup>e</sup>patim] that you shall set before them. **When you buy a Hebrew slave ('eved)**, he shall serve six years, and **in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing.**
- 2: If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. If **his master gives him a wife** and **she bears him sons or daughters**, the **wife and her children shall be her master's**, and he shall go out alone.
- 3: But **if the slave ('eved) plainly says**, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; **I will not go out free,**' then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and **he shall be his slave ('eved) forever.**
- 4: When **a man sells his daughter as a [concubine] ('amah)**, **she shall not go out as the male slaves ('eved) do.** If she does not please her master, **who has designated her for himself**, then **he shall let her be redeemed.** He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has broken faith with her.
- 5: **If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter.**
- 6: **If he takes another** <woman><sup>151</sup> to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights.
- 7: And if he does not do these three things for her, **she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.**
- 8: **When a man strikes his slave, male ('eved) or female ('amah)**, with a rod and **the slave dies** under his hand, **he shall be avenged (naqam).**
- 9: But if **<the slave>**<sup>152</sup> **survives a day or two, he is not to be avenged (naqam)**, for **<the slave> is his money.**
- 10: When **a man strikes the eye of his slave, male ('eved) or female ('amah)**, and destroys it, **he shall let <the slave> go free** because of his eye. If **he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male ('eved) or female ('amah)**, **he shall let <the slave> go free** because of his tooth.
- 11: **If the ox gores a slave, male ('eved) or female ('amah)**, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.  
(Exodus 21:1-11, 20-21, 26-27, 32 ESV)

These prescriptions and proscriptions are properly considered "statutes", *huqqah*.<sup>153</sup> From the use of *mish<sup>e</sup>patim* in clause 1, **it is clear that they are NOT to be taken as complete and all inclusive** – they are **statements of wisdom from God** by which **proper treatment of slaves is to be discerned**. For example, **clause 2 is ambiguous**: if the wife is a "Hebrew slave" she will have the option herself of freedom after six years, so **the choice of permanent slavery (clause 3)** resides with both the man and the women, if they prefer to stay together. Presumably the children would remain with the wife at least until a certain age. The clause can only be applied literally if the supplied wife is a foreign slave.

<sup>151</sup> The ESV translator supplies "wife", but the context is "slave" or "concubine", so "woman" is better.

<sup>152</sup> In clauses 9 and 10, <the slave> is added by the translator; there is no equivalent Hebrew word in each case.

<sup>153</sup> For further discussion on "statutes", see *Excursus 4 – Statutes and Ancient Law Codes* in the paper "The Writings of Moses" located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

In clause 4, it is clear that there was **little difference between “concubinage” and “slavery”**. As a concubine, the woman cannot be required to do hard manual labour, “go out as the male slaves do”. **The woman is designated either for the purchaser or his son.** The woman cannot be resold as a common slave. Clauses 5, 6, and 7 make it clear that the woman was to be a “concubine” NOT a common slave. Clauses 6 and 7 are inclusive of the designation of the woman – to the purchaser or his son.

In clause 8, the word for “avenged” is נָקַם - naqam. This word most often implies “death”, for example:

And **I will bring a sword upon you**, that shall execute **vengeance (naqam)** for the covenant. (Leviticus 26:25a ESV)

So Moses spoke to the people, saying, **“Arm men from among you for the war**, that they may go against Midian to **execute** the LORD’s **vengeance (naqam)** on Midian. ...” (Numbers 31:3 ESV)

However, discretion can also be implied by *naqam*, for example:

Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, **vengeance (naqam)** shall be taken on him sevenfold.” (Genesis 4:15 ESV)

**You shall not take vengeance (naqam)** or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18 ESV)

**This is a clear advance on the contemporary attitude toward slaves:** in the world around, a slave was property – life and death were purely at the discretion of the owner. **In Israel, the owner could be executed for killing his slave.** This discernment follows naturally from clause 1: **a slave is NOT property**, but a person with rights who is temporarily under the “master-ship” of the slave owner. This makes clause 9 difficult. Its practical application would seem to be only to non-Israelite slaves, or to accidental killing of an Israelite slave. Similarly, clause 10 is also a clear advance on the contemporary attitude toward slaves: in the world around, there are no provisions for freeing a slave injured by a master.

The provision for an Israelite to permanently indenture himself in the Book of Exodus is modified by the Jubilee Year in the Book of Leviticus:

1: If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, **you shall not make him serve as a slave (‘eved): he shall be with you as a hired worker and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee.**

2: Then he shall go out from you, **he and his children with him**, and go back to his own clan and return to the possession of his fathers. For **they are my servants (‘eved)**, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; **they shall not be sold as slaves (‘eved).**

3: You shall **not rule over him ruthlessly** but shall fear your God.

4: **As for your male (‘eved) and female slaves (‘amah) whom you may have: you may buy male (‘eved) and female slaves (‘amah) from among the nations that are around you.**

5: **You may also buy from among the strangers** who sojourn with you and their clans that are with you, who have been born in your land,

6: and **they may be your property.**

7: **You may bequeath them to your sons after you to inherit as a possession forever. You may make slaves (‘eved) of them,**

8: **but over your brothers the people of Israel you shall not rule,** one over another ruthlessly.

9: If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and **your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner** with you or to a member of the stranger’s clan,

10: then **after he is sold he may be redeemed.**

11: One of **his brothers** may redeem him, or **his uncle** or **his cousin** may redeem him, or a **close relative** from his clan may redeem him.

12: Or **if he grows rich he may redeem himself.**

13: **He shall calculate** with his buyer from the year when he sold himself to him until **the year of jubilee**, and the price of his sale shall vary with the number of years. The time he was with his owner shall be rated as the time of a hired worker. If there are still many years left, he shall pay proportionately for his redemption some of his sale price. If there remain but a few years until the year of jubilee, he shall calculate and pay for his redemption in proportion to his years of service.

14: He shall **treat him as a worker hired** year by year.

15: He shall **not rule ruthlessly over him** in your sight.



16: And if he is not redeemed by these means, then he and his children with him shall be released in the year of jubilee.

17: For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants ('eved). They are my servants ('eved) whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.  
(Leviticus 25:39-55 ESV)

**Clauses 1, 2, 3, and 8** deal with an Israelite who has opted to remain a slave after six years – the slave and his or her family are to be released at the Year of the Jubilee. **Clauses 4, 5, 6, and 7** deal with an Israelite's purchase of a non-Israelite slave. These slaves can be treated as permanent property, as with slaves in the world around, but the provisions for proper treatment of slaves would also apply. **Clauses 9 through 16** deal with an Israelite who sells himself to a non-Israelite who is residing in Israel. The Israelite remains a person with rights. He may be redeemed by a relative. He may redeem himself, which implies that he retains the right to own property and acquire wealth. The redemption cost is determined by the Year of the Jubilee. **Clause 11** provides the redemption formula. If he is not redeemed, at the Year of the Jubilee, he and his family go free. Although it is NOT explicit, the redemption rights were probably extended to non-Israelite slaves owned by Israelites. **Clause 17 provides the over-riding principle of all slavery in Israel.**

In Moses' speeches recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy, **Moses explains and elaborates on the previous prescriptions and proscriptions regarding slavery**. First, he makes it clear that **slaves were to participate in the beneficence of the Promised Land**:

... then to the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the LORD. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male [slaves] ('eved) and your female [slaves] ('amah), and the Levite that is within your towns, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.

You may not eat within your towns the tithe of your grain or of your wine or of your oil, or the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, or any of your vow offerings that you vow, or your freewill offerings or the contribution that you present, but you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place that the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and your daughter, your male [slave] ('eved) and your female [slave] ('amah), and the Levite who is within your towns. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God in all that you undertake.

... then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male [slave] ('eved) and your female [slave] ('amah), the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there.

You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male [slave] ('eved) and your female [slave] ('amah), the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. (Deuteronomy 12:11-12, 17-18, 16:10-11, 13-14 ESV)

Next, **Moses enlarges the provision for the normal release of a slave after six years of service**. In compensation for the six years of labour, the freed slave is to be provided with the means to start a new life. Moses also makes it explicit that the provisions are the same for both male slaves and female slaves:

If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today.

But if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he is well-off with you, then you shall take an awl, and put it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your slave ('eved) forever.

And to your female slave ('amah) you shall do the same.

It shall not seem hard to you when you let him go free from you, for at half the cost of a hired worker he has served you six years. So the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do.  
(Deuteronomy 15:12-18 ESV)

**Moses then provides some instructions regarding taking of captives in war.** If an enemy surrenders, all the people are to be reduced to slavery. If the city fights and must be conquered, the men are exterminated, and the women and children are enslaved. **If a man takes a captive female as a wife or concubine, she is NOT to be treated as an ordinary slave:**

When you draw near to a city to fight against it, **offer terms of peace** to it. And **if it responds to you peaceably** and it opens to you, then **all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you.**

But **if it makes no peace with you**, but makes war against you, **then you shall besiege it.** And when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, **you shall put all its males to the sword**, but the **women and the little ones**, the livestock, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, **you shall take as plunder** for yourselves.

**When you go out to war against your enemies**, and the LORD your God gives them into your hand and **you take them captive**, and **you see among the captives a beautiful woman ('ishshah)**, and **you desire to take her to be your [woman] ('ishshah)**, and you bring her home to your house, she shall shave her head and pare her nails. And she shall take off the clothes in which she was captured and shall remain in your house and lament her father and her mother a full month. **After that you may go in to her and be her [master] (ba'al), and she shall be your [woman] ('ishshah).**

But **if you no longer delight in her, you shall let her go where she wants.** But **you shall not sell her** for money, **nor shall you treat her as a slave,**<sup>154</sup> since you have humiliated her. (Deuteronomy 20:10-14a, 21:10-14 ESV)

Finally, Moses deals with the difficult issue of fugitive slaves. This provision makes sense only for slaves from neighbouring countries escaping into Israelite territory:

**You shall not give up to his master a slave ('eved) who has escaped** from his master to you. **He shall dwell with you**, in your midst, in the place that he shall choose within one of your towns, wherever it suits him. You shall not wrong him. (Deuteronomy 23:15-16 ESV)

**Slavery was an economic necessity in Old Testament times.** Persons who fell into irrecoverable debt or irreversible financial circumstances had no other recourse. **Taking slaves as plunder in war was similarly necessary** – the men were to be killed and the women and children would have had no other means of support. In the world at large slaves were simply property - they had few or no rights as human beings. **In Israel, slaves remained persons with rights.**

### 5.2.3 Slavery in New Testament Times

Both Greece and Rome were slave-owning societies, and both used slaves to perform all manner of tasks in public and private life. **Slaves were legally recognized as chattels and were owned by their masters.** They were typically acquired through warfare, kidnapping or piracy, or breeding. In both **classical Athens** and **Roman Italy** slaves formed a significant portion of the population, estimated at **one-quarter to one-third of the populace.** (CDCC page 827)

Slavery was a fact of life. No one challenged its existence. **In many parables, Jesus uses the character of a *doulos* to make his point,** for example:<sup>155</sup>

**Hear another parable.** There was **a master of a house who planted a vineyard** and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, **he sent his [doulos]** to the tenants to get his fruit. And **the tenants took his [doulos]** and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again **he sent other [doulos]**, more than the first. And they did the same to them. (Matthew 21:33-36 ESV // Mark 12:1-4, Luke 20:9-12)

**The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,** and **sent his [doulos]** to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again **he sent other [doulos]**, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast."' But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while **the rest seized his [doulos]**, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. **Then he said to his [doulos]**, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.' And **those [doulos] went out** into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. (Matthew 22:2-10 ESV)

<sup>154</sup> The verb here is עָמַר - 'amar, "to treat brutally", used only here and in Deuteronomy 24:7, see Holladay page 277.

<sup>155</sup> See also Matthew 13:27-28, 18:23-33, 25:14-30, Mark 13:33-34, Luke 12:35-48, 14:15-24, 17:7-10, 19:11-27

### The faithful centurion assumed the use of slaves:

"Lord, **my [pais] is lying paralyzed at home**, suffering terribly." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." But **the centurion replied**, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but **only say the word, and my [pais] will be healed**. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and **to my [doulos] 'Do this,' and he does it.**"

When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. ... And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And **the [pais] was healed at that very moment.** (Matthew 8:6-10,13 ESV // Luke 7:1-10)

**Jesus is very specific to metaphorically extend the concept of "slavery" to Christian service;** in particular, a Christian's relationship to God the Father:

**No one can serve (douleuo) two masters**, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve (douleuo) God and money.** (Matthew 6:24 ESV // Luke 16:13)

**A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a [doulos] above his master.** It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the [doulos] like his master. (Matthew 10:24-25a ESV see also John 13:16, 15:20)

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **It shall not be so among you.** But **whoever would be great among you must be your servant (diakonos)**,<sup>156</sup> and **whoever would be first among you must be your slave (doulos)**, even as the Son of Man came not to be served (diakoneo)<sup>157</sup> but to serve (diakoneo), and to give his life as a ransom for many."

(Matthew 20:25-28 ESV // Mark 10:42-45, see also 1 Corinthians 9:19)

Who then is **the faithful and wise [doulos]**, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? **Blessed is that [doulos]** whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

But if that **wicked [doulos]** says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and **begins to beat his fellow [doulos]**<sup>158</sup> and eats and drinks with drunkards, **the master of that [doulos] will come on a day when he does not expect him** and at an hour he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:45-51 ESV)

So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, '**We are unworthy [doulos]; we have only done what was our duty.**' (Luke 17:10 ESV)

The apostles, Paul, James, Peter, and Jude, applied the metaphoric use of "slave" to themselves:

**Paul, a [doulos] of Christ Jesus** ... (Romans 1:1 ESV, see also Galatians 1:10, Philippians 1:1, Titus 1:1)

**James, a [doulos] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ** ... (James 1:1 ESV)

**Simeon Peter, a [doulos] and apostle of Jesus Christ** ... (2 Peter 1:1 ESV)

**Jude, a [doulos] of Jesus Christ and brother of James** ... (Jude 1 ESV)

Similarly, **the metaphoric use of "slave" is applied by the apostles to Christians in general:**

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and **grant to your [doulos] to continue to speak your word with all boldness**, ... (Acts 4:29 ESV)

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, **with ourselves as your [doulos] for Jesus' sake.** (2 Corinthians 4:5 ESV)

Epaphras, who is **one of you, a [doulos] of Christ Jesus**, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. (Colossians 4:12 ESV)

And **the Lord's [doulos]** must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil ... (2 Timothy 2:24 ESV)

Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but **living as [doulos] of God.** (1 Peter 2:16 ESV)

**The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his [doulos] the things that must soon take place.** He made it known by sending his angel to **his [doulos] John** ...

(Revelation 1:1 ESV see also 2:20, 7:3, 11:18, 19:2,5, 22:3,6)

The metaphoric use of "slave" can be applied in negative way:

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **everyone who practices sin is a slave (doulos) to sin.** (John 8:34 ESV see also Romans 6:6,16-20, 2 Peter 2:19)

<sup>156</sup> The Greek word here, δῆκονος - diakonos, means "servant", "minister", "deacon" (one entrusted to serve the needs of others), see [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org) Greek Word Detail.

<sup>157</sup> A verb related to *diakonos* is διακονέω - diakoneō, with a similar range of meaning.

<sup>158</sup> The Greek is σύνδουλος - syndoulos, "fellow slave"; a compound of the preposition *syn* with *doulos*.

There were, of course, **Christians who were slave owners**, and **Christians who were slaves**.<sup>159</sup>

Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. **Were you a [doulos] when called?** Do not be concerned about it. **(But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)** For **he who was called in the Lord as a [doulos] is a freedman of the Lord**. Likewise **he who was free when called is a [doulos] of Christ**. You were bought with a price; **do not become [doulos] of men**. So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God. (1 Corinthians 7:20-24 ESV see also 12:13, Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11)

**[doulos] obey your earthly masters** with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but **as [doulos] of Christ**, doing the will of God from the heart, **rendering service (douleuo) with a good will as to the Lord and not to man**, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, **whether he is a [doulos] or is free. Masters, do the same to them**, and stop your threatening, knowing that **he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven**, and that there is no partiality with him. (Ephesians 6:5-9 ESV, see also Colossians 3:22, 4:1, 1 Timothy 6:1, Titus 2:9)

Real and actual slavery was very much a fact of life in New Testament times. Christians were slaves. Christians owned slaves, some of whom were Christians. The message of the New Testament is to be free – but not all could attain it in this life. **True freedom comes only from God, but only at the price of willingly subjecting oneself to be a “slave” of God.**

### 5.2.4 Slavery Today and Freedom to Come

In the modern world, slavery has been universally abolished by official policy. However, actual, and real slavery continues on a massive scale. A 2018 report from the Walk Free Foundation<sup>160</sup> states:

In 2016, 40.3 million people were living in modern slavery. It exists in every corner of the world, yet is seemingly invisible to most people. ... Though almost every country has declared it illegal, modern slavery still exists on a shocking and unacceptable scale ... And, the 2018 Global Slavery Index finds businesses and governments in G20 countries are importing products that are at risk of modern slavery on a significant scale.

This is, and unfortunately will remain, a terrible evil in this world, **part of the “Human Condition”, until the Kingdom of God is established**. The Book of Revelation prophesizes that slavery will come right out into the open before the end comes:

And **the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her**, since no one buys their cargo anymore, cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, **and slaves (soma), that is, human [lives] (psyche)**.<sup>161</sup> (Revelation 18:11-13 ESV)

A far more universal problem in the modern world is “**debt slavery**”. Governments and banks have universally conspired to control the lives of millions of people through financial debt. This evil will also be eradicated in the World Tomorrow. The “governments” of this world will be gone. The implementation of the anathema against usury will prevent development of large banks, and the Jubilee Year will put an end to generational poverty:

If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, **you shall not be like a moneylender** to him, and **you shall not exact interest** from him. (Exodus 22:25 ESV)

**Take no interest** from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. You shall **not lend him your money at interest**, nor give him your food for profit. (Leviticus 25:36-37 ESV)

**You shall not charge interest on loans** to your brother, **interest on money, interest on food, interest on anything** that is lent for interest. (Deuteronomy 23:19 ESV)

**You shall count seven weeks of years**, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years. **Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month**. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and **proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants**. **It shall be a jubilee for you**, when **each of you shall return to his property** and each of you shall return to his clan. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of

<sup>159</sup> Paul's letter to Philemon concerning the slave Onesimus has been discussed in section **3.8 Philemon**.

<sup>160</sup> See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walk\\_Free](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walk_Free): Minderoo Foundation's Walk Free initiative is an independent, privately funded international human rights organisation based in Perth, Western Australia. Walk Free works towards ending modern slavery in all its forms by taking a multifaceted and global approach. The report, “**The Global Slavery Index 2018**”, can be viewed at; <https://www.walkfree.org/>

<sup>161</sup> The Greek phrase is “καὶ σωμάτων καὶ ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων” - kai somaton kai psyche anthropon, “and bodies that is lives of humans”, the slave trade is the most likely implication; but also, it could include the disgusting practice of trade in body parts.

itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee. **It shall be holy to you.** You may eat the produce of the field.

**In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property.** And if you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another. You shall pay your neighbor according to the number of years after the jubilee, and he shall sell to you according to the number of years for crops. If the years are many, you shall increase the price, and if the years are few, you shall reduce the price, for it is the number of the crops that he is selling to you. You shall not wrong one another, but **you shall fear your God, for I am the LORD your God.** (Leviticus 25:8-17 ESV)

**True freedom is available only through the truth of God, living by the Way of God:**

**If you abide in my word,** you are truly my disciples, and **you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (eleutheroō).**” ... Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave (doulos) to sin. The slave (doulos) does not remain in the house forever; **the son remains forever.** So **if the Son sets you free (eleutheroō), you will be free (eleutheros) indeed.** (John 8:31b-32, 34-35 ESV)

The main Greek words for freedom are:<sup>162</sup>

- ἐλευθερία - eleutheria, a feminine noun, “state of being free”, “liberty”, “freedom”
- ἐλεύθερος - eleutheros, an adjective, “free”, “free person”
- ἐλευθερώ - eleutheroō, a verb, “set free”, “liberate”

**The Christian calling frees a person from the world.** While we are still in the world, we are subject to the “human condition”, but the true freedom of the truth of God allows Christians to look beyond the “slavery” of this life to a better world. Also, through the Christian calling, **life in this world is freed from the constraints of “slavery” to the ways of this world:**

But thanks be to God, that **you who were once slaves (doulos) of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,** and, having been set free (eleutheroō) from sin, have become slaves (doulou) of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as **you once presented your members as slaves (doulos) to impurity** and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so **now present your members as slaves (doulos) to righteousness** leading to sanctification.

For **when you were slaves (doulos) of sin,** you were free (eleutheros) 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 (eleutheroō) from sin** and have become slaves (doulou) of God, **the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.** (Romans 6:17-22 ESV)

Now **the Lord is the Spirit,** and **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (eleutheria).** (2 Corinthians 3:17 ESV)

**No longer do I call you [doulos],** for the [doulos] 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** ... (John 15:15-16a ESV)

While Christians are in the world, we cannot be part of the world. It is great mistake to think that freedom allows one liberty to sin:

**For freedom (eleutheria) Christ has set us free (eleutheroō);** stand firm therefore, and **do not submit again to a yoke of slavery (douleia).** ... For **you were called to freedom (eleutheria),** brothers. Only **do not use your freedom (eleutheria) as an opportunity for the flesh,** but through love serve one another. (Galatians 5:1, 13 ESV)

**Live as people who are free (eleutheros), not using your freedom (eleutheria) as a cover-up for evil,** but living as [doulos] of God. (1 Peter 2:16 ESV)

**We see the world around us gripped slavery to sin, to idolatry in all its many forms.** The true freedom God promises to Christians will come at the First Resurrection. In the meantime, knowing the truth of God allows Christians to **look beyond the evils of this world,** including the sadness of those people trapped in slavery, **to the better world where all human slavery will be eradicated.**

<sup>162</sup> See GEL pages 249-250  
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### 5.3 Swearing and Oaths

**Jesus' teaching on "swearing" and "taking oaths" is plain and simple**, and it is reiterated by James :

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)

But above all, my brothers, **do not swear**, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, **but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no**, so that you may not fall under condemnation. (James 5:12 ESV)

**This is a big change from the Old Testament**. It was assumed that all agreements would be associated with an oath:

Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the people of Israel, saying, **"This is what the LORD has commanded**. If a man vows a vow to the LORD, 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 30:1-2 ESV)

**You shall not swear by my name falsely**, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:12 ESV)

**This issue is perhaps the simplest case possible of God requiring a higher standard of Christians than was required of True Worshipers in the past**. With the full and complete revelation of God available, Christians can understand the magnitude of our calling. To say "yes" or "no" is sufficient – further elaboration is NOT required of a Christian to ensure that, **"He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth"**.

### 5.4 Meat Offered to Idols

**This must have been a very serious issue in the Corinthian Church**. Paul founded the Corinthian Church on his second journey in 49-50AD. The letter we have as First Corinthians was written from Ephesus a couple of years later. Like the other churches founded by Paul, there were both "Jews" and "Greeks" in the Corinthian Church:

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** ... And **he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks**.

When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, **Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus**. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. **From now on I will go to the Gentiles**."

And he left there and went to the house of a man named **Titius Justus, a worshiper of God**. His house was next door to the synagogue. **Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household**. And **many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized**.

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, **"Do not be afraid**, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for **I have many in this city who are my people**." And he stayed a year and six months, **teaching the word of God** among them.

(Acts 18:1-2a, 4-11 ESV)

Those with a Jewish background would have had sources of meat from other "Jews", i.e., NOT from the Greek markets. Those with a "Greek" background would have had a favourite "butcher" in one of the markets. Meat sold in the markets was typically taken from an animal that had been offered to an idol in one of the pagan temples. Someone raised this issue to Paul:

Now **concerning food offered to idols**: we know that **"all of us possess knowledge"** ... But some, **through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol**, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. (1 Corinthians 8:1a, 7b ESV)

Clearly some of the members of the Church were offended because they believed that meat offered to an idol was "spiritually contaminated" – eating it implied participation in idol worship. Paul is explicit, Christians are NOT to participate in idol worship:

Therefore, my beloved, **flee from idolatry**. ... **What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?** No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. **I do not want you to be participants with demons**. ... For if anyone sees **you who have knowledge** eating **in an idol's temple**, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, **to eat food offered to idols?** And so **by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed**, the brother for whom Christ died. (1 Corinthians 10:14a, 19-20, 8:10-11 ESV)



Paul enjoins Christians NOT to be seen in pagan Temples for the sake of a “weak” brother. The “weak” Christian, who believes that eating food offered to an idol is participation in idolatry, will therefore feel it is okay to participate in idolatry. Paul had already established that idols were in fact nothing and, therefore, food offered to them was NOT contaminated:

Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1 Corinthians 8:4-6 ESV)

“Food” is provided by God’s beneficence. “Idols”, representing “gods” which do NOT exist, cannot contaminate food. Paul is specific in his conclusion: ignore the possibility that food has been offered to an idol, but more importantly avoid offending a “brother” over the issue:

Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. For “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience.

But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience—I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else’s conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:25-33 ESV)

This issue is important because it deals with the problem of “preconceptions”. The one “who had knowledge” assumed that there could be no problem with whatever food he ate,<sup>163</sup> yet he was causing offense. The “weak” brother assumed the “one with knowledge” was committing a grievous sin – he was projecting his own constraints onto another. Paul, as a former Pharisee, is struggling with his own preconceptions – he had been brought up to avoid all contact with “Gentiles” and any food touched by them. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul cuts through all the confusion:

- “idols” are nothing
- All food is provided by God
- “food” cannot be contaminated by “nothings”
- The conscience of a brother is more important than one’s own freedom
- “eat or don’t eat”, but do NOT offend another
- Make no assumptions about other people

We need to carry these principals in daily life: each individual has preconceptions which differ based on experience and circumstance. Deal with facts, not preconceptions.

## 5.5 Marriage

The Hebrew root for “marriage” is בָּעַל - ba`al. This root carries a very complicated range of meaning.<sup>164</sup> As a **verb** it means “possess”, “rule over”, “own”, “marry”. **Derivative common nouns** mean “owner”, “master”, “lord”, “husband”. As a **proper noun** it is used in conjunction other nouns for place names, e.g., Ba`al-gad, Ba`al-ḥazor. It is frequently a **component in proper names**, e.g. Jerubba`al, Merib-ba`al. It also became used as a name for the **“storm god”, Hadad**, just as Ba`al. As a deity name it was commonly compounded, e.g., Ba`al-pe`or. Some examples in the context of “marriage” follow:

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman (‘ishshah) whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife (b`ulath ba`al).” (Genesis 20:3 ESV)  
After that you may go in to her and be her husband (v`al`atah), and she shall be your wife (‘ishshah).

If a man (‘ish) is found lying with the wife of another man (‘ishshah v`ulath ba`al) ...

When a man (‘ish) takes a wife (‘ishshah) and marries her (v`ulah) ...  
(Deuteronomy 21:13b, 22:22a, 24:1a ESV)

<sup>163</sup> Note that this issue has nothing to do with “clean” and unclean” meat – “unclean” meat is NOT food.

<sup>164</sup> See Holladay pages 43-44, TWOT article 262 page 119

The following sub-sections first review marriage customs in the ancient world in order to compare the Biblical material with the contemporary environment. Jesus' teaching recorded in the New Testament is reviewed and the elaboration of Jesus' teaching by the Apostles is discussed.

### 5.5.1 Marriage Customs in the Ancient World

H.W.F. Saggs provides the following assessment of marriage in early times:

**Marriage** (throughout the whole of Sumerian and Babylonian society) **was monogamous** in the sense that a man might have **only one woman who ranked as a wife and enjoyed a social status corresponding to his own**. On the other hand, no stigma attached to resort to **temple prostitutes** or to the keeping of **concubines**, and once **slaves** came to occur widely as private property one of the chief uses, if not the chief use, of female slaves was for the latter purpose: concubinage did not alter the status of a slave-girl. (Saggs page 186)

Under some circumstances written **marriage contracts** were required – from the Code of Hammurabi:  
128: If a seignior acquired a wife, but **did not draw up a contract** for her, that woman is no wife. (ANET page 171)

The earlier Laws of Eshnunna contained a similar provision:

27: If a man takes a(nother) man's daughter without asking the permission of her father and her mother and **concludes no formal marriage contract** with her father and her mother, even though she may live in his house for a year, **she is not a housewife**. (ANET page 162)

Later Assyrian laws reversed the constraint for widows:

34: If a seignior married a widow, **without sealing (it) with a contract**, (and) she lived in his house two years, she becomes his wife; she need not leave. (ANET page 183)

A Neo-Babylonian law confirms the use of contracts but also makes two other points – **marriages were arranged by families** and their **primary purpose of marriage was economic**:

9: In the case of **a seignior who gave his daughter** (in marriage) **to a(nother) seignior's son** and **the father set down a certain amount on the document** and gave (it) to his son and **the seignior set the dowry for his daughter** and **they wrote a contract** with one another – **they may not contest the contract**; the father may **not make a deduction** from anything he wrote down for his son on the contract and indicated to his (son's) father-in-law. ... (ANET page 197)

The **economic necessity of a woman to be associated with the household** of a man is demonstrated by two laws from Eshnunna:

29: If **a man has been made prisoner** during a raid or an invasion or (if) he has been **carried off forcibly** and [stayed in] a foreign [count]ry for a [long] time, (and if) **another man has taken his wife** and she has born him a son – **when he returns, he shall [get] his wife back**.

30: If a man hates his town and his lord and **becomes a fugitive**, and if **another man takes his wife** – when he returns, **he shall have no right to claim his wife**. (ANET page 162)

The Code of Hammurabi makes it clear that it could be **the woman's volition to enter the household of another man**:

134: If the seignior was taken captive and there was not sufficient to live on in his house, **his wife may enter the house of another**, with the woman incurring no blame at all. (ANET page 171)

**In the ancient world, marriage was an economic and legal arrangement between two families**. There was no consideration for the psychological and emotional feelings of the man and woman. **The primary purpose of marriage was to identify legitimate heirs**. Nothing in the marriage arrangement precluded the use of concubines, prostitutes, temple prostitutes, or slaves; but, children from these relationship were NOT legitimate.

### 5.5.2 Marriage Customs in the Bible

The first recorded marriage was implicit. Eve was created from Adam's rib – they were one flesh from the start:

So **the LORD God** caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept **took one of his ribs** and closed up its place with flesh. And **the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman** and brought her to the man. Then the man said, **"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh** she shall be called **Woman ('ishshah)** because she was taken out of **Man ('ish)**." (Genesis 2:21-23 ESV)

Next, we find **Cain** and **Lamech** with wives. There is no indication how the women came to be designated as “wives”:

**Cain knew his wife ('ishshah)**, and she conceived and bore Enoch. ... To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad fathered Mehujael, and Mehujael fathered Methushael, and **Methushael fathered Lamech**. And **Lamech took two wives ('ishshah)**. The name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. (Genesis 4:17a, 18-19 ESV)

Similarly, there is no information on the process of marriage until we get to **Lot**, where the custom of “**betrothal**” is in place:

So Lot went out and said to his **sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters**, “Up! Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city.” (Genesis 19:14a ESV)

With **Rebekah** there is some information on the process of marriage:

... you will not take a wife ('ishshah) for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will **go to my country and to my kindred**, and **take a wife ('ishshah) for my son Isaac**.

Then the [slave] took ten of his master's camels and departed, **taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master**; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor.

Let the young woman to whom I shall say, ‘Please let down your jar that I may drink,’ and who shall say, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels’—**let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac**.

Then **Laban and Bethuel answered** and said, “The thing has come from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good. Behold, **Rebekah is before you; take her and go**, and let her be the wife ('ishshah) of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken.”

And **the [slave] brought out jewelry of silver and of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah**. He also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments. And he and **the men who were with him ate and drank**, and they spent the night there.

... They said, “**Let us call the young woman and ask her.**” And they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” She said, “**I will go.**” (Genesis 24:3b-4, 10, 14a, 50-51, 53-54a, 57-58 ESV)

Marriage criteria:

- Racial and cultural compatibility were important
- The marriage was arranged by families not participants
- The subject was the bridegroom's family
- The object was the bride's family
- The subject family provided rich gifts to the object family
- The agent of the subject family looked to God for provision
- The object family had the first option to agree or disagree to the proposal
- Their acceptance of the proposal was accompanied by gift-giving and feasting
- The object woman had the right of last refusal

**A marriage was a formal agreement between two families.** There was no consideration given to emotional attachment or personal preference. It was a legal and economic transaction. There were apparently **no ceremonies or formalities** once the arrangements were made:

And **Rebekah lifted up her eyes**, and when **she saw Isaac**, she dismounted from the camel and said to the [slave], “**Who is that man**, walking in the field to meet us?” The [slave] said, “**It is my master.**” So **she took her veil and covered herself**. And the [slave] told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then **Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife ('ishshah)**, and he loved her. (Genesis 24:64-67a ESV)

The next marriages about which there is any information is **Jacob with Leah and Rachel**:

Then **Laban said to Jacob**, “Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, **what shall your wages be?**” Now Laban had two daughters. The name of **the older was Leah**, and the name of **the younger was Rachel**. Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance. **Jacob loved Rachel**. And he said, “**I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.**” (Genesis 29:15-19 ESV)

Because Jacob is alone, he initiates the proposal with the family, Laban, of the object woman. There is an emotional attraction for Jacob because he has seen Rachel, but **she is no part of the negotiations**. **The most important factor is economic** – the “**bride price**”, seven years labour. When the bride price is paid, the marriage can occur:

Then Jacob said to Laban, “**Give me my wife (‘ishshah) that I may go in to her**, for my time is completed.”

So **Laban** gathered together all the people of the place and **made a feast**. But in the evening **he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob**, and **he went in to her**. ... And in the morning, behold, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?”

Laban said, “**It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn**. Complete the week of this one, and **we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years**.” Jacob did so, and **completed her week**. Then **Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife (‘ishshah)**. (Genesis 29:21-23, 25-28 ESV)

Marriage criteria:

- The **consummation made the marriage legal and binding**
- Because it was consummated, **the marriage to Leah was binding** even though Laban had altered the terms of the proposal agreement
- **Jacob accepted the local customs** of marriage of the firstborn and provided “her week”
- Jacob had no compunctions about having two wives

**Samson’s marriage to Timnah**, recounted in Judges chapter fourteen, provides no new information:

- It was arranged by his family, verse 2
- The family was concerned about racial and cultural compatibility, verse 3
- There was a marriage feast, verse 10

With Esther, there are no details of the actual “marriage”, but the key point is that **Esther was willing to go along with whatever the Persian customs required**:

- She allowed herself to be selected as a candidate, Esther 2:2
- She entered the harem of the king, Esther 2:3, 8
- She took her turn “going into the king”, Esther 2:12-15

The only marriage recounted in the New Testament is at **Cana**, where Jesus turned the water to wine. The wedding feast was a large celebration, given the amount of wine Jesus created. Jesus first reaction was that he wanted no part of participating in the feast:

And Jesus said to her, “Woman, **what does this have to do with me?** My hour has not yet come.” (John 2:4 ESV)

But in the end, **he went along with local customs** and performed a miracle to enhance the faith of his disciples and the few others who knew what he did:

When the master of the feast tasted **the water now become wine**, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. **But you have kept the good wine until now.**” (John 2:9-10 ESV)

The point of these examples is that **local custom determines how marriages are performed**. In the ancient world, marriages were primarily a legal and economic arrangement. God defined the standard with Adam and Eve, but the standard was rarely if ever adhered to. **God has made no effort to correct or change any local customs**.

### 5.5.3 Jesus’ Teaching on Marriage

**The seminal scriptures on Jesus’ teaching on marriage are recorded by Mark and Matthew**. During the Later Perean Ministry,<sup>165</sup> so probably within the last six months of Jesus’ ministry, in the area east of the Jordan and north of the Dead Sea,<sup>166</sup> Jesus is assailed by some Pharisees. They attempt to trap him by a question on “divorce”. **Jesus’ response provides the basis of his teaching on “marriage”, “divorce”, and “adultery”**. Divorce is discussed in section **5.7.3 Jesus’ Teaching on Divorce**. Adultery is discussed in section **5.8.3 Jesus’ Teaching on Adultery**. The entire texts of both Mark and Matthew are included here for completeness:

And **Pharisees came up and in order to test him** asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a

<sup>165</sup> See Robertson pages 131 and 141

<sup>166</sup> See Mark 10:1 and Matthew 19:1-2

certificate of divorce and to send her away.” And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.

But **from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’** So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” (Mark 10:2-12 ESV)

And **Pharisees came up to him and tested him** by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that **he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,** and said, ‘**Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh**’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

The disciples said to him, “**If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.**” But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.” (Matthew 19:3-12 ESV)

**Both synoptists record that Jesus went right back to the beginning,** “from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female”, when Jesus, as YHWH, had created Adam and Eve and taught them about family life:

The LORD God took **the man (ha’adam)** and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ... Then the LORD God said, “**It is not good that the man (ha’adam) should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.**” ... So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man (ha’adam), and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man (ha’adam) **he made into a woman (‘ishshah)** and brought her to the man (ha’adam). Then the man (ha’adam) said,

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;

**she shall be called Woman (‘ishshah),** because **she was taken out of Man (‘ish).**”

Therefore **a man (‘ish) shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife (‘ishshah), and they shall become one flesh.** (Genesis 2:15, 18, 21-24 ESV)

This passage contains the first instances of the two very important words: **וְאִישׁ** - ‘ish, “man”, and **אִשָּׁה** - ‘ishshah, “woman”. Up until the creation of Eve, Adam had simply been called

**אָדָם** - ‘adam, “man”, or **הָאָדָם** ha’adam, “the man”. **The words ‘ish and ‘ishshah relate specifically to the marriage relationship, especially to the concept of “being one flesh”,** which of course Eve was because she was taken from Adam.

**God’s intention from the beginning was that a marriage is a special relationship between a man and a woman, two people, who are in fact, one.** This concept precludes all the corruptions man as brought to marriage. **This understanding has never been common in the world at large.** The experience of many people recorded in the Old Testament indicates that even people with whom God was working, did NOT understand this. **They were NOT censured for their lack of understanding,** but **for Christians,** those people God is calling under the New Covenant, **the plain teaching of Jesus is that a higher standard is required.**

#### 5.5.4 The Apostles’ Teaching on Marriage

Based on Jesus’ elevation of the marriage relationship to a physical and spiritual partnership in which the husband and wife are in fact “one”, the apostles elaborated on the beauties of a Christian marriage.

The **Apostle Paul** covers it most thoroughly in the letter known to us as **Ephesians:**

**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. (Mark 10:7-8a)

**This mystery is profound**, and I am saying that **it refers to Christ and the church**. However, let each one of you **love his wife** as himself, and let **the wife see that she respects her husband**. (Ephesians 5:22-33 ESV see also Colossians 3:18-19)

**The key to Paul's teaching** is the **"mystery"**. Everything about marriage is to teach husbands and wives about Christ and the Church. **"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her"** is a fundamental understanding of conversion that all persons called to the Church need to internalize. **God is love**.<sup>167</sup> God loves all human beings and desires each and every one to have the opportunity for eternal life.<sup>168</sup> The Divine Creator Being who initiated the first marriage in Adam and Eve, emptied himself of his Divine Status and became a human being so that he could create a **Church to prepare individuals to assist him and God the Father in their Plan of Salvation**.

**The intention of God for a marriage** is that two people can live in a loving, life-long, relationship comparable to **the relationship Jesus Christ has with the True Church** – the True Church being the **"body of Christ"**, the aggregate of **individuals who have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit** (NOT an organization). By doing this, the two individuals come to an understanding of Christ's nature, the Nature of God; also, the Plan of God and the Way of God. This makes the two individuals **candidates for the gift of eternal life** at the First Resurrection. This is indeed a **"mystery"**, the understanding of which comes only through **the calling of God, repentance, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit**.

Specifically, **to make this relationship work**, Paul asserts that:

- The husband
  - **"is the head"** – he must learn to be to his wife "as Christ is the head of the church"
  - **"love your wife"** – he must learn what true love is "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her"<sup>169</sup>
- The wife
  - **"submit to your husband"** – she must learn true cooperation (submission) "as the church submits to Christ"
  - **"respect her husband"** – she must learn the depths of God's plan, as Christ "cleansed her by the washing of water with the word"

#### **The Apostle Peter echoes the teaching of Paul:**

Likewise, **wives, be subject to your own husbands**, so that even if **some do not obey the word**, they may be won without a word by the **conduct of their wives**, when they see your **respectful** and **pure conduct**.

Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be **the hidden person of the heart** with the **imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit**, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by **submitting to their own husbands**, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Likewise, **husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman** as the weaker vessel, since **they are heirs with you of the grace of life**, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:1-7 ESV)

Peter adds the important concept that **proper handling of the situation** by a wife can lead to the conversion of a husband – the reciprocal is also clearly true. Peter is clear that **what is in the heart is what matters** – for both husband and wife. Peter elaborates "love" as encompassing **"understanding"**

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<sup>167</sup> See 1 John 4:8, 16

<sup>168</sup> See John 3:16

<sup>169</sup> Note that "love" in marriage was certainly NOT unheard-of in Old Testament times: both Isaac and Jacob are noted as having loved their wives, see Genesis 24:67, 29:18.



and “**honour**”. Most importantly, **Peter quantifies the “mystery” as “they are heirs with you of the grace of life”**.

## 5.6 Slaves as Surrogates

**The use of a slave by her mistress to produce children for the mistress** was an accepted practice in the ancient world – from the Code of Hammurabi:

144: When a **seignior married a hierodule** and that **hierodule gave a female slave to her husband** and she has then **produced children** ...

146: When a **seignior married a hierodule** and **she gave a female servant to her husband and she has then borne children**, if later the female slave has claimed equality with her mistress because she bore children, her mistress may not sell her; she may mark her with the slave-mark and count her among the slaves. (ANET, page 172)

The most instructive case in the Bible is **Rachel’s use of Bilhah**:

When **Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children**, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I shall die!” Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”

Then **she said, “Here is my [slave] (‘amah) Bilhah; go in to her, so that she may give birth on my behalf, that even I may have children through her.”** So she gave him **her [slave] (shiph’ah) Bilhah as a [surrogate] (‘ishshah)**, and Jacob went in to her. And **Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son**. (Genesis 30:1-5 ESV)

**Rachel is NOT producing children**, as with the case in the Hammurabi laws, **she provides a slave to her husband**. The slave produces children. Rachel is explicit that **“the slave is giving birth on her behalf”**. The children produced by the slave are accounted her children, **“I may have children through her”**.

**Leah used Zilpah** in the same way:

When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, **she took her [slave] (shiph’ah) Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a [surrogate] (‘ishshah)**. Then Leah’s [slave] (shiph’ah) Zilpah bore Jacob a son. (Genesis 30:9-10 ESV)

**Four of Jacob’s sons were borne through surrogates**. There is no censure anywhere in the Bible of Jacob for producing sons through surrogates. **There is no suggestion anywhere in the Bible that the sons produced through the surrogates were in anyway less “legitimate” than the sons of Jacob’s two wives**.

The situation with **Sarai and Hagar** is exactly the same:

Now **Sarai, Abram’s wife (‘ishshah), had borne him no children**. She had a **female Egyptian [slave] (shiph’ah) whose name was Hagar**. And Sarai said to Abram, “Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. **Go in to my [slave] (shiph’ah)**; it may be that **I shall obtain children by her**.”

And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her [slave] (shiph’ah), and **gave her to Abram her husband (‘ish) as a [surrogate] (‘ishshah)**. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. (Genesis 16:1-4a ESV)

Sarai’s objective was to **“obtain children by her”** – the children of the surrogate were accounted children of the slave owner. **Ishmael was Abram’s legitimate firstborn son**. The Apostle Paul is well aware of this when he puts forth his **allegory of Sarah and Hagar**:

For it is written that **Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman**. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

Now **this may be interpreted allegorically**: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now **Hagar is Mount Sinai** in Arabia; she corresponds to the **present Jerusalem**, for she is in slavery with her children. But the **Jerusalem above** is free, and she is our mother. For it is written,

Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;

break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor!

For the **children of the desolate one** will be more than those of **the one who has a husband**.

(Isaiah 54:1)

Now **you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise**. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.

But what does the Scripture 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.” So, brothers, **we are not children of the slave but of the free woman**. (Galatians 4:22-31 ESV)

Paul notes that **Abraham had two legitimate sons** – he had many other sons through concubines. **The point of Paul’s allegory is God’s election of Isaac representing God’s election of Christians** over “Jews”. The “present Jerusalem”, a physical city, represents the “Jews”. “Jerusalem above” represents the True Church. **The “calling” of Christians is by “election”**, as was the promise of Isaac. The “Jews” were like **Ishmael**, they were **the first**, but **God did NOT elect** them.

#### **Analysis of Paul’s allegory:**

- **Both Ishmael and Isaac were legitimate sons**, “Abraham had two sons”, he already had many sons by concubines who were NOT “legitimate”, i.e., they had no legal standing
- **Ishmael was born according to accepted cultural practice**, “the son of the slave was born according to the flesh”
- **Isaac was born through a miracle**, “the son of the free woman was born through promise”
- **Ishmael represents the “Jews”**, the last visible physical remnant of the nation of Israel, created at Mount Sinai, by the Sinai Covenant<sup>170</sup>
- The “Jews” are identified with **the existing physical city of Jerusalem** which was in slavery to Rome (i.e., “the world”): **represented by Hagar**
- The Church is identified with **“Jerusalem above”**, a spiritual entity comprised of individuals with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Church is “free”, “she is our mother”, **represented by Sarah**: **“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 8:31b-32 ESV)
- The Church is metaphorically, **“the desolate one”**, **“the barren one, not in labour”** who **produces “children” for God through the “miracle”** of God’s calling, repentance, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit
- **The nation of Israel was metaphorically “married to YHWH”**,<sup>171</sup> she had a husband, but that relationship produced few “children for God”
- Christians are the **“children of promise”**, like Isaac
- The “Jews”, like Ishmael,<sup>172</sup> were at that time **“persecuting”** Christians
- Sarah, **the slave owner of Hagar** and the “legal” mother of Ishmael, rejected them, **“Cast out the slave woman and her son”** – as God, **the vassal owner of the nation of Israel**, had rejected the nation, and was about to finally reject the last visible remnant of the nation, the “Jews”
- **The Christian calling is a miracle by God’s election**; the “Jews” were God’s people by physical descent, the customs of the world, “slavery”; **“we are not children of the slave but of the free woman”**

**There was no stigma in the ancient world attached to the use of slaves as surrogates.** This was allowed in Old Testament times, **“the times of ignorance God overlooked”**.<sup>173</sup> Because it was an accepted practice, there is no censure anywhere in the Bible of Sarah’s use of Hagar, Rachel’s use of Bilhah, or Leah’s use of Zilpah. **Four of the eponymous tribal leaders of Israel were borne through surrogates. Their status among the sons of Jacob is never questioned.** If they had been borne through concubines, as with Abraham’s sons by concubines, they would NOT have had legitimate status.

## **5.7 Divorce**

The Hebrew root for “divorce” is גָּרַשׁ - garash.<sup>174</sup> “The root denotes an effective separation between persons or groups, expulsion”.<sup>175</sup> The context determines when the meaning is a “divorce from marriage”. The noun, כְּרִיתוּת - k<sup>e</sup>rithuth, “certificate of divorce” is apparently derived from the root

<sup>170</sup> See Exodus 19:3-8

<sup>171</sup> See Isaiah 54:5, Jeremiah 3:20, 31:32

<sup>172</sup> See Genesis 21:9

<sup>173</sup> See Acts 17:30

<sup>174</sup> See Holladay page 65

<sup>175</sup> See TWOT article 388 pages 173-174

כָּרַת - karath, “to cut off.”<sup>176</sup> The Greek verb ἀπολύω - apolyō, carries approximately the same range of meaning as *garash*.<sup>177</sup>

The following sub-sections briefly review divorce in the ancient world in order to compare it to divorce in the Old Testament. Jesus’ teaching on divorce is examined and a modern solution to the ongoing problem of divorce is briefly discussed.

### 5.7.1 Divorce in the Ancient World

Divorce was an accepted part of life in the Ancient World. It was generally at the volition of the man and there were apparently no requirements regarding justification, other than a desire to be rid of the woman. The considerations after the divorce were children and economic matters.

From the Code of Hammurabi:

137: **If a seignior has made up his mind to divorce a lay priestess, who bore him children, or a hierodule who provided him with children, they shall return her dowry to that woman and also give her half of the field, orchard and goods in order that she may rear her children ...**

138: **If a seignior wishes to divorce his wife who did not bear children, he shall give her money to the full amount of her marriage-price and he shall also make good to her the dowry which she brought from her father’s house and then he may divorce her. (ANET page 172)**

The woman could also initiate the divorce:

142: **If a woman so hated her husband that she has declared, “You may not have me,” her record shall be investigated at the city council, and if she was careful and was not at fault, even though her husband has been going out and disparaging her greatly, that woman, without incurring any blame at all, may take her dowry and go off to her father’s house. (ANET page 172)**

The Middle Assyrian Laws were not so generous to the woman:

37: **If a seignior wishes to divorce his wife, if it is his will, he may give her something, if it is not his will, he need not give her anything; she shall go out empty. (ANET page 183)**

Hittite laws are clear that divorce could be very casual:

31: **If a free man and a slave-girl (are) lovers and the cohabit, he takes her for his wife, they found a family and have children, but subsequently, either (as) they quarrel or (as) they reach a friendly agreement, they break up the family, the man receives the children, but the woman receives one child. (ANET page 190)**

In Greek culture and in Roman culture, divorce was an accepted practice:

**In Greco-Roman cultures, divorce was governed by convention rather than state regulation. ... The dowry was probably returned ... but children would remain with their father. ... Divorce was probably rare and disgraceful in early Rome, but it had become common by the late republic. ... Legal ground-rules for the division of property after divorce were apparently derived from suits ... (CDCC page 279)**

**The Mishnah contains a lot of material on divorce.**<sup>178</sup> The Tractate Gittin<sup>179</sup> contains the most details around the actual procedure. There are also many other references. The Jewish website Sefaria<sup>180</sup> contains the following **summary of the teaching of the Mishnah:**

**A woman may be divorced only by receiving a bill [of divorce]. This bill is called a get.**

The Torah<sup>181</sup> establishes ten principles as fundamental [for a divorce to be effective]. They are:

- a) That a man must voluntarily initiate the divorce;
- b) That he must effect the divorce by means of a written document and through no other means;
- c) That this document must communicate that he is divorcing [his wife] and releasing her from his domain;
- d) That it should utterly sever the connection between the husband and his wife;
- e) That [the *get*] should be written for the sake [of the woman being divorced];
- f) That once [the *get*] is written, there should be no action [necessary] except its transfer to the woman;
- g) That he should actually transfer [the *get*] to her;
- h) That he should transfer [the *get*] to her in the presence of witnesses;

<sup>176</sup> See TWOT article 1048a pages 456-457

<sup>177</sup> See GEL pages 95-96

<sup>178</sup> The Mishnah as we have it was written down around 200AD. It contains the teaching of the Pharisees from the time of Christ. Its contents reflect the official thinking around divorce that Jesus dealt with.

<sup>179</sup> Mishnah pages 307-321

<sup>180</sup> See <https://www.sefaria.org/community>

<sup>181</sup> Note that the claim is these come from the *torah*. This is a typical pharisaic interpretation.

- i) That he should actually transfer it to her for the sake of divorce;
  - j) That the husband or his agent should be the one who gives it to her.
- The other requirements of a *get* - e.g., dating it, having it signed by witnesses and the like - are all Rabbinic institutions. ( [https://www.sefaria.org/Mishneh\\_Torah%2C\\_Divorce.1.1?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishneh_Torah%2C_Divorce.1.1?lang=bi) )

The following quote from Tractate Gittin provides a fair representation of the attitude of the Pharisees:

10. The School of **Shammai** says: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, *Because he hath found in her indecency in anything*. And the school of **Hillel** says: [He may divorce her] even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, *Because he hath found in her indecency in anything*. R. **Akiba** says: Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, *And it shall be if she found no favour in his eyes ...* (Mishnah page 321)

**In the ancient world divorce was generally easy.** It was normally at the discretion of the man. The divorced woman was simply cut loose from her former household. She may or may not have been given any material substance.

### 5.7.2 Divorce in the Old Testament

**The meaning of *garash* was obviously well known, it is used three times in Leviticus with no attempt at definition.** In each case the proscription does NOT apply to the average Israelite – only to the priests.

And the LORD said to Moses, “**Speak to the priests**, the sons of Aaron, and say to them ... They shall not marry a prostitute or a woman who has been defiled, **neither shall they marry a woman divorced (*garash*) from her husband**, for the priest is holy to his God.

**The priest who is chief** among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil is poured and who has been consecrated to wear the garments ... A widow, or **a divorced (*garash*) woman**, or a woman who has been defiled, or a prostitute, these **he shall not marry**.

If **a priest's daughter marries a layman**, she shall not eat of the contribution of the holy things. But if a **priest's daughter is widowed or divorced (*garash*)** and has no child and returns to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food; (Leviticus 21:1a, 7, 10a, 14a, 22:12-13)

The word is similarly used in a proscription given in the Plains of Moab in the context of “vows” by women – this applies to any woman:

But any vow of a widow or of **a divorced (*garash*) woman**, anything by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her. (Numbers 30:9 ESV)

In a speech recorded in Deuteronomy, **Moses added two provisos which limit a man's ability to divorce a woman.** **A different word is used here for divorce** שָׁלַח - *shalah*, literally “to let go”, “to send away”:<sup>182</sup>

**If any man (*'ish*) takes a wife (*'ishshah*) and goes in to her and then hates her** and accuses her of misconduct and brings a bad name upon her, saying, ‘I took this woman (*'ishshah*), and when I came near her, **I did not find in her evidence of virginity**,’ then the father of the young woman and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of her virginity to the elders of the city in the gate. And the father of the young woman shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man (*'ish*) to marry (*'ishshah*), and he hates her; and behold, he has accused her of misconduct, saying, “I did not find in your daughter evidence of virginity.” And yet **this is the evidence of my daughter's virginity**.’ And they shall spread the cloak before the elders of the city.

Then the elders of that city shall take the man (*'ish*) and whip him, and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name upon a virgin of Israel. And **she shall be his wife (*'ishshah*)**. **He may not divorce (*shalah*) her all his days**. (Deuteronomy 22:13-19 ESV)

**If a man (*'ish*) meets a virgin who is not betrothed, and seizes her and lies (*shakav*) with her**, and they are found, then the man who lay (*shakav*) with her shall give to the father of the young woman fifty shekels of silver, **and she shall be his wife (*'ishshah*)**, because he has violated her. **He may not divorce (*shalah*) her all his days**. (Deuteronomy 22:28-29 ESV)

**The seminal scripture on “divorce”** is also in Deuteronomy:

**When a man (*'ish*) takes a wife (*'ishshah*) and marries (*ba'al*) her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her**, and he writes her **a certificate of divorce (*k'arithuth*)**, and puts it in her hand and sends (*'shalah*) her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if **she goes and becomes another man's wife (*'ishshah*)**, and the latter man hates her and writes her **a certificate of divorce (*k'arithuth*)** and puts it in her hand and sends (*shalah*) her out of his house, or if the

<sup>182</sup> See Holladay pages 371-372  
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latter man ('ish) dies, who took her to be his wife ('ishshah), **then her former husband (ba'al), who sent her away (shalah), may not take her again to be his wife ('ishshah)**, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the LORD. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4 ESV)

**The actual point of this proscription is to prevent a woman from going back to a former husband.**<sup>183</sup>

The grounds for divorce are sexual misconduct, "some indecency". The Hebrew word for "indecency" is עֲרִוּהָ - 'erwah, it normally implies sexual misconduct.<sup>184</sup> **These points became ignored by New**

**Testament times:**

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, **"Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"** (Matthew 19:3 ESV)

In all the references to divorce in the Ancient World and in the Old Testament it is clear that the concept of divorce applied only to a man divorcing a woman. **There was no concept of a "divorced man".**

When Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, one of the problems he observed was **intermarriage of the returned exiles with pagan women from surrounding cultures:**

In those days also I saw the **Jews who had married women ('ishshah) of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.** And **half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod,** and **they could not speak the language of Judah,** but only the language of each people. (Nehemiah 13:23-24 ESV)

When **Nehemiah obtained the services of Ezra** through the aegis of King Artaxerxes, and Ezra arrived, **Ezra took this to be the greatest threat to the integrity and success of the remnant community.** With the assistance of certain others, **Ezra arranged for the men to divorce their foreign wives.** These divorces would have been conducted according to Persian customs:

While **Ezra prayed and made confession,** weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men ('ish), women ('ishshah), and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly. And **Shecaniah** the son of **Jehiel,** of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: **"We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women ('ishshah) from the peoples of the land,** but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. Therefore **let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives ('ishshah) and their children,** according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the [torah]. (Ezra 10:1-3 ESV)

**Divorce in the Old Testament was definitely within the context of divorce in the world at large.** A man divorced a woman by giving her a divorce document and sending her away from his household.<sup>185</sup> The only stated reason for divorce is **"she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her"**. This would seem to imply only "sexual misconduct", but **it was apparently interpreted more generally,** at least by New Testament times. Ezra's basis for divorce was that the women were NOT of Israelite descent, and they were NOT willing to "convert" to Israelite religion – they were bringing-up their children according to pagan ways.

### 5.7.3 Jesus' Teaching on Divorce

As discussed in section **5.5.3 Jesus' Teaching on Marriage,** the seminal scriptures on Jesus' teaching on divorce are recorded by Mark and Matthew:

And **Pharisees came up and in order to test him** asked, **"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"** He answered them, **"What did Moses command you?"** They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." And Jesus said to them, **"Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment."**

But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. **What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."** (Mark 10:2-9 ESV)

And **Pharisees came up to him and tested him** by asking, **"Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?"** He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his

<sup>183</sup> See Jeremiah 3:1

<sup>184</sup> See the discussion of this word in section **5.8.2 Adultery in the Old Testament.**

<sup>185</sup> This was John the Baptist's issue with Herod Antipas and Herodias: she had divorced her previous husband, Herod Philip I, in order to marry Herod Antipas. There is no provision for a woman to divorce her husband, so the second marriage was adulterous (see Mark 6:17-18 // Matthew 14:3-4).



wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. **What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.**"

They said to him, "**Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce** and to send her away?" He said to them, "**Because of your hardness of heart** Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. (Matthew 19:3-8 ESV)

The Pharisees, using the same tactic as Satan the Devil,<sup>186</sup> attempt to trap Jesus by quoting scripture. They refer to Moses' provision recorded in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, discussed in section **5.7.2 Divorce in the Old Testament**. **Jesus specifically says this provision was an accommodation to prevailing circumstances**, "your hardness of heart". **From the beginning, God intended marriage to be indissoluble**. Again, **this understanding has never been available to the world at large**, and in the Old Testament, the vast majority of Israelites were NOT called to salvation, they did NOT have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; therefore, God did not hold them to the highest standard.

Note that even in Moses' provision, the implied cause of divorce was sexual misconduct:

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because **he has found some indecency in her**, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house ... (Deuteronomy 24:1 ESV)

The word "**indecency**" is translated from עֶרְוָה - `er<sup>e</sup>wah, the same word used for "nakedness" in the proscriptions against sexual activity with close relatives in Leviticus chapter eighteen. Joseph, to whom Mary the mother of Jesus was betrothed, understood this:

When his mother **Mary** had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together **she was found to be with child** from the Holy Spirit. And her husband **Joseph**, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, **resolved to divorce her quietly**. (Matthew 1:18b-19 ESV)

Matthew records that Jesus allowed this same proviso even for Christians:

And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another, commits adultery. ... 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. (Matthew 19:9, 5:31-32 ESV)

Based on Jesus' teaching, the Apostle Paul adds a proviso:

**To the married I give this charge** (not I, but the Lord): **the wife should not separate from her husband** (but if she does, **she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband**), and **the husband should not divorce his wife**. (1 Corinthians 7:10 ESV)

**Jesus' teaching is plain and clear**. Divorce should never occur unless the marriage becomes untenable due to unfaithfulness. This will be the teaching of the World Tomorrow, when hopefully there will be no divorce.

#### **5.7.4 UCGIA Policy on Divorce**

In modern Western Civilization divorce has become as big a problem as it has ever been in any civilization at any point in history. **Christians today cannot ignore Jesus plain teaching on divorce**. At the same time, it is not possible to fully implement Jesus' high standard under all circumstances. **Jesus own words on the subject are clear**:

But he said to them, "**Not everyone can receive this saying**, but only those to whom it is given. ..." (Matthew 19:11 ESV)

The document "**Divorce and Remarriage Doctrinal Statement**" published by **United Church of God, an International Association**,<sup>187</sup> contains an excellent modern assessment of the problem and a solution that works in today's world. The UCGIA paper discusses many of the same scriptures discussed in this paper. The final summary of the topic from the UCGIA paper is as follows:

The following points summarize the teachings of the United Church of God, an *International Association* on divorce and remarriage. These principles are derived from the instructions which can be found in the pages of scripture.

<sup>186</sup> See Matthew 4:6, Luke 4:9-11

<sup>187</sup> <https://ucgweb.s3.amazonaws.com/files/papers/UCG-papers-Divorce-and-Remarriage.pdf>  
Wednesday, April 12, 2023



1. Only the following two reasons can (but do not necessarily have to) dissolve a marriage in which a believer is involved.
  - “*pornea*,” or sexual immorality. This would include in the broader sense all cases of sexual deviancy, adultery being an example. The implication is habitual sexual misconduct, but is not limited to this.
  - Not pleased to dwell. Paul explains in the book of 1 Corinthians that if an unbeliever is not pleased to dwell and departs that a Christian is not “under bondage”. An individual may express his/her displeasure in a number of ways – *habitual* misconduct such as immorality (refers back to implications of *porneia*), criminality, addictive behaviors, abuse, desertion or willful failure to provide physical support (1 Timothy 5:8). In such cases it may be appropriate for the “believer” to initiate proceedings.
2. Believers who separate, for other than scripturally-given reasons, are admonished to either reconcile or remain unmarried (Matthew 19:6; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11).
3. Generally speaking, if an unbeliever is “willing to live” (1 Corinthians 7:12) with the believer, the believer should not seek to end the marriage through divorce. The AV uses “pleased to dwell” instead of “willing to live”. This is often a difficult area to define since it can be quite subjective. There should be some evidence of the unbeliever not being pleased to dwell with the believer.
4. A marriage may be annulled or put aside if either party was deceived by the other prior to marriage. Fraud or deception should be acted upon at the time of discovery.
5. Individuals who are called into the Church having already experienced divorce, are accepted in their current marital state – divorced and now single, or divorced and now remarried, since all sin is removed upon repentance and baptism (Romans 6:7).

## 5.8 Adultery

The Hebrew verb for adultery is נָאָף - na’aph. The meaning of the word is a man, either married or single having sex with a married or betrothed woman. Some lexical definitions are:

- Commit adultery: usually of man, always with wife of another<sup>188</sup>
- Commit adultery: subject man with woman (either wife or fiancée of another man)<sup>189</sup>
- Commit adultery: This root represents sexual intercourse with the wife or betrothed of another man<sup>190</sup>

The equivalent Greek word is μοιχεύω - moicheuō. The Septuagint uses *moicheuō* and its derivatives for *na’aph* and its derivatives.<sup>191</sup> Both *na’aph* and *moicheuō* are used metaphorically for “spiritual adultery”. This is discussed in section 6. *Spiritual Whoredom*.

The general conception of adultery is captured by O.J. Baab:

Because of the nature of marriage, adultery was not so much evidence of moral depravity as the violation of the husband’s right to have sole sexual possession of his wife and to have the assurance that his children were his own. (IDB I page 51)

In the following sub-sections, the concept of adultery in the ancient world is briefly reviewed in order to compare it to the concept of adultery in the Old Testament. This is compared to and contrasted with Jesus’ teaching on adultery.

### 5.8.1 Adultery in the Ancient World

In the Ancient World “adultery” was defined according to the normal meaning of the word *na’aph*. Many of the proscriptions against adultery are very similar to the proscriptions in the Old Testament.

Some examples from the Code of Hammurabi:

129: If the **wife of a seignior has been caught lying with another man**, they shall **bind them and throw them into the water**. ...

130: If a **seignior bound the (betrothed) wife of another seignior** ... and **he has lain in her bosom** and they have caught him, **that seignior shall be put to death**, while the woman shall go free.

<sup>188</sup> BDB page 610

<sup>189</sup> Holladay page 224

<sup>190</sup> TWOT article 1273 page 542

<sup>191</sup> TDNT IV pages 729-734

131: If a seignior's wife was accused by her husband, but she was not caught lying with another man, she shall make affirmation by god and return to her house. (ANET page 171)

The Middle Assyrian Laws are similar:

12: If a seignior's wife passed along the street, a(nother) seignior has seized her, saying to her, "Let me lie with you," since she would not consent (and) kept defending herself, but he has taken her by force (and) lain with her ... they shall put the seignior to death, with no blame attached to the woman.

13: When a seignior's wife has left her own house and visited another seignior where he is living, if he has lain with her, knowing she was a seignior's wife, they shall put the seignior to death and the woman as well.

15: If a seignior has caught a(nother) seignior with his wife, when they have prosecuted him (and) convicted him, they shall put both of them to death ... (ANET page 181)

**This understanding of adultery is clearly demonstrated** by Pharaoh, and by "Abimelech"<sup>192</sup> with Sarah, and by "Abimelech" with Rebecca, and by Joseph:

When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ... But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. So Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife; take her, and go." (Genesis 12:14-15, 17-19 ESV)

And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife." ... Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin?" (Genesis 20:2b-3, 9a ESV)

So Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Behold, she is your wife. How then could you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac said to him, "Because I thought, 'Lest I die because of her.'" Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." (Genesis 26:9-10 ESV)

In all these examples, the subject man believed the object woman to be "uncommitted", i.e., not betrothed or married; therefore, she was open to sex with other men. When it was discovered by the subject man that the object woman was in fact the wife of another man, the subject man recoiled from the potential crime.

In Joseph's case, it is known that the woman is married. She is the one proposing sexual activity. **Joseph understands the nature of the crime and will have no part of it:**

And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" And as she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie beside her or to be with her. (Genesis 39:7-10 ESV)

**In the ancient world, adultery could only occur with a woman who was married or betrothed. The marital status of the man was irrelevant.** This definition of adultery is consistent with the Old Testament.

### 5.8.2 Adultery in the Old Testament

The first use of *na'aph* is in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14 // Deuteronomy 5:18):

תִּנְאַף	לֹא
tine'aph	lo'
you shall commit adultery	not

**No definition of "adultery" is provided** prior to its use in the Ten Commandments or afterwards – **the assumed common meaning of the word is therefore to be applied**, i.e., a man, married or single, having sex with the wife or betrothed of another man. There is only one other instance of *na'aph* in the Writings of Moses:

<sup>192</sup> "Abimelech" is apparently a title used by certain kings of Gerar.

If a man **commits adultery (na'aph)** with the wife of his neighbor, both the **adulterer (na'aph)** and the **adulteress (na'aph)** shall surely be put to death. (Leviticus 20:10 ESV)

This censure is paralleled in Deuteronomy:

If a man is found **lying (shakav) with the wife of another man**, both of them shall die, **the man who lay (shakav) with the woman, and the woman**. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. (Deuteronomy 22:22 ESV see also Leviticus 18:20)

The phrase “lying with” uses the verb: שָׁכַב - shakav, “lie down”. The verb shakav “... appears most often ... with the meaning ‘to lie down (in death)’ or ‘to lie down (for sexual relations)’”. Whenever the derivatives of shakav are used in a context of sexual relationships, **those relationships are illicit ...**<sup>193</sup>

**The common theme in these judgements is the status of the woman**. The woman is the wife of another man. There is **no comment on the status of the man** – he may be married or single. The censure is explicitly extended to a “betrothed” woman:

If there is **a betrothed virgin**, and a man meets her **in the city** and **lies (shakav) with her**, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and **you shall stone them to death** with stones, **the young woman** because she did not cry for help though she was in the city, **and the man** because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

But if **in the open country** a man meets **a young woman who is betrothed**, and the man seizes her and **lies (shakav) with her**, then **only the man who lay (shakav) with her shall die**. But you shall **do nothing to the young woman**; she has committed no offense punishable by death. For this case is like that of a man attacking and murdering his neighbor, because he met her in the open country, and **though the betrothed young woman cried for help** there was no one to rescue her. (Deuteronomy 22:23-27 ESV)

If the woman is neither married nor betrothed, there is no death penalty for either person. **The man is required to take the woman as a wife** - regardless of his prior status, married or single:

If a man meets **a virgin who is not betrothed**, and seizes her and **lies (shakav) with her**, and they are found, then **the man who lay (shakav) with her shall give to the father of the young woman fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife**, because he has violated her. He may not divorce her all his days. (Deuteronomy 22:28-29 ESV)

The father of the young woman had been previously given the option of just taking money:

If a man seduces **a virgin who is not betrothed** and **lies (shakav) with her**, **he shall give the bride-price for her and make her his wife**. If **her father utterly refuses to give her to him**, he shall pay money equal to the bride-price for virgins. (Exodus 22:16-17 ESV)

For slaves there is even more flexibility. **Sexual activity with a betrothed slave** does NOT warrant a death penalty – only a “guilt offering”:<sup>194</sup> (the case of an un-betrothed slave is NOT covered)

If **a man lies sexually with a woman who is a slave (shiph'hah), assigned to another man** and not yet ransomed or given her freedom, **a distinction shall be made**. **They shall not be put to death**, because she was not free; but **he shall bring his compensation to the LORD**, to the entrance of the tent of meeting, a ram for **a guilt offering**. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the LORD for his sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven for the sin that he has committed. (Leviticus 19:20-22 ESV)

In Leviticus chapter eighteen, **all sexual activity with close relatives is proscribed**:

**None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness**. I am the LORD.

You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is **the nakedness of your mother**; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover **the nakedness of your father's wife**; it is your father's nakedness.

You shall not uncover **the nakedness of your sister**, your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether brought up in the family or in another home.

You shall not uncover **the nakedness of your son's daughter** or of **your daughter's daughter**, for their nakedness is your own nakedness. You shall not uncover **the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter**, brought up in your father's family, since she is your sister.

You shall not uncover **the nakedness of your father's sister**; she is your father's relative. You shall not uncover **the nakedness of your mother's sister**, for she is your mother's relative. You shall not uncover the nakedness of **your father's brother**, that is, you shall not approach **his wife**; she is your aunt.

<sup>193</sup> V.P. Hamilton, TWOT article 2381 page 921

<sup>194</sup> See Leviticus 6:14-19, 7:1-10

You shall not uncover **the nakedness of your daughter-in-law**; she is your son's wife, you shall not uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover **the nakedness of your brother's wife**; it is your brother's nakedness.

You shall not uncover **the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter**, and you shall not take **her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness**; they are relatives; it is depravity. And you shall not take **a woman as a rival wife to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive**. (Leviticus 18:6-18 ESV)

The phrase "**uncover nakedness**" uses the noun עֶרְוָה - 'er'wah, "nakedness",<sup>195</sup> with various forms of the verb גָּלָה - galah, "uncover", "remove",<sup>196</sup> "... in the Piel stem it always denotes 'to uncover' something which is normally concealed. ... **it is used most frequently in this stem for designating proscribed sexual activity**."<sup>197</sup>

**In all of these proscriptions, the object is always a woman. The subject is always a man** – married or single. **The object woman is assumed to be uncommitted, either single, divorced, or widowed** – if she were married or betrothed, the death penalty would automatically apply.

**The immediate family of the subject man** is covered by:

- the nakedness of your mother
- the nakedness of your sister
- the nakedness of your father's wife
- the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter

**Aunts** are covered by:

- the nakedness of your father's sister
- the nakedness of your mother's sister
- your father's brother... his wife

**Grandchildren** are covered by, (note that this implies the subject man is either currently married or is a widower):

- the nakedness of your son's daughter
- your daughter's daughter

**In-laws** are covered by:

- the nakedness of your daughter-in-law
- the nakedness of your brother's wife

**Two women from the same family** are covered by, (note the proscription is NOT against two wives, but only two women from the same family):

- the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter
- take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness
- take a woman as a rival wife to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive

In Leviticus chapter twenty, judgements are provided for some of the foregoing proscriptions. Some incur the death penalty:

If **a man lies with his father's wife**, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; **both of them shall surely be put to death**; their blood is upon them. If **a man lies with his daughter-in-law**, **both of them shall surely be put to death**; they have committed perversion; their blood is upon them. ... If **a man takes a woman and her mother** also, it is depravity; he and **they shall be burned with fire**, that there may be no depravity among you. (Leviticus 20:11-12, 14 ESV)

**The censure of adultery is always from the man's perspective. A man commits adultery with a married or betrothed woman. A woman commits adultery if she is married or betrothed.** An uncommitted woman who has sex with a man would normally be expected to enter his household either as a wife or a concubine. An uncommitted woman who has sex with more than one man becomes a "**harlot**" or a "**whore**". If she charges for her services, she is a "**prostitute**".

<sup>195</sup> TWOT article 1692 page 695

<sup>196</sup> TWOT article 350 page 160

<sup>197</sup> B.K. Walke, *ibid.*, pages 160-161

The Hebrew words for “whore” or “prostitute” are from the root זָנָה - *zanah*. **“The basic idea of the word is ‘to commit illicit intercourse’ (especially of women)”**.<sup>198</sup> The most important derivative nouns are זֹנָה - *zonah*, feminine singular; זָנוֹת - *z<sup>e</sup>nuth*, feminine plural; and, זָנוּנִים - *z<sup>e</sup>nunim*, masculine plural. The equivalent Greek word group is based on πόρνῃ - *pornē*, from πέρνημι - *pernēmi*, “to sell, especially of slaves, means literally ‘**harlot for hire**’, ‘**prostitute**’”.<sup>199</sup> In the Septuagint, πορνεύω - *porneyo* is normally used for *zanah*. Both *zanah* and *pornē* / *porneyo* are used metaphorically for “spiritual whoredom”. This is discussed in section **6. Spiritual Whoredom**.

The first instance of *zonah* is in the humiliation of Dinah. Clearly the brothers considered it made her to be a *zonah* for Dinah to participate in sex before she was married:

Now **Dinah** the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the women of the land. And when **Shechem the son of Hamor** the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, **he seized her and lay (shakav) with her and humiliated her**. ... two of the sons of Jacob, **Simeon and Levi**, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and **came against the city** while it felt secure and **killed all the males**. ... But they said, **“Should he treat our sister like a [whore] (zonah)?”** (Genesis 34:1-2, 25b, 31 ESV)

If a woman was presented in marriage as a virgin, and she was in fact not a virgin, **“zanah” was a capital offence**:

**If any man takes a wife** and goes in to her and then hates her and accuses her of misconduct and brings a bad name upon her, saying, ‘I took this woman, and when I came near her, **I did not find in her evidence of virginity**’ ... But **if the thing is true**, that evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman, then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father’s house, and **the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones**, because she has done an outrageous thing in Israel by **whoring (zanah) in her father’s house**. (Deuteronomy 22:13-14, 20-21a ESV)

Similarly, **a daughter of a priest who participates in zanah is executed**:

And the daughter of any priest, **if she profanes herself by whoring (zanah)**, profanes her father; **she shall be burned with fire**. (Leviticus 21:9 ESV)

**Women who fell into prostitution were not subject to any penalties**, although there was certainly stigma attached to the profession. In the following citation, **the woman presents herself as a “prostitute” and negotiates the price for her services**:

When Judah saw her, **he thought she was a prostitute (zonah), for she had covered her face**. He turned to her at the roadside and said, “Come, let me come in to you,” for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. **She said, “What will you give me**, that you may come in to me?” (Genesis 38:15-16)

Fees for prostitution were considered “dirty money”:

**You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute (zonah)** ... into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow ... (Deuteronomy 23:18 ESV)

Forcing a daughter into “prostitution” was proscribed:

**Do not profane your daughter by making her a prostitute (zanah)**, lest the land fall into prostitution (zanah) and the land become full of depravity. (Leviticus 19:29 ESV)

Priests were prohibited from marrying a woman who had been a “prostitute”:

And the LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the **priests**, the sons of Aaron, and say to them ... They **shall not marry a prostitute (zonah)** or a woman who has been defiled ... (Leviticus 21:1a, 7a ESV)

**A distinct pair of words is used for cult prostitution**, קִדְשָׁה - *q<sup>e</sup>deshah*, **“female cult prostitute”**; and, קִדְשָׁה - *qadesh*, **“male cult prostitute”**. Cult prostitution was emphatically proscribed:

**None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute (q<sup>e</sup>deshah)**, and **none of the sons of Israel shall be a cult prostitute (qadesh)**. (Deuteronomy 23:17 ESV)

**Other forms of aberrant sexual activity** are also proscribed:

**Whoever lies with an animal shall be put to death**. (Exodus 22:19 ESV)

And **you shall not lie with any animal** and so make yourself unclean with it, **neither shall any woman give herself to an animal** to lie with it: it is perversion. ... **If a man lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death**, and you shall **kill the animal**. **If a woman approaches any animal and lies with it**, you shall **kill**

<sup>198</sup> L.J. Wood, TWOT article 563 page 246

<sup>199</sup> TDNT VI pages 579-595

**the woman and the animal;** they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.  
(Leviticus 18:23, 20:15-16 ESV)

**You shall not lie with a male as with a woman;** it is an abomination. ... If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; **they shall surely be put to death;** their blood is upon them. (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, ESV)

**The Wisdom Literature does indicate that a stigma became associated with the use of whores and prostitutes.** Two new words are used in the Book of Proverbs related to sexual immorality:

- The Hebrew word זָרָה - zarah, a feminine adjective, means “forbidden” or “strange”.<sup>200</sup>
- The Hebrew word נִנְקָרִיָּה - nnak<sup>e</sup>riyah, a feminine adjective, means “foreign one”.<sup>201</sup>

The Proverbs use these words to identify a “**loose woman**” – a prostitute, a whore, or an adulteress.

The following citations could apply to either a “prostitute” or a “whore”:

**So you will be delivered from the forbidden (zarah) woman (‘ishshah), from the [foreign one] (nnak<sup>e</sup>riyah) 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 to the departed;  
**none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life.** (Proverbs 2:16-19 ESV)

**For the lips of a forbidden woman (zarah) drip honey,** and her speech is smoother than oil,  
but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

**Her feet go down to death;** her steps follow the path to Sheol;  
**she does not ponder the path of life;** her ways wander, and she does not know it.

**Drink water from your own cistern,** flowing water from your own well.

Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets?

Let them be for yourself alone, **and not for strangers (zarim)<sup>202</sup> with you.**

Let your fountain be blessed, and **rejoice in the wife of your youth,** a lovely deer, a graceful doe.

Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; **be intoxicated always in her love.**

**Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman (zarah) and embrace the bosom of a [foreign one] (nnak<sup>e</sup>riyah)?** (Proverbs 5:3-6, 15-20 ESV)

**The mouth of forbidden women (zarah) is a deep pit;** he with whom the LORD is angry will fall into it.  
(Proverbs 22:14 ESV)<sup>203</sup>

The following citations relate explicitly to a woman who is a prostitute:

For **a prostitute (zonah) is a deep pit; a [foreign one] (nnak<sup>e</sup>riyah) is a narrow well.**

She lies in wait like a robber and increases the traitors among mankind.

... **a companion of prostitutes (zonah) squanders his wealth.**

(Proverbs 23:27-28, 29:3b ESV)

**The following citation relates “loose women” in general with actual adultery.** In Old Testament times, a man could take a “loose woman” into his household; and thus, the use of such a woman was as situation from which a man could recover, **“the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread”**. But, actual adultery brings on the death penalty:

For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,

**to preserve you from the evil (ra<sup>204</sup>) woman (‘ishshah),**

**from the smooth tongue of the [foreign one] (nnak<sup>e</sup>riyah).**

Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;

for **the price of a prostitute (‘ishshah zonah) is only a loaf of bread,**

but **a married woman (‘ishshah ‘ish) hunts down a precious life.**

(Proverbs 6:23-26 ESV see also 6:29-32, 7:4-23, 30:20)

**Consistent with the world around, in the Old Testament, adultery only occurred with a married or betrothed woman. The marital status of the man was irrelevant. Whores and prostitutes existed and were tolerated.** A man did NOT commit adultery by the use of a whore or a prostitute regardless of his marital status; but, such use of women was greatly stigmatized in the Wisdom Literature.

<sup>200</sup> See BDB page 266, and [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org) Hebrew Word Detail

<sup>201</sup> See Holladay page 239, and [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org) Hebrew Word Detail

<sup>202</sup> Hebrew זָרִים - zarim, masculine plural of zarah. The implication is that sexual immorality will result in “others” taking the wife of the subject.

<sup>203</sup> See also Proverbs 9:13-18, zarah is NOT used, but “folly” is personified as a “loose woman”.

<sup>204</sup> The Hebrew word רָע - ra<sup>204</sup> is the normal word for “evil”, “bad”, “objectionable”; see Holladay page 341.



### 5.8.3 Jesus' Teaching on Adultery

As discussed in section [5.5.3 Jesus' Teaching on Marriage](#), the seminal scriptures on Jesus' teaching on adultery are recorded by Mark and Matthew:

And **Pharisees came up and in order to test him** asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ... And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. And he said to them, "**Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery** against her, and **if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.**" (Mark 10:2, 10-12 ESV)

And **Pharisees came up to him and tested him** by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" ... And I say to you: **whoever divorces his wife**, except for sexual immorality, and **marries another, commits adultery.**"

The disciples said to him, "**If such is the case of a man with his wife**, it is better not to marry."

But he said to them, "**Not everyone can receive this saying**, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. **Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.**" (Matthew 19:3-12 ESV)

In Luke's unique material, which Robertson places during the Later Perean Ministry,<sup>205</sup> **Luke reports a similar saying of Jesus**. It is not possible to determine whether this is Luke's topical placement of one the other reported sayings or if Jesus repeated this brief saying:

**Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.** (Luke 16:18 ESV)

In these sayings of Jesus, **he clearly reverses the emphasis on divorce**. Jesus put the emphasis on the man, it is the man who is married and divorces his wife, and then remarries. The status of the new woman is irrelevant. **The adultery is the sin of the man** – he is married, divorces his wife, and marries another woman. The implication is that he has one wife (required by Jesus' teaching on marriage), divorces her for some reason other than "sexual immorality", and marries another woman. **This is a complete reversal of the understanding of divorce in the ancient world.**<sup>206</sup>

In Matthew's record, it is clear that the disciples understood the radical nature of Jesus' teaching: "**If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.**" Jesus then clearly states that this pure teaching of his was not for everyone, "**Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given.**" Again, **the highest standard is to be applied carefully** – "only those to whom it is given". Jesus' intentions clearly include True Worshipper, those called to be Christians. Jesus then uses **the metaphor of being a eunuch** to make the point that under some circumstances, it is better for a person to remain in an unmarried state. Even True Christians may be in a state where compliance with the highest standard is NOT possible: "**Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.**"<sup>207</sup>

Jesus had previously made the emphasis on the man's role even more pointed in the Sermon the Mount:

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.** (Matthew 5:27-28 ESV)

Jesus' teaching does NOT absolve a woman's role in adultery. **During the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew reports another saying of Jesus:**

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.** (Matthew 5:31-32 ESV)

**Here the emphasis is on the woman. She is divorced from her husband for an invalid reason**, if she marries again, or engages in sex with a man, she commits adultery. If a man marries a woman who has been divorced, the man commits adultery because the woman was married, and the divorce is invalid. Mark and Luke also included the case of the responsibility of the woman: **Mark, "if she divorces her**

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<sup>205</sup> See Robertson page 131 and 136

<sup>206</sup> Note that some Greek reformers had attempted to enforce this definition of adultery, see TDNT VI, page 583. Also, Jeremiah hints at higher understanding of adultery in 5:7 and 9:2; as does Hosea in 3:3 and 4:14.

<sup>207</sup> See the discussion in section [5.7.4 UCGIA Policy on Divorce](#).

husband and marries another, she commits adultery"; and Luke, "he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery".

**The case of a woman legitimately divorced is NOT covered.** The reciprocal nature of Jesus' teaching clearly implies that "sexual immorality" works both ways: **a woman whose husband engages in "sexual immorality" has legitimate grounds to divorce him**. What becomes of these people? Jesus' handling of the **"woman caught in adultery"** gives the answer:

They went each to his own house, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. **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],<sup>208</sup> **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 7:53, 8:1-11 ESV)<sup>209</sup>

This is clearly a situation of **"those unable to received Jesus' pure teaching"**. The two big questions in this incident are:

- Where was the man?
- What did Jesus write?

**The absence of the man strongly suggest that the woman was setup.** By the Pharisees conception of "adultery", she had to be married or betrothed, which implies she was either seduced or forced into sex so that she could be apprehended. **The "man", who should also have been put to death,** having been part of the plot was allowed to slip away. Jesus perceiving their plot perhaps wrote on the ground some details of its arrangement. The arrangers, recognizing that they were found out **"went away one by one"**. The important thing is **Jesus' treatment of the woman.** She was a sinner – as are all human beings.<sup>210</sup> Jesus came to propitiate sin. **He immediately extended mercy to the woman and told her to repent.** God's love for all human beings<sup>211</sup> implies that **all sins can be repented of.** People who find themselves in an untenable position can have the slate wiped clean and can move on in **"newness of life"**.<sup>212</sup>

**Jesus teaching on adultery is a complete reversal of the normal understanding of adultery in the world at that time and from time immemorial.** The traditional understanding of adultery applied only if the object woman was married or betrothed. By the traditional understanding, sex with an "uncommitted woman" was never an issue. By the traditional understanding, a woman, divorced for any reason, was considered "uncommitted". **Jesus places both men and women on an equal footing.** **Any sexual activity between a married person and a person other than the spouse is adultery.** Casual divorce does NOT release a person from a marriage; if such a person engages in sexual activity it is adultery. **Adultery is a sin, and as such with all sins, it can be repented of.**

## 5.9 Levirate Marriage

The purpose of a "levirate marriage" was to ensure that a man had descendants to carry on his name and to inherit his property. If a man died without a "male" heir, his wife would marry his brother and the first son produced would belong to the deceased. The root יָבַם - yavam, "consumate the marriage

<sup>208</sup> This clearly demonstrates the Pharisee's confusion: the proscriptions against adultery in the Writings of Moses require the death penalty; it was the Pharisee's interpretation that required "stoning".

<sup>209</sup> There is considerable confusion in the early manuscripts as to the provenance and placement of this material. However, most commentators agree that the incident is legitimate. See Metzger pages 219-222 and Guthrie pages 315-316.

<sup>210</sup> See Romans 3:23

<sup>211</sup> See John 3:16

<sup>212</sup> See Romans 6:4

of a brother-in-law”, is a technical term for the Levirate marriage.<sup>213</sup> There are two derivative nouns, יָבָם - yavam, “brother of deceased husband”, and יְבֵמָה - y<sup>e</sup>vamah, “brother’s widow”.<sup>214</sup> It was a great shame for a brother to refuse to perform the service.

The seminal scripture on levirate marriage is from Deuteronomy:<sup>215</sup>

**If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife (‘ishshah) of the dead man shall not be married (‘ish) outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother (yavam) shall go in to her and take her as his wife (‘ishshah) and perform the duty (yavam) of a husband’s brother to her.**

And **the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother**, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

And **if the man (‘ish) does not wish to take his brother’s wife (y<sup>e</sup>vamah)**, then his brother’s wife (y<sup>e</sup>vamah) shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, ‘My husband’s brother (yavam) refuses to perpetuate his brother’s name in Israel; he will not perform the duty (yavam) of a husband’s brother to me.’

Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, ‘I do not wish to take her,’ then his brother’s wife (y<sup>e</sup>vamah) shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, **‘So shall it be done to the man (‘ish) who does not build up his brother’s house.’** And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.’ (Deuteronomy 25:5-10 ESV)

**There is no consideration of the status of the brother** – he may be single or married. **If “married”, his brother’s wife becomes a secondary wife.** This is exemplified in the **Book of Ruth. Boaz was an older man, almost certainly with grown children – his marital status is never considered.** Ruth was considered a “young woman” – **Boaz’s first reaction to her was to consider her a “daughter”:**

Then **Boaz said** to his young man who was in charge of the reapers, **“Whose young woman is this?”** And the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, “She is the young Moabite woman, who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves after the reapers.’ So she came, and she has continued from early morning until now, except for a short rest.” Then **Boaz said to Ruth, “Now, listen, my daughter,** do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. (Ruth 2:5-8 ESV)

When it was clear that Naomi and Ruth were requesting Boaz to perform the levirate function, Boaz’s first reaction was that there was another more qualified. The other “redeemer” refused to perform the levirate service, and the rest is history:

He said, **“Who are you?”** And she answered, **“I am Ruth, your servant.** Spread your wings over your servant, for **you are a redeemer.**” And he said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that **you have not gone after young men**, whether poor or rich. And **now, my daughter,** do not fear. **I will do for you all that you ask,** for all my fellow townsmen know that you are a worthy woman. And now it is true that I am a redeemer. **Yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.** (Ruth 3:9-12 ESV)

The Sadducees could not envision a woman in any status other than subordinate to a man. They did NOT hold to the concept of the resurrection, so devised, what they felt was, a sure-fire conundrum by which they could trap Jesus:

And **Sadducees** came to him, **who say that there is no resurrection.** And they asked him a question, saying, “Teacher, **Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.** There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring. **Last of all the woman also died.**

**“In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be?”** For the seven had her as wife.” Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? For **when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage,** but are like angels in heaven. ...” (Mark 12:18-25 ESV // Matthew 22:23-30, Luke 20:27-36)

<sup>213</sup> See Holliday page 126

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> The practice was ancient and well known before the time of Moses, see Genesis 38:6-9. The only other instance of the technical terms is in Ruth 1:15.

Marriage is a physical thing, for human beings. Marriage does NOT persist into eternal life, but that does NOT preclude **the continuance of a relationship built-up by a marriage:**

Likewise, **husbands**, live with your wives in an understanding way, **showing honor to the woman** as the weaker vessel, since **they are heirs with you of the grace of life** ... (1 Peter 3:7 ESV)

**The socio-economic environment of the ancient world required the levirate marriage** – it was necessary for a man to have a male heir. **The practice was predicated upon the fact that a man could maintain more than one wife.** **Jesus’ teaching on marriage makes the practice of levirate marriage impossible.** It is therefore, included, with the sacrificial system, as an aspect of Old Testament teaching which has become obsolete and is obviated.

### 5.10 Polygamy

**Jesus’ teaching on marriage is simple and clear:** marriage is a committed relationship between one man and one woman, for life. This was discussed in section **5.5.3 Jesus’ Teaching on Marriage**. However, **for the majority of human history, this has NOT been understood or practiced.** Even by the middle of the first century, after the teaching of Jesus’ had been available through the Church for twenty odd years, **Paul had to make it explicit that those in Church offices could be married to only one wife:**

Therefore **an overseer** must be above reproach, **the husband of one wife** ...

Let **deacons** each be **the husband of one wife** ... (1 Timothy 3:2a, 12a ESV)

... appoint **elders** in every town as I directed you—if anyone is above reproach, **the husband of one wife** ... (Titus 1:6 ESV)

**Presumably, there were Church members who had more than one wife.** As discussed in the previous section, the provision for **Levirate Marriage** implied that a man may have more than one wife. In the **Writings of Moses**, the **provision for the inheritance of the Firstborn** is **explicit that a man has two wives:**

**If a man (‘ish) has two wives (‘ishshah), the one loved and the other unloved,** and both the loved and the unloved have borne him children, and **if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved,** then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, **he may not treat the son of the loved as the firstborn** in preference to the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn, but he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the firstfruits of his strength. The right of the firstborn is his. (Deuteronomy 21:15-17 ESV)

**Implicit in this provision, is that “polygamy” leads to family difficulties, “the one loved and the other unloved”.** This was already discussed concerning Jacob with Rachel and Leah in section **3.2 Jacob**.

Other examples include **Elkanah** and **Josiah**:

There was a certain man (‘ish) of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was **Elkanah** the son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, can Ephrathite. **He had two wives (‘ishshah).** The name of the one was **Hannah**, and the name of the other, **Peninnah**. And **Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.**

Now **this man (‘ish) used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts** at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, **he would give portions to Peninnah** his wife (‘ishshah) and to all her sons and daughters. But **to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her,** though the LORD had closed her womb. And **her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her,** because the LORD had closed her womb. (1 Samuel 1:1-6 ESV)

**Josiah** was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem . His mother’s name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. And **he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father,** and **he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.**

Now **the rest of the acts of Josiah** and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him, and Pharaoh **Neco killed him at Megiddo,** as soon as he saw him. And his servants carried him dead in a chariot from Megiddo and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb.

And **the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah,** and anointed him, and made him king in his father’s place. Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. **His mother’s name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.**

And Pharaoh Neco put [Jehoahaz] in bonds at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and laid on the land a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. And **Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim.** But he took Jehoahaz away, and he came to Egypt and died there.

**Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign,** and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. **His mother's name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.**

(2 Kings 22:1-2, 23:28-30, 33-34, 36 ESV)

Both of these men were True Worshipers of God. **Elkanah “used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to YHWH”.** **Josiah “did what was right in the eyes of YHWH”.** Neither is censured for having two wives. But, clearly Ekanah's home was NOT all happy, **“her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her”.** **Josiah clearly had little influence on his sons Jehoahaz and Eliakim,** presumably their education was controlled by their mothers, they were among Israel's worst kings:

And **[Jehoahaz] did what was evil in the sight of the LORD,** according to all that his fathers had done.

And **[Eliakim] did what was evil in the sight of the LORD,** according to all that his fathers had done.

(2 Kings 23:32, 37 ESV)

**The maintenance of multiple wives was clearly tolerated in the Old Testament.** But, Jesus' teaching on marriage clearly indicates that this was NOT God's intention from the beginning, and it is NOT acceptable for True Worshipers under the New Covenant. The teaching of the apostles discussed in section **5.5.4 The Apostles' Teaching on Marriage,** makes clear that **the true purpose of marriage can only be attained through a life-long relationship of one man with one woman.**

### 5.11 Concubinage

**In the ancient world, it was necessary for a woman to be associated with the household of a man,** otherwise, she would have no means of support. Not every man could support more than one woman, and since men were generally fewer than woman due to military conscription, it was necessary for those who could, to support many women. **Abraham's concubines** have been discussed in section **3.1 Abraham,** and **David's concubines** have been discussed in section **3.5 David.**

The Hebrew word for “concubine” is פִּלְגֶּשֶׁת - pilegesh.<sup>216</sup> From the Genesis narratives, it clear that concubines were common in patriarchal times; and, also through the period of the Judges.<sup>217</sup> King Saul also kept concubines.<sup>218</sup>

The only explicit provision regarding concubinage is in Exodus chapter twenty-one, the Covenant Code. This was discussed under “clauses 4 through 7” in section **5.2.2 Slavery in the Old Testament.**

**Clearly, Jesus' teaching on marriage and adultery precludes any form of concubinage.** For most of human history, it has been part of the “human condition”. Of True Worshipers living under the New Covenant, a higher standard is required.

## 6. Spiritual Whoredom

**From God's earliest dealings with the nation of Israel, God has used sexual immorality as a metaphor for spiritual infidelity.** This metaphor takes the most fundamental, and most important human relationship, and uses it to teach True Worshipers about the relationship God requires with each called person. Throughout history very few human beings have had the privilege of understanding this relationship. **Jesus' teaching on marriage, divorce, and adultery makes plain God's intentions for the relationship.** The entire revelation throughout the Bible of God's love allows us to know God the Father and Jesus Christ, our elder brother, Saviour, and soon coming King. **The most fundamental character attribute of the divine nature is “love”:**

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

<sup>216</sup> See Holliday page 292

<sup>217</sup> See Genesis 22:24, 25:6, 35:22, 36:12, Judges 8:31, 19:1ff, 20:4-6, see also 1 Chronicles 2:46,48, 7:14, 2 Chronicles 11:21

<sup>218</sup> See 2 Samuel 3:7, 21:11

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. (1 John 4:7-10 ESV)

**The word which embodies God's nature of "love" is *hesed*:** God's unfailing commitment to accomplish his side of the relationship. God requires True Worshipers to understand *hesed*, and to allow the Holy Spirit to make it part the nature of each True Worshiper.<sup>219</sup> **The metaphor of "spiritual whoredom" is essential to learning this.** True and unfailing fidelity to the family relationship is required by God of anyone to be admitted to the Family of God. As human beings we can learn a lot about this relationship from our physical marriage.

## 6.1 Spiritual Whoredom in the Old Testament

**The metaphor of spiritual whoredom is established in the Writings of Moses:**

**Take care**, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, **lest it become a snare** in your midst. You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim (for **you shall worship no other god**, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), **lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land**, and **when they whore (zanah) after their gods and sacrifice to their gods** and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of their daughters for your sons, and **their daughters whore (zanah) after their gods** and **make your sons whore (zanah) after their gods**. (Exodus 34:12-16 ESV)

So they shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to **goat demons, after whom they whore (zanah)**.

**I will set my face against that man** and against his clan and will cut them off from among their people, him **and all who follow him in whoring (zanah) after Molech**.

If a person turns to **mediums and necromancers, whoring (zanah) after them**, I will set my face against that person and will cut him off from among his people. (Leviticus 17:7, 20:5-6 ESV)

... **remember all the commandments of the LORD**, to do them, **not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore (zanah) after**.

While Israel lived in Shittim, **the people began to whore (zanah) 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**. (Numbers 15:39b, 25:1-2 ESV)

And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then **this people will rise and whore (zanah) after the foreign gods** among them **in the land that they are entering**, and **they will forsake me and break my covenant** that I have made with them. (Deuteronomy 31:16 ESV)

**The characteristics of "spiritual whoredom" include:**

- It is enticing and alluring, "take care", "lest it become a snare"
- It can be triggered by association, "with the inhabitants of the land", "you are invited, you eat"
- It involves participation, "they whore after their gods", "and make your sons whore", "whore with the daughters of Moab", "the people ate and bowed down"
- The object is: "other gods", "demons", "Molech", "mediums and necromancers"
- It is a violation of the covenant, "forsake me and break my covenant"
- Avoidance requires: "remember all the commandments of YHWH, to do them"
- **The root cause is pride and arrogance**, "follow after your own heart and your own eyes"

The metaphor continued be used in later writings.<sup>220</sup> Here are a couple of significant examples of the metaphor occurring in later writings: in Judges chapter eight, the object of "whoredom" is a physical item manufactured by Gideon; in Psalm seventy-three, *zanah* is translated by "unfaithful":

Then **the men of Israel said to Gideon**, "Rule over us, you and your son and your grandson also, for you have saved us from the hand of Midian." Gideon said to them, "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the LORD will rule over you."

And **Gideon said to them**, "Let me make a request of you: every one of you **give me the earrings from his spoil**. ... And **Gideon made an ephod** of it and put it in his city, in Ophrah. And **all Israel whored (zanah) after it** there, and **it became a snare to Gideon and to his family**.

(Judges 8:22-24a, 27 ESV see also 2 Kings 18:1-4, Numbers 21:4-9)

For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;

**you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful (zanah) to you**. (Psalm 73:27 ESV see also Judges 19:2)

<sup>219</sup> For a detailed discussion of *hesed*, see *Excursus 2 – hesed* in the paper "Covenants of Grace" located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>220</sup> See Judges 2:17, 8:33, 1 Chronicles 5:25, 2 Chronicles 21: 11,13, Psalm 106:34-39



## **The metaphor is used extensively by the prophets:**

**How the faithful city has become a whore (zonah) ...**

... it will happen to Tyre as in **the song of the prostitute (zonah):**

**"Take a harp; go about the city, O forgotten prostitute (zonah)!"**

But you, draw near, **sons of the sorceress, offspring of the adulterer (na'aph) and the loose woman (zanah).**

Where is **your mother's certificate of divorce (k'rithuth)** with which I sent her away?

(Isaiah 1:21, 23:15b-16a, 57:3, 50:1 ESV)

Yes, on every high hill and under every green tree **you bowed down like a whore (zonah).**

If a man divorces (shalah) his wife and she goes from him

and becomes another man's wife, will he return to her?

Would not that land be greatly polluted?

**You have played the whore (zanah) with many lovers;** and would you return to me? declares the LORD.

Lift up your eyes to the bare heights, and see! **Where have you not been ravished?**

By the waysides **you have sat awaiting lovers** like an Arab in the wilderness.

**You have polluted the land with your vile whoredom (z'nuth).**

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 (zanah)?** 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 (na'aph) of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce (k'rithuth).** Yet her treacherous sister **Judah** did not fear, but she too **went and played the whore (zanah).** Because **she took her whoredom (z'nuth) lightly,** she polluted the land, **committing adultery (na'aph) with stone and tree.** (Jeremiah 2:20b, 3:1-2, 6b-9 ESV)

... then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, how **I have been broken over their whoring (zanah) heart** that has departed from me and **over their eyes that go whoring (zanah) after their idols.**

Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and **go whoring (zanah) after their detestable things?** (Ezekiel 6:9a, 20:30b ESV)

All her carved images shall be beaten to pieces,

**all her wages** shall be burned with fire, and all her idols I will lay waste,

for **from the fee of a prostitute (zonah) she gathered them,**

and **to the fee of a prostitute (zonah) they shall return.** (Micah 1:7 ESV)

And all for **the countless whorings (z'nunim) of the prostitute (zonah),** graceful and of deadly charms, who **betrays nations with her whorings (z'nunim),** and peoples with her charms. (Nahum 3:4 ESV)

**The Book of Ezekiel contains two extended allegories outlining the sins of Israel.** In Ezekiel chapter sixteen, Israel is portrayed as an abandoned child which is rescued by YHWH. She grows up and becomes YHWH's wife. As his wife, Israel became vain and arrogant and proved unfaithful:

And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord GOD. But **you trusted in your beauty and played the whore (zanah)** because of your renown and **lavished your whorings (taz'nuth)<sup>221</sup> on any passerby;** your beauty became his.

**How sick is your heart,** declares the Lord GOD, because you did all these things, **the deeds of a brazen prostitute ('ishshah zonah) ... Therefore, O prostitute (zonah), hear the word of the LORD:** Thus says the Lord GOD, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered **in your whorings (taz'nuth) with your lovers,** and **with all your abominable idols ... And I will judge you as women who commit adultery (na'aph) and shed blood are judged,** and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy. (Ezekiel 16:14-15, 30, 35-36a, 38 ESV)

In Ezekiel chapter twenty-three, North Israel and South Israel are portrayed as two sisters who became whores at an early age. YHWH took them in, but their whoredoms continued with the younger eventually become the more perverse:

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, there were **two women,** the **daughters of one mother.** They **played the whore (zanah) in Egypt;** they **played the whore (zanah) in their youth;** there their breasts were pressed and their virgin bosoms handled. **Oholah was the name of the elder** and **Oholibah the name of her sister.** **They became mine,**<sup>222</sup> and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, **Oholah is Samaria,** and **Oholibah is Jerusalem.** **Oholah played the whore (zanah) while she was mine,** and she lusted after her lovers ...

<sup>221</sup> "taz'nuth" is a derivative noun of *zanah* which is used only in Ezekiel 16 and 23.

<sup>222</sup> Note this implies a "sexual" relationship, metaphorically, between YHWH and both sisters.

"Her sister **Oholibah** saw this, and she **became more corrupt than her sister** in her lust and **in her whoring (taz<sup>e</sup>nuth)**, which was worse than that of her sister. ... Yet **she increased her whoring (taz<sup>e</sup>nuth), remembering** the days of her youth, **when she played the whore (zanah) in the land of Egypt** and lusted after her lovers there ..."

The LORD said to me: "Son of man, will you **judge Oholah and Oholibah**? Declare to them their abominations. For **they have committed adultery (na<sup>a</sup>aph)**, and blood is on their hands. **With their idols they have committed adultery (na<sup>a</sup>aph)**, 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**. (Ezekiel 23:1-5a, 11, 19-20a, 36-38 ESV)

**The major theme of the Book of Hosea is spiritual whoredom.** Hosea's family life is used as a metaphor for the sins of Israel. The sins of Israel are explicated with reference to the metaphor. Ultimately the fidelity of New Israel in the World Tomorrow is prophesized:

When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, **the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom (z<sup>e</sup>nunim) and have children of whoredom (z<sup>e</sup>nunim), for the land commits great whoredom (zanah) by forsaking the LORD."**

She conceived again and bore **a daughter**. And the LORD said to him, **"Call her name No Mercy**, for I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all. ... When she had weaned No Mercy, she conceived and bore **a son**. And the LORD said, **"Call his name Not My People**, for you are not my people, and I am not your God."

Plead with your mother, plead—for she is not my wife,  
and I am not her husband—that **she put away her whoring (z<sup>e</sup>nunim)** from her face,  
**and her adultery (na<sup>a</sup>aph)** from between her breasts;

Upon her children also I will have **no mercy**, because **they are children of whoredom (z<sup>e</sup>nunim)**.  
For **their mother has played the whore (zanah)**; she who conceived them has acted shamefully.  
For she said, 'I will go after my lovers ...' (Hosea 1:2, 6, 8-9, 2:2, 4-5a ESV)

**Hosea summarizes the sin of Israel as "whoredom":**

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.

They shall eat, but not be satisfied; **they shall play the whore (zanah)**, but not multiply,  
because they have forsaken the LORD **to cherish whoredom (z<sup>e</sup>nuth)**, wine, and new wine,  
which take away the understanding.

My people inquire of a piece of wood, and their walking staff gives them oracles.

For **a spirit of whoredom (z<sup>e</sup>nunim) has led them astray**,

and **they have left their God to play the whore (zanah)**.

They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains and burn offerings on the hills,  
under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good.

Therefore **your daughters play the whore (zanah)**, and **your brides commit adultery (na<sup>a</sup>aph)**.

I will not punish your daughters **when they play the whore (zanah)**,

nor your brides **when they commit adultery (na<sup>a</sup>aph)**;

for **the men themselves go aside with prostitutes (zonah)** and **sacrifice with cult prostitutes (qadesh)**,  
and a people without understanding shall come to ruin.

Though **you play the whore (zanah), O Israel**, let not Judah become guilty.

Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone.

When their drink is gone, **they give themselves to whoring (zanah)**; their rulers dearly love shame.

A wind has wrapped them in its wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

(Hosea 4:7-15a, 17-19 ESV)

I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from me;

for now, O Ephraim, **you have played the whore (zanah)**; Israel is defiled.

Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God.

For **the spirit of whoredom (z<sup>e</sup>nunim) is within them**, and they know not the LORD.

**The pride of Israel testifies to his face**;

In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing;

**Ephraim's whoredom (z<sup>e</sup>nuth) is there**; Israel is defiled.

Rejoice not, O Israel!

Exult not like the peoples; for **you have played the whore (zanah)**, forsaking your God.

**You have loved a prostitute's wages ('eth<sup>n</sup>an)<sup>223</sup>** on all threshing floors.  
(Hosea 5:3-5a, 6:10, 9:1 ESV)

Extending the metaphor, Hosea does redeem his wife, as God will do with the New Israel in the World Tomorrow. **This typifies the spiritual fidelity available only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:** And **the LORD said to me, "Go again, love a woman** who is loved by another man and is an adulteress (na'aph), **even as the LORD loves the children of Israel,** though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins."

**So I bought her** for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a lethech of barley. And I said to her, "**You must dwell as mine for many days. You shall not play the whore (zanah),** or belong to another man; so will I also be to you."

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 the LORD their God,** and David their king, and **they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.**  
(Hosea 3:1-5 ESV)

**Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,** for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him,

**Take away all iniquity;** accept what is good,  
and we will pay with bulls the vows of our lips.

**I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely,** for my anger has turned from them.

I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily;  
he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out;  
his beauty shall be alike the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon.

**They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow;**

they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine;  
their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

**Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;** whoever is discerning, let him know them;  
for **the ways of the LORD are right,** and the upright walk in them,  
but transgressors stumble in them. (Hosea 14:1-2, 4-7, 9 ESV)

**The people of ancient Israel fell captive to the world around them quickly and frequently.** God dealt patiently with the nation, repeatedly trying to teach the people to live by the Way of God. Only those people who God specifically called, worked with, and were given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit truly understood. **We have their teaching in the Old Testament. This is an object lesson for all people for all time.** Israel was given every opportunity to succeed. **They failed, because as human beings they were susceptible to the "human condition".** This is Satan's world; without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit a human being cannot resist the temptations of Satan the Devil.

## 6.2 Spiritual Fidelity in the New Testament

Ancient Israel repeatedly fell into idolatry because of the overpowering influence of the world around them, Satan's world. **This was the "human condition".** From the beginning, God was prepared for this eventuality:

And **the LORD said to Moses,** "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then **this people will rise and whore (zanah) after the foreign gods** among them in the land that they are entering, and **they will forsake me and break my covenant** that I have made with them. Then **my anger will be kindled** against them in that day, and **I will forsake them** and hide my face from them, and they will be devoured. And many evils and troubles will come upon them, **so that they will say** in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?' And **I will surely hide my face** in that day because of all the evil that they have done, **because they have turned to other gods.** (Deuteronomy 31:16-18 ESV)

**The people, the nation as a whole, could NOT obey God because the vast majority did NOT have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.** The most important reason for the First Advent was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as a propitiation for sin. Under the New Covenant, **only through the calling of God** and subsequent repentance, and acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice, can a person be given the gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:

**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**

<sup>223</sup> See Deuteronomy 23:18, Ezekiel 16:31,34, 41, Micah 1:7  
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**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**. (Romans 8:9-11 ESV)

**A second reason for the First Advent was to create the Church of God**. The Church is a spiritual organism comprised of those **called-out individuals** to whom God has given the gift of the Holy Spirit. The main Greek words related to “calling” are:

- προσκαλέομαι - proskaleomai, a verb, which means “to call to oneself”, “to summon”<sup>224</sup>
- κλήσις - klēsis, a feminine noun, which means “calling”, “condition”.<sup>225</sup>
- καλέω - kaleō, a verb, which means “to call”, “to invite”<sup>226</sup>
- κλητός - klētos, an adjective, which means “called”, “invited”<sup>227</sup>

At the inception of the Church of God, on the first Christian Pentecost, Peter is explicit that **only those called by God can come to the Church**:

And **Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls (proskaleomai) to himself.”** (Acts 2:38-39 ESV see also 13:2, 16:10)

Mark uses the same word when Jesus identified the twelve apostles:

**And he went up on the mountain and called (proskaleomai) to him those whom he desired**, and they came to him. And **he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles)** so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach ... (Mark 3:13-14 ESV // Luke 6:12-13<sup>228</sup>)

All three Synoptists report Jesus’ sarcastic saying contrasting the self-righteous Pharisees with those he would call:

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 (kaleō) the righteous, but sinners.”** (Mark 2:16-17 ESV // Matthew 9:11-12, Luke 5:30-32)

Jesus used **the parable of the Wedding Feast** to make clear the necessity of “being called”.<sup>229</sup> This parable, of course, foreshadows **the actual “wedding supper” at the First Resurrection**:

And again **Jesus spoke to them in parables**, saying, **“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants (doulos) to call (kaleō) those who were invited (kaleō) to the wedding feast, but they would not come.**

Again he sent other [slaves] (doulos), saying, **“Tell those who are invited (kaleō), “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”** But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his [slaves] (doulos), treated them shamefully, and killed them.

**The king was angry**, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

Then he said to his [slaves] (doulos), **“The wedding feast is ready, but those invited (kaleō) were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and invite (kaleō) to the wedding feast as many as you find.”** And those [slaves] (doulos) went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. (Matthew 22:1-8 ESV)

**“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 (kaleō) to the marriage supper of the Lamb.**”  
(Revelation 19:6b-9a ESV)

**The Apostle Paul has more to say about the “Christian calling” than any other New Testament author.**

Paul contrasts the Christian calling with the “human condition” – it is contrary to the ways of the world.

<sup>224</sup> See [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org) Greek Word Detail; GEL, “προσκαλέω”, page 722

<sup>225</sup> See [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org) Greek Word Detail; GEL pages 436-437

<sup>226</sup> See [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org) Greek Word Detail; GEL pages 399-400

<sup>227</sup> See [www.esv.org](http://www.esv.org) Greek Word Detail; GEL page 437

<sup>228</sup> Luke uses a related word: προσφωνέω – prosphōneō; see also Mark 1:20 // Matthew 4:21 where *kaleō* is used for the calling of James and John.

<sup>229</sup> See also the similar parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14:12-24

A person's status, position, race, wealth, and any other measure of worldly success are all irrelevant to the Christian calling. Whatever a Christian's station is in this life, is also irrelevant – God's calling leads to true freedom:

**For consider your calling (klēsis), brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise;** God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29 ESV)

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to **walk in a manner worthy of the calling (klēsis) to which you have been called (kaleō),** 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. **There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called (kaleō) to the one hope that belongs to your call (klēsis)—**one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6 ESV)

**Where is the one who is wise?** Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** For since, in the wisdom of God, **the world did not know God** through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but **to those who are called (klētos),** both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.** For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (1 Corinthians 1:20-25 ESV)

Only **let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called (kaleō) him.** This is my rule in all the churches.

Was anyone **at the time of his call (kaleō)** already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone **at the time of his call (kaleō)** uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but **keeping the commandments of God.**

**Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called (kaleō).**

**Were you a bondservant (doulos) when called (kaleō)?** Do not be concerned about it. (But **if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.**) For **he who was called (kaleō)** in the Lord as a bondservant (doulos) is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise **he who was free when called (kaleō)** is a bondservant (doulos) of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men.

So, brothers, **in whatever condition each was called (kaleō),** there **let him remain with God.** (1 Corinthians 7:17-24 ESV)

**For you were called (kaleō) to freedom, brothers.** Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Galatians 5:13 ESV)

The "calling" is a serious business – the New Testament authors affirm that **God the Father is the source of "calling".** **Once called, a person must respond in order to become a Christian.**<sup>230</sup> Calling is according to God's purpose; it is irrevocable and occurs through hearing the "gospel". A Christian must learn to **live by the Way of God** to "confirm the calling and election":

**All that the Father gives me will come to me,** and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ... **No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.** ... **no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.** ... 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. ... **Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me,** may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (John 6:37, 44a, 65b, 17:11, 24 ESV see also Galatians 5:8, Jude 1)<sup>231</sup>

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may **proclaim the excellencies of him who called (kaleō) you** out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but **now you are God's people;** once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10 ESV see also Romans 9:19-26)

And we know that **for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called (klētos) according to his purpose.** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined<sup>232</sup> to be conformed

<sup>230</sup> The parable of the "Sower and the Seed" is about God's calling and the response of various people, see Mark 4:3-20, Matthew 13:3-23, Luke 8:5-15; see also Matthew 22:14.

<sup>231</sup> The New Testament authors considered themselves called by God, as well as others in the past, see Romans 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:2, Hebrews 5:4, 11:8.

<sup>232</sup> "Predestination" is more or less equivalent to "calling". It has nothing to do with a person's ultimate fate. The Plan of God has from the beginning determined that people would be "called". God looks on the heart to decide who to call when. Once "called" a person is "predestined", or "elected". God is faithful, he will never give up on a person. As long as a person does NOT reject God's calling, God continues to work with the person.

to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called (kaleō), and those whom he called (kaleō) he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30 ESV)

For the gifts and the calling (kaleō) of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29 ESV)

To this he called (kaleō) you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:14 ESV)

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling (klēsis) and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 ESV)

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and [mind] and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls (kaleō) you is faithful; he will surely do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 ESV)

Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling (klēsis) and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. (2 Peter 1:10 ESV)

The New Testament authors provide some characteristics of God's calling:

... including you who are called (klētos) to belong to Jesus Christ. To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called (klētos) to be saints<sup>233</sup> ... (Romans 1:6-7a ESV)

God is faithful, by whom you were called (kaleō) into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:9 ESV)

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called (kaleō) you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel ... But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called (kaleō) me by his grace ... (Galatians 1:6, 15 ESV)

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called (kaleō) in one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:15 ESV)

... we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls (kaleō) you into his own kingdom and glory. ... For God has not called (kaleō) us for impurity, but in holiness. (1 Thessalonians 2:12, 4:7 ESV see also 2 Peter 1:3)

... share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called (kaleō) us to a holy calling (klēsis), not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began ... (2 Timothy 1:8b-9 ESV)

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling (klēsis) ... (Hebrews 3:1a ESV)

For to this you have been called (kaleō), because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ... Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called (kaleō), that you may obtain a blessing. (1 Peter 2:21, 3:9 ESV)

The ultimate purpose of the Christian calling is to be given the gift of eternal life and participate with the King of kings in the Kingdom of God:

But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called (kaleō) and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:11-12 ESV see also Hebrews 9:15, 1 Peter 5:10)

They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called (klētos) and chosen and faithful. (Revelation 17:14 ESV)

The "calling", however, is just the beginning. Once converted, it is necessary to learn to live by the Way of God. This topic is discussed in detail in the paper "True Worship of the True God" located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca). The metaphor of "spiritual whoredom" is continued in the New Testament.<sup>234</sup> It is made clear that idolatry is the root cause of spiritual infidelity.<sup>235</sup> Pride and arrogance are the factors that lead to idolatry. Idolatry is the setting of anything before God – an idea, a goal, a desire, a material object, a person, or anything else. The Christian life is about purifying the mind and heart so that the Christian can be considered as a candidate for the gift of eternal life:

So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ... I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

<sup>233</sup> See also 1 Corinthians 1:2

<sup>234</sup> See Mark 7:21 // Matthew 15:19, Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:3-16, Revelation 9:20-21, 14:8, 17:2,4, 18:3,9

<sup>235</sup> See 1 Corinthians 10:14-15, Colossians 3:5, 1 Peter 4:3, 1 John 5:21, see also John 8:34 Romans 6:6,16-20, 2 Peter 2:19



Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but **we shall all be changed**, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For **this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality**.

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.** (Isaiah 25:8)

O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting? (Hosea 13:14)

(1 Corinthians 15:42, 50-55 ESV)

**The last enemy to be defeated is death.**<sup>236</sup> For Christians to whom God grants the gift of eternal life, this occurs at the First Resurrection. This was the primary reason for the First Advent. YHWH gave up his status in eternity, came to earth as Jesus Christ, lived a perfect life and suffered a propitiating death. His death allows the sins of all human beings to be forgiven. **This opens the door to the gift of eternal life**, for a few at the First Resurrection, **for the rest of humanity** after the establishment of the Kingdom of God:

On this mountain **the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples** a feast<sup>237</sup> of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

And **he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.**

**He will swallow up death forever;**

and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,

and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, **for the LORD has spoken.**

(Isaiah 25:6-8 ESV)

**The “human condition” under which humanity has suffered for thousands of years has been caused by lack of knowledge of the Way of God.** Satan the Devil has been in charge of this world. Through one lie after another he has suppressed and confused the Truth of God. Only those individuals who are specifically called by God and given the indwelling of the Holy Spirit have been able to understand the Truth of God. That is **“the covering that is cast over all peoples”, “the veil that is spread over all nations”**. This veil was characterized by the curtain in the Tabernacle<sup>238</sup> (replicated in the Temple) separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. **That veil was as close as any human being could come to the Holy God. When Jesus Christ died, the veil was destroyed:**

And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour **Jesus cried with a loud voice** ... And **Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.**

And **the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.** And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, **“Truly this man was the Son of God!”**<sup>239</sup>  
(Mark 15:33-34a, 37-39 ESV // Matthew 27:45-51, Luke 23:44-45)

**With Jesus’ death and resurrection, the New Testament Church became possible.** The “covering of ignorance” has been removed from True Christians. At the Second Advent, all saints since righteous Abel will be resurrected to eternal life and will be granted membership in the Family of God. The Kingdom of God will then rule over all the earth, and **“the covering of ignorance”, “the human condition” will be removed.** All people everywhere on the earth will have access to the Truth of God.<sup>240</sup>

Sanctify them in the truth; **your word is truth** ... if you **abide in my word**, you are truly my disciples, and **you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free** ... **“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 17:17, 8:31b-32, 6:68b-69 ESV)

**Israel fell victim to the human condition because the people did not understand the Way of God.** They could not understand the Way of God. The world at large for all these thousands of years has been unable to understand the Way of God. Satan has deceived the whole world and all the people in it – **“the veil of ignorance”**. **The veil was destroyed by Christ at his death.** Since then God has called many people to his Church, far more than were called in prior times. The purpose of God’s calling is to bring

<sup>236</sup> See 1 Corinthians 15:26, 2 Timothy 1:8-9, Hebrews 2:14-15, 1 John 3:14, Revelation 21:4

<sup>237</sup> This “feast” is a metaphor for the true teaching of God.

<sup>238</sup> See the discussion of the veil in the paper “**The Transfiguration and the Tabernacle**” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)

<sup>239</sup> See John 1:34

<sup>240</sup> See also 2 Samuel 7:28, Psalm 119:160

the called person to repentance, so that the gift of the Holy Spirit can be given, and **the person can learn to live by the Way of God**. This makes a person a candidate for the gift of eternal life. When Satan is removed, **God's calling will be extended to all living human beings**.

## 7. Forward into the World Tomorrow and Beyond

**When the Kingdom of God is established on this earth**, and the First Resurrection has occurred, the resurrected saints, now fully divine members of the God Family, will bring the pure and complete teaching of God, **the Way of God**, to every corner of this planet, to every living human being, and **the human condition will change**. All people, everywhere, will have access to the unadulterated Truth of God. The God Family comprising the Kingdom of God will bring salvation to all humanity. The Plan of God will then proceed to completion. The Prophet Micah describes this time:<sup>241</sup>

It shall come to pass **in the latter days** that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and **many nations shall come, and say:**

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that **he may teach us his ways** and that **we may walk in his paths**.”

For **out of Zion shall go forth the [torah]**, and **the word of the LORD from Jerusalem**.

**He shall judge between many peoples**, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, **neither shall they learn war anymore**; but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and **no one shall make them afraid**, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

For **all the peoples walk each in the name of its god**, but **we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever**. (Micah 4:1-5 ESV)

The “human condition” for the whole history of humanity has been that **“all the peoples walk each in the name of its god”**. The false “gods”, the idols of this world, are **lies promulgated by Satan the Devil** and promoted by demons:

No, I imply that **what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God**. **I do not want you to be participants with demons**. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and **the cup of demons**. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and **the table of demons**. (1 Corinthians 10:20-21 ESV)

**The rest of mankind**, who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent** of the works of their hands nor give up **worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood**, which cannot see or hear or walk, **nor did they repent** of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Revelation 9:20-21 ESV)

**This whole world is based on lies**. The “human condition” is predicated on Satan’s deception of humanity through lies. Jesus’ ultimate castigation of the Pharisee identified their true nature as exponents of the lies of Satan.<sup>242</sup>

**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)

Using the metaphor of the “spider’s web”, **the Prophet Isaiah describes the network of lies upon which this world is built:**

For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity;  
**your lips have spoken lies**; your tongue utters wickedness.

**No one enters suit justly; no one goes to law**<sup>243</sup> **honestly**; they rely on empty pleas,  
**they speak lies**, they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.

They hatch adders’ eggs; **they weave the spider’s web**;  
he who eats their eggs dies, and from one that is crushed a viper is hatched.

**Their webs will not serve** as clothing; men will not cover themselves with what they make.

**Their works are works of iniquity**, and deeds of violence are in their hands.

Their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood;

**their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity**; desolation and destruction are in their highways.

<sup>241</sup> See also Isaiah 2:2-5

<sup>242</sup> See also Romans 1:24-25, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12,

<sup>243</sup> The Hebrew is a participle of שָׁפַט - shaphat, “one being judged”, “law” is a good translation.

**The way of peace they do not know**, and **there is no justice in their paths**;  
they have made their roads crooked; no one who treads on them knows peace. (Isaiah 59:3-8 ESV)

**The lies of this world, the “human condition”, are about to change.** At the Second Advent, the Kingdom of God will be established. Satan the Devil will be removed. **The worldwide utopia described by the Prophet Micah will become a reality.** **First**, repentance will be made available to all people everywhere in the world. **Secondly**, all people everywhere in the world will be taught the truth of God; and, all will learn to live by the Way of God. **Finally**, after a thousand years of peace, order, good government, and freedom on this earth, God the Father will come to this planet and reveal to us his plans for going forward into eternity future.

### 7.1 All Living Human Beings Will Be Called to Repent

In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ... **The times of ignorance God overlooked**, but **now he commands all people everywhere to repent** ... (Acts 14:16, 17:30 ESV)

Based on the sin of Adam, **humanity has been consigned to the “human condition”**. This is NOT God’s world. This world has been under the stewardship of Satan the Devil. **God has made no effort to fix this world**. The nations of the world have been left to go their own ways. **Satan’s agenda for all human beings is death**. The lies, upon which the various systems and philosophies of this world are based, all lead to death.

The Plan of God for human beings is to become members of the God Family. God wants a very large family. **Each and every human being will be given the opportunity to enter the God Family**. The gulf between the world of Satan and the Family of God can only be traversed **through repentance**. Through the ages God has dealt with a few individuals, “the saints”, each of whom has been led to repentance: the recognition of who and what the Creator God is, and who and what human beings are, the acceptance of God’s grace to forgive our sinful nature, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to allow living by **the Way of God**.

**This repentance was extended to a larger group at the First Advent**, the Church of God. **At the Second Advent, repentance will be rolled out to each and every person on the planet**, eventually including even all those who have died in ignorance over the millennia. First, **to fulfill the promises and the prophecies, God will create a new nation of Israel**. God will call individuals from the four corners of the earth and lead them back to the Land of Israel, **the Second Exodus**. Each individual in the New Israel will be called to conversion – **the nation and the Church will be co-terminus**.<sup>244</sup> These individuals must first be taught about repentance. As the people are converted, and the nation is established, **the New Israel will become the model nation God intended from the start** to set the example for all the nations of the world. Then **calling can extend to all people over the whole earth and repentance can be taught to them**.

#### **The Prophet Isaiah describes the roll-out of repentance:**

**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.

**Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD**:

though **your sins are like scarlet**, they shall be as white as snow;  
though **they are red like crimson**, they shall become like wool.

**If you are willing and obedient**, you shall eat the good of the [earth]; (Isaiah 1:16-19 ESV)

“I, **I am he who blots out your transgressions** for my own sake, and **I will not remember your sins**.”

**Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!**

For **I am God, and there is no other**.

By myself I have sworn; **from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return**:

‘**To me every knee shall bow**, every tongue shall swear allegiance.’

**Seek the LORD 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**.

<sup>244</sup> See Jeremiah 31:31-33, 32:37-41, Ezekiel 11:16-20, 36:22-28

For **my thoughts are not your thoughts**, neither are your ways my ways, **declares the LORD**.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
**so are my ways higher than your ways** and my thoughts than your thoughts.  
(Isaiah 43:25, 45:22-23, 55:6-9 ESV)

### **The Second Exodus and the New Israel are also described by the Prophet Isaiah:**

**In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples**—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

**In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant** that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

**He will raise a signal for the nations** and will **assemble the banished of Israel**, and gather the dispersed of **Judah from the four corners of the earth**.

Fear not, for I am with you; **I will bring your offspring from the east**, and **from the west** I will gather you. I will say to **the north**, Give up, and to **the south**, Do not withhold; bring **my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth**, **everyone who is called** by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”  
(Isaiah 11:10-12, 43:5-7 ESV)

### Chapter twelve of Isaiah describes **the joy and the gratitude of those called to the New Israel:**

#### **You will say in that day:**

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for **though you were angry with me, your anger turned away**, that you might comfort me.  
Behold, **God is my salvation**; I will trust, and will not be afraid;  
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and **he has become my salvation**.

#### **With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day:**

Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name,  
**make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted**.  
**Sing praises to the LORD**, for he has done gloriously; **let this be made known in all the earth**.  
Shout, and **sing for joy**, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

(Isaiah 12:1-6 ESV)

The people of the New Israel willingly accept the role of being a “**holy nation**”, God’s “**treasured possession among all peoples**”<sup>245</sup> to bring the Gospel to all the earth:

In days to come **Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom** and put forth shoots and **fill the whole world with fruit**.

#### **And now the LORD says,**

he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him—for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength—he says:

It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel;

**I will make you as a light for the nations**, that **my salvation may reach to the end of the earth**.

Thus says the LORD:

In a time of favor I have answered you; **in a day of salvation** I have helped you;

**I will keep you and give you as a covenant to the people, to establish the [earth]**, to apportion the desolate heritages, saying to the prisoners, ‘Come out,’ to those who are in darkness, ‘Appear.’

(Isaiah 27:6, 49:5-6, 8-9a ESV)

Once repentance has been rolled out over the earth, **all human beings can be taught the Way of God**.

## **7.2 All Human Beings Will Learn the Way of God**

This was to show God’s righteousness, because **in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins**. ... for **sin indeed was in the world** before the [nomos] was given, **but sin is not counted where there is no [nomos]**. ... **He does not deal with us according to our sins** ... (Romans 3:25b, 5:13, Psalm 103:10a ESV)

There is nothing any human being can do to put God in a position that he must grant eternal life to that person – it is impossible to “earn salvation”. **Eternal life is the gift of God**. The Way of God, the way of life taught in the Bible is designed to teach human beings the character of God and to inculcate into our character the nature of God. As a person becomes more like God in his character, **God looks on the**

**heart to determine whether or NOT to grant the gift of eternal life to the person.** Living by the Way of God is a pre-requisite to being considered as a candidate for eternal life. To live by the Way of God requires the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This has been available to very few people over human history. In the World Tomorrow, the Millennium, the Messianic Age, all people will have access to God's calling and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit:<sup>246</sup>

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 ('eved) and female (ship'hah) [slaves]** in those days **I will pour out my Spirit.**  
(Joel 2:28-29)

The Prophet Isaiah contains **some of the most famous prophecies of the spread of the Way of God** throughout the world:

There shall come forth **a shoot from the stump of Jesse**, and **a branch** from his roots shall bear fruit.  
And the **Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him**, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might, **the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.**

And **his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.**

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,  
but **with righteousness he shall judge** the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
and **he shall strike the earth** with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall **kill the wicked.**

**Righteousness** shall be the belt of his waist, and **faithfulness** the belt of his loins.

**The wolf shall dwell with the lamb**, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

**They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain;**  
for **the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.**  
(Isaiah 11:1-9 ESV)

The "**shoot from the stump of Jesse**", the "**branch**", is, of course, Jesus Christ. As "God", he was imbued with the Holy Spirit from conception. As a human being, Jesus sought out and taught his disciples the Way of God, the "**knowledge and the fear of the LORD**". The word "fear" is from the noun

יִרְאָה - yir'ah, it is better translated "**reverence**". After his resurrection and ascension, indeed, Jesus, now in the role of Intercessor and High Priest, was **delighted** in the "reverence" for God taught by his apostles and disciples as they created the New Testament Church.

**The prophecy then moves on to the World Tomorrow**, after the Second Advent. The goal of the King of kings will be to extend the Way of God over the whole earth – "**his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD**" taught to all peoples. **His rule will be characterized by "righteousness"**. At the Second Advent, he established his authority by his actions to "**strike the earth**" and "**kill the wicked**". All remaining people will be ready to repent and learn the Way of God. The King of kings will then in "**faithfulness**" carry out his promises to all humanity.

The nature of animals will apparently be changed for the better. But, one also sees in the description of the animals some of **the base behaviours of human beings**. Therefore, the description is also a metaphor for the change in human society: "**They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain**". The "**mountain**" of God, **the extent of the government of the Kingdom of God**, is the whole world. Every human society in every corner of the world will learn the Way of God because: "**the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea**".

Isaiah provides some more characteristics of **the government of the King of kings**:  
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.**  
**He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth;**  
and the coastlands wait for his [torah].

<sup>246</sup> Peter quotes this prophecy in its typical fulfillment at the inception of the New Testament Church, Acts 2:14-18.  
Wednesday, April 12, 2023

It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel

**I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**

For when your [mish<sup>e</sup>patim]<sup>247</sup> are in the earth, **the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.**

Behold, **a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in [justice]**<sup>248</sup>.

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.

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 justice 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.

(Isaiah 42:1, 4, 49:6, 26:9b, 32:1-2, 51:4-5 ESV)

#### **Isaiah prophesizes that people will be receptive to the teaching:**

For **a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem**; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, 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**, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

Then **the eyes of those who see will not be closed**, and the ears of those who hear will give attention.

The **heart of the hasty will understand** and know,

and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak distinctly.

**The fool will no more be called noble, nor the scoundrel said to be honorable.**

**All your children shall be taught by the LORD**, and great shall be the peace of your children.

In that day **the deaf shall hear the words of a book**,

and out of their gloom and darkness **the eyes of the blind shall see.**

**The meek** shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD,

and **the poor** among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

And those who go astray in spirit will **come to understanding**,

and those who murmur will **accept instruction.**

(Isaiah 30:19-21, 32:3-5, 54:13, 29:18-19, 24)

#### **Again, Isaiah prophesizes that the nations at large will learn the Way of God:**

In that day there will be **five cities in the land of Egypt** that speak the language of Canaan and **swear allegiance to the LORD of hosts.** One of these will be called the City of the Sun.

In that day **there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt**, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt. **When they cry to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender**, and deliver them. And **the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the LORD** in that day and **worship with sacrifice and offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them.** And the LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and **they will return to the LORD**, and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them.

In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and **the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.**

In that day **Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth**, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "**Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.**"

For I know their works and their thoughts, and **the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues.** And **they shall come and shall see my glory**, and I will set a sign among them. And from them **I will send survivors to the nations**, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, **that have not heard my fame or seen my glory.** And **they shall declare my glory among the nations.** And they shall bring **all your brothers from all the nations** as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, **to my holy mountain Jerusalem**, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. And **some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites**, says the LORD.

(Isaiah 19:18-25, 66:18-21 ESV)

<sup>247</sup> This implies the discernment and understanding which results from living by the Way of God. There is no equivalent English word.

<sup>248</sup> "mish<sup>e</sup>pat" here is parallel to "righteousness" – it has to be a character attribute.



This glorious utopia will last for a thousand years, then all who have died over the history of humanity will be brought back to physical life and be given the opportunity to repent and learn the Way of God:

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. ... They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. ... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.

(Revelation 20:4a, 4c-6, 11a, 12-13 ESV)

The “great white throne” judgement is the Second Resurrection – all the dead throughout history are raised to physical life, and they are given the opportunity to learn the Way of God. The “books were opened” are the books of the Bible from which these people are given the opportunity to learn the Way of God. The opening of “the book of life” means that the calling of God is now available to these people – their names can be written in the Book of Life, they have the opportunity to be granted the gift of eternal life. The “judgement” is based on the response to their calling, as with all True Worshipers down through the ages.

This is as far as the Bible give us any details on the Plan of God. But, the Bible is clear that the plan continues:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

I made the earth and created man on it;  
it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.

Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel?  
Whom did he consult, and who made him understand?

Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?

For thus says the LORD, 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 the LORD, and there is no other. ...”  
(Isaiah 9:6-7, 45:12, 40:13-14, 45:18 ESV)

The increase on the earth is to continue, but the implication is that the increase will extend to the rest of the universe. God created the earth to be inhabited. God also created the whole universe to be inhabited. The understanding of the roll-out of that part of the Plan of God remains for the future.

### 7.3 No End to the Increase of His Government

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8 ESV)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18a ESV)

How is “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”? His focus is always on the completion of the Plan of God. Israel as a physical nation had to fight wars. Christians today are enjoined NOT to participate in military activity. Each position has been required by the Plan of God. In the ancient world True Worshipers were not ready for Jesus’ teaching on marriage/divorce/adultery. Their historic and cultural situation put them in a place where they were “not able to receive”<sup>249</sup> the full teaching. Going forward the complete teaching of God, the Way of God, will fill the whole earth.

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<sup>249</sup> See Matthew 19:11-12  
Wednesday, April 12, 2023

There have been **three periods of great revelation from God to humanity**:

1. **The Writings of Moses**: these contain the fundamental teaching on almost every aspect of the Way of God
2. **The Latter Prophets**: Israel had failed to live by the Way of God but had maintained perfunctory worship of God; through Latter Prophets God revealed that True Worship was a matter of the heart not physical activities
3. **The First Advent**: Jesus revealed to his disciples the true nature of Spiritual Worship of God; the New Testament authors have captured Jesus' teaching which brings into focus all previous revelation

**We now have the complete package**: the Bible, when taken from start to finish, gives us the complete information we need to live by the Way of God. To use only one part of the Bible as a guide, whether it be Deuteronomy or the Epistles of Paul, gives an incomplete and, in many cases, erroneous picture.

**God's plan has been complete from the beginning**, but due to the sin of Adam, humanity has been consigned to live under the "human condition": a world under the sway of Satan the Devil. God has made no attempt to fix this world. True Worshipers have been required to live in his world as they found it at their particular point in history. True Christians today have the complete revelation, yet **there remain things with which we must struggle**. We are on the precipice of the end-time calamity which will usher in the Kingdom of God. In the World Tomorrow, **the full teaching of God will go out into all the world** – all people everywhere will learn to fully live by the Way of God.

The full understanding of God's revelation is difficult: Peter adjures us "**grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**". That is our task today, and it will remain to be completed after the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. Then **we will have unfettered access to the King of kings – he will lead us into all grace and truth**".<sup>250</sup>

**The Prophet Isaiah records God's words regarding his plan**:

O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name,  
for you have done wonderful things, **plans formed of old, faithful and sure**.

**The LORD of hosts has sworn**:

**"As I have planned**, so shall it be, and **as I have purposed**, so shall it stand ...

**This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth**,  
and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.

**For the LORD of hosts has purposed**, and who will annul it?

His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?

**Remember this and stand firm ... remember the former things of old**;

for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,

**declaring the end from the beginning** and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and **I will accomplish all my purpose**,'

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.

Behold, **the former things have come to pass**, and **new things I now declare**;  
before they spring forth I tell you of them.

You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it?

From this time forth **I announce to you new things**, hidden things that you have not known.

**They are created now**, not long ago; before today you have never heard of them ...

**For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it**, for how should my name be profaned?

My glory I will not give to another.

For behold, **I create new heavens and a new earth**,

and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

But **be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create**;

for behold, **I create** Jerusalem to be a **joy**, and her people to be a **gladness**.

**I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people**;

no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.  
(Isaiah 25:1, 14:24, 26-27, 46:8a, 9-10, 55:10-11, 42:9, 48:6-7a, 11, 65:17-19 ESV)

**The Plan of God is perfect.** God wants all human beings to have the opportunity to be part of his Family. Based on Adam's choice, humanity has been assigned for these thousands of years to the "**human condition**". **God's truth has always been available**, but the revelation has been progressive. God has never required anything of his people that they were not able to understand or cope with – we have all had to live in this world. **We now have the complete revelation** – all parts of it are necessary to understand the Nature of God and the Way of God. Even parts of the revelation which have been superseded provide instruction, for example, the sacrificial system. God has given us everything we need to know. Yet, **the Plan will continue** – we await eagerly for the day when God the Father joins his Family on this earth and says, "**Now children, this what we are going to do!**"

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