

CHRISTOPHER THOMAS

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HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE
IN THESE LAST DAYS

THE SALVATION EQUATION

How to Understand the Bible In These Last Days

CHRISTOPHER THOMAS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered if all the stories, prophecies, and gospels found in the bible are really true and accurate? For me this was very true, especially as putting together all of its pieces into one complete puzzle without using a hammer seemed impossible. But as I've come to understand, this was because I had never been taught how to properly read the bible so that all of its pieces do indeed come together without the use of a blunt instrument. This book presents the answers and insights I've learned to enable all who desire to begin piecing this large biblical puzzle together and see its big picture. Thus, this book is aimed at those who have never truly heard the written Word of God, but seasoned Christians are also welcome. In terms of resources, I used my New American Standard Life Application Study Bible for outline and content, and www.biblehub.com (default view) for biblical verses and biblical quotes cited throughout this book.

The anchor piece to this biblical puzzle will be the apostle Paul and his gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jews), but we need to begin with pieces from the Old Testament followed by pieces from the four gospels of Jesus Christ. These will lay the groundwork and set the stage for the calling of Paul and his new revelation (gospel) of Jesus Christ. I will then detail Paul's gospel found in his epistles or letters, followed by the apostolic epistles, the last of which is the book of Revelation, which will be the last piece needed to finish this biblical puzzle. Once complete, we will see how the written Word of God fits together so tight and neat that each book of the bible builds on the one previous without fault or contradiction, leaving no doubt to the bible's

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accuracy and authority. Or, to put it another way, “**One Thing Leads to Another**”¹ as we hear the new wave rock band The Fixx sing!

Paul’s gospel, and more specifically *Romans 10:9*, contains what I call **THE SALVATION EQUATION** of *faith + nothing else = life eternal*. This equation is something everyone will know and understand very well by the end of this book. Again, for those who don’t know epistles are writings directed or sent to a person or group of people in the form of a didactic or teaching letter. Thus, I will refer to all biblical epistles as letters when detailing them.

Now many bible scholars argue that some books and letters of the bible are of unknown or debated authorship, but all without a doubt are of Jewish authorship written to Israel or to Jewish followers of Jesus Christ. The one exception to this pattern is the apostle Paul who in addition to being Jewish was also a Roman citizen having been born in the free city of Tarsus within the Roman province of Syria. As we will see in chapter four, he was instructed by the Holy Spirit to preach his new revelation of Jesus Christ only to the Gentiles versus his Jewish brethren. Also of note is that many scholars believe the apostle Luke was Greek rather than Jewish, but this is highly unlikely as the oracles of God were entrusted only to the Jews of Israel per *Psalms 147:18-20* and *Romans 3:1-2*. **As we now have all the pieces to this biblical puzzle, all we need to do is observe who authored each book of the bible, the author’s intended audience, and the context in which each book was written in order to piece it all together.** By using this simple algorithm we will see how all books and letters of the bible fit together in a logical organized manner without fault or contradiction, versus throwing them into a blender as something written to everyone.

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This means my contention is that all books and letters of the bible were individually written to a specific audience of that time period in order to provide an understanding of what had been spoken and taken place, as a basis of what was to come. Armed with this realization, we will see why Paul's letters are unique and different from the rest of the bible which had been written only to Israel or to Jewish followers of Jesus Christ. Again, by studying the written Word of God in this fashion it will become perfectly clear that the bible is not just a book of myths and compelling stories based on vague scriptures, but a collection of sequential books conveying the truth of biblical history and biblical prophecy per *Romans 15:4*, *2 Timothy 3:15-17*, and *2 Peter 1:19-21*. We will then see that while not written to everyone, the bible is definitely written for everyone as Paul declares in *2 Timothy 3:15-17*: "From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through *faith* in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

Thus, the inspired Word of God and its authority come directly from the Father's fulfillment of all biblical prophecy, beginning with creation and extending through the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. The only portions of biblical prophecy still awaiting fulfillment are the Day of the Lord, the Pauline rapture, and the Kingdom Gospel, as these will take place during the seven-year tribulation. What's truly amazing is that all Jewish and Gentile believers of Paul's gospel have now been grafted onto the olive vine along with Israel's remnant elect as co-heirs with Jesus Christ. This important biblical truth along with these last portions of unfulfilled prophecy will be detailed in chapters 4, 7, and 10 of this book. We then finish with chapter 11 detailing reasons why people may doubt the bible

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followed by chapter 12 with some final thoughts on why I believe that we are indeed in these last days per scripture.

As I conclude the introduction, it also my intention to challenge everyone by addressing what the bible actually says versus what it does not say, so that no person bets eternity on misinformation. For this reason I always try and give at least two different scriptural references for important biblical points to provide further meaning and authority. These scriptural references also include additional verses surrounding the point being made in order to provide further context. But they are by no means a comprehensive list as this book is not intended to be a concordance. Then, as just seen in the second paragraph above, I also use music, film, and sports as additional learning metaphors to compliment the many biblical points seen throughout this book. They are a collection of some of my favorite video clips which can be accessed by **clicking** on the **bold underlined hyperlink** in an eBook, or consulting the endnotes using the hyperlink superscript number if you are reading a hard copy. By adding this unconventional approach I hope to make the bible appear less abstract and engage more with the reading audience.

Most of these clips, however, are non-Christian in nature, and some readers may disapprove of their use in learning the bible. If this is the case, simply ignore them as they are not required to learn the written Word of God. Having said that, music, film, and sports can absolutely inspire the human spirit; for this reason I encourage everyone to have a look at the various clips that intrigue you. As I possess no rights to any of these or their content, they are for educational purposes only to inspire further study of the written Word. Thus, they may also be pulled at anytime at the discretion of the media platform on on which they are posted, and in no way do I suggest that any of the actors, artists, athletes, or persons within

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them support Christianity or the bible. For those who aren't familiar with the bible, just think of this book as a desperate S-O-S call attempting to reach all who seek to know **THE SALVATION EQUATION**, something I liken to the song "**Message in a Bottle**"² by the rock band The Police. With this introductory groundwork to build from, let's begin piecing this biblical puzzle together.

The Triune Godhead

Before we start exploring Genesis through Revelation, I would first like to detail the starring roles of what Christians call the Triune God or Holy Trinity, for there is no bible without these divine entities. They are God the Father, His Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ His Son, as delineated by Jesus and Paul in *Matthew 28:18-19* and *Ephesians 3:13-19*. The bible tells us **all things came from God the Father for whom we exist through His Son Jesus Christ through whom we exist** as *John 1:1-5*, *1 Corinthians 8:4-8*, and *Colossians 1:15-17* all confirm. We then have the Holy Spirit who indwells the hearts of all true believers conveying all spiritual truth of the Father and Jesus Christ as He guides our walk within the Body of Christ per *Isaiah 11:2*, *John 16:13-15*, *1 Corinthians 2:9-11*, *1 Corinthians 3:16*, and *Ephesians 1:12-14*. The verse of *Isaiah 11:2* specifically speaks to the qualities of the Holy Spirit, for it is only through the Holy Spirit that believers are guided in a relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ per *Romans 8:8-9*. The Holy Spirit is also the one who raises believers from death to life eternal, just as He did with Jesus Christ who is the first fruits of those resurrected from the dead, as detailed in *Romans 8:10-11* and *1 Corinthians 15:19-20*. In my opinion, no song title reflects this divine action better than "**Rise**"³ by trumpeter Herb Alpert. Just imagine the Holy Spirit calling out to Pauline believers who have perished in saying, "RISE,

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the time has come to receive your crown of righteousness.” Based on these verses one could make the argument that the Holy Spirit is also the Word of God seen in *John 1:1-4*.

The bible further reveals the Son Jesus Christ is the precise visible image of the invisible Father who became flesh and was responsible for all creation through the Word of God per *Genesis 1:1* and *John 1:1-4*. This means Christ came before all things, whether visible or invisible, and through Him all things are held together as *Colossians 1:15-17* again confirms. These verses further teach us that the Father is eternity, with His Holy Spirit and His Son Jesus Christ living extensions of His eternity as His precise visible image and spiritual essence, each serving a specific purpose to the Father. Thus, we should now see why Christians have coined the terms Triune God or Holy Trinity, but neither is mentioned in the bible.

What I glean from these verses is there seems to be a divine spiritual link or connection through the Holy Spirit enabling all three parts of the Triune God to act as one, as *Isaiah 11:1-2* again confirms. This seems to be what *1 Corinthians 8:6* is communicating in saying “there is one God the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we exist.” This is also why Jesus tells Philip in *John 14:8-11*, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me,” as He is speaking of His divine connection to His Father through the Holy Spirit and the Word. In terms of humanity, these verses teach us the Holy Spirit's role is not one of worship, but one of divine connection to the Father and Christ, who then intercedes for all in the Body of Christ with groans too deep for words as described in *Romans 8:25-27*.

This divine link is best seen in *Matthew 3:16-17* where immediately after Jesus is water baptized, the Holy Spirit descends upon Him as His

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Father elates, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” In *1 Corinthians 11:1-3* Paul then defines a definite hierarchy of worship; this is why Christians send their prayers to the Father and complete them in Jesus’ name, as Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father interceding on our behalf for the forgiveness of sin per *Romans 8:33-34* and *1 John 2:1-2*. This is also why Jesus tells Thomas in *John 14:5-11* that no one comes to the Father except through Me. Thus, these verses absolutely confirm that all members of the triune Godhead are indeed separate divine entities versus being one single God.

We first hear of a plural Godhead in *Genesis 1:26-27* where God says, “Let Us make man in Our image,” followed by *Genesis 3:22* where the Lord God says, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us knowing good and evil.” As we continue through the bible, we will see the pronoun “Us” is a clear reference to the Father, His Holy Spirit, and His Son Jesus Christ. In human terms this means our soul represents the Father’s eternity, our spirit the Father’s Holy Spirit, and our physical body His Son Jesus Christ who was born into flesh. Christ came in bodily form possessing all the fullness of the Deity for Israel first, but also as a blood sacrifice for the sins of all, so that through Him, the Father could reconcile Himself to all things per *Romans 15:8*, *Colossians 1:18-20*, and *Colossians 2:8-10*. I will detail the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ in chapter 3; but this begs the question, how did the Son Jesus Christ exist before He was born into human flesh?

The answer is found in *Genesis 1:2* where we see the Spirit of God hovering above the surface of the waters. The verses of *Matthew 1:18* and *Luke 1:31-35* tell us that Jesus had been born into flesh through the power of the Holy Spirit. This can only mean that before His fleshly birth, Jesus had existed within His Father’s Holy Spirit as an immaterial but divine being per *John 16:27-28* and *John 17:1-5*. We can further substantiate this

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idea through *Ecclesiastes 12:6-7* which says, remember Him (the Creator) before the silver chord is snapped and the dust returns to the ground from which it came and the spirit back to God who gave it. Again, “there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we exist” per *1 Corinthians 8:6*. Thus, from His immaterial and divine state Jesus had brought about all creation through His Father’s Word as *John 1:1-4* and *Colossians 1:15-17* have already confirmed.

Once Jesus had been born into flesh, *Philippians 2:4-8* reveals that He didn’t consider equality with the Father as something to be grasped, for He had now assumed the role of a humble and obedient servant. It isn’t until just before His death on the cross that Jesus asks for any credit in regards to His service to the Father, as *John 17:1-5* again confirms. Jesus had been born a little lower than the angels to declare His Father’s Glory, so that His victory in death would be crowned in honor and glory as the first fruits of those who rise from the dead per *John 17:6-7*, *1 Corinthians 15:20*, *Philippians 2:8-11*, *Colossians 1:18-20*, and *Hebrews 2:6-9*. In *Matthew 17:1-2* and *Revelation 1:12-18* we further see how Christ’s glorified and transfigured form mirrors that of His Father, the Ancient of Days, as described in *Isaiah 6:1*, *Ezekiel 1:26-28*, and *Daniel 7:9-10*. Within this earthly dimension of creation the Father’s heavenly realm is invisible to all, which is why *John 1:17-18* and *John 6:45-46* tell us that only the Son has seen the Father. Lastly, the verses of *1 Corinthians 3:20-23* and *1 Corinthians 15:26-28* reveal that we belong to Christ who belongs to the Father, and when all things have been put under Christ’s feet, the Son Himself will then be made subject to the Father, so that God may be in all. We will see this detailed in chapter 10, which also delineates the time when heaven and earth will be one.

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With the exception of creation in Genesis, the only direct Old Testament references to Jesus Christ are prophetic as the Father's Servant and Chosen One, a High Priest, and a King who will redeem Israel from her sins so that she may be permanently restored as God's chosen nation. As such, we do see the Old Testament make a clear distinction between the Father or Ancient of Days in *Isaiah 6:1*, *Ezekiel 1:26-28*, and *Daniel 7:9-14*, and His Son the Chosen Servant to come in *Psalms 2:6-7* and *Isaiah 42:1*. Again, His prophesized coming was for the sake of Israel, God's chosen, per the promises made to her patriarchs; but it was also to serve as a sacrifice for the sins of all as *Romans 15:8-9* and *Galatians 1:3-5* again confirm. Unlike the apostles of the New Testament, Old Testament Jews had knowledge only of creation, Jewish history, Jewish law, and Jewish prophecy. They did not see **the Father had brought about all creation through His Son** their prophesized Messiah and King per *1 Corinthians 8:6*. The Old Testament verses of *Genesis 1:1*, *Isaiah 45:17-18*, and *Nehemiah 9:6-37* are clearly written from the perspective of the Father being the Creator, versus Israel's Messiah—Jesus Christ.

The understanding the Father had brought about all creation through His Son Jesus Christ was not revealed until the New Testament. This was part of the Father's plan so that all who believe in Christ through *faith*, may be saved. *Matthew 28:17-18*, *Colossians 2:8-10*, and *Hebrews 1:1-6* then tell us all the fullness of the Deity dwells in Jesus Christ as all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him. Understanding this, we also need to keep in mind that Christ and the Father are not equal co-rulers in heaven, for even Jesus tells us the Father is greater in *John 14:27-28*. During His earthly ministry Jesus always deferred to His Father as He prayed, thus exemplifying His commitment to the purpose for which His Father had sent Him. Without the Father's Word, Jesus also could not have brought

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about all creation as seen in *Genesis 1:3-27* and *Psalms 33:6-9* per *John 1:1-4*.

By then looking at verses such as *Isaiah 43:10-12*, *Isaiah 48:17*, and *Isaiah 59:19-21*, we can see the Father is Israel's only savior through His love, grace, and redeeming Son Jesus Christ. The Old Testament never delineates the Lord God will send Himself to be Savior and Messiah for all Israel, and then raise Himself from the dead. This all speaks to the prophetic coming of His Son Jesus Christ through the power of His Father's Holy Spirit as *Luke 1:30-35* and *Romans 8:10-11* confirm. While Christ is absolutely God on earth, there is **only one God the Father from whom all things came**, but **before Him no god was formed and after Him none will come** per *Isaiah 43:10-11* and *1 Corinthians 8:4-6*.

Thus, we should now have a better understanding of how to interpret the various names of the Father, His Holy Spirit, and His Son Jesus Christ referenced in the Old Testament. It's also worth noting that we only see glimpses of all three parts of the Triune God in the Old Testament, unlike the abundance of direct references seen in the New Testament. When we get to chapter 10 we will also see the counterfeit version of the Triune God, with Satan or the red dragon imitating God the Father, the antichrist or beast from the sea imitating Christ the Son, and the false prophet or beast from the earth imitating the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, as we now begin reviewing the books of the Bible, keep in mind **THE SALVATION EQUATION** of *faith* + **nothing else = life eternal**. For when you see the italicized word *faith*, look to see whether it represents the presence of true *faith* in God and His written Word, or an absence of it through doubt or unbelief.

CHAPTER 2

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Creation and Jewish Law: Genesis - Deuteronomy

Before *Genesis 1:1* had taken place, time as we know it did not exist, as there is no measurement of time in eternity. While the terms past, present, and future do exist in eternity, there is no measurement of them from a perspective of time as the Father has always existed. Further validation of this concept can be seen in *Psalms 90:2-4* and *2 Peter 3:8* which speak to the Father's eternal existence, as opposed to offering any insight into the age of our planet or the universe as many speculate. The best visual example I've seen encompassing existence without regard to time comes from the 2014 science fiction film **Lucy**.⁴ It is at this film's climax where we see Lucy moving through time and space from a human perspective as she nears one hundred percent of her brain's capacity. Another example can be seen in the 2016 Marvel film *X-Men: Apocalypse*, where **Quicksilver saves everyone**⁵ from an explosion as he is capable of moving at speeds much faster than the human eye can perceive. These are crude examples at best which can never demonstrate how the Father truly exists in eternity, but they do give us something we can begin to understand.

The bible's first book of Genesis is written by Moses to the Jews of Israel. It begins with creation of the heavens and the earth per *Genesis 1:1*. By looking further, we can see the bible breaks down the word heavens into three distinct areas. The first heaven is described as an expanse which separates the waters from each other which God calls the sky where birds fly per *Genesis 1:6-8*, *Genesis 7:11-12*, *Job 35:5*, and *Job 35:10-11*. The

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second heaven is never named so specifically, but the verses of *Psalms 8:3*, *Psalms 136:6-9*, and *Isaiah 13:9-10* clearly describe it as everything beyond our planet's atmosphere. The third heaven is the invisible dimension of heaven itself where the Father, His Son, and the Father's heavenly court reside per *Deuteronomy 26:15*, *Isaiah 6:1-4*, *Ezekiel 1:4-28*, *Daniel 7:9-10*, *2 Corinthians 12:2-4*, and *Revelation 4:1-11*. As these places exist above or beyond our sight, we can understand why the Lord calls them the heavens. *Nehemiah 9:5-6* and *Colossians 1:15-17* further confirm that these are the only heavens the bible delineates per *Genesis 1:1*, in contrast to string theory physicists who propose the existence of multiple universes. For only the Father is eternal with no beginning or ending, as everything else is finite per *Deuteronomy 32:39* and *Isaiah 43:10-11*.

We next see the Lord God call into being all plant and animal life to complete His paradise of earth. He then creates the very first man, named Adam, and places him in a garden within the land of Eden to cultivate and keep it per *Genesis 2:15*. In the very next verses of *Genesis 2:16-17*, the Lord God tells Adam that he may eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for if he does, he will surely die. *Genesis 2:18-25* then details the Lord God's creation of the very first woman to be a helper and companion for Adam. These verses describe how the Lord God had caused Adam to fall into a great sleep, and by using one of Adam's ribs, He makes the woman and brings her to Adam.

Genesis 3:1-13 next reveals how the serpent, which is Satan, deceives the woman into eating from the forbidden tree of knowledge. Thus, per the serpent's prevarication, the woman does indeed see the fruit as pleasing to the eye and good for obtaining wisdom.

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After taking a bite, she gives some to Adam who was with her, and their eyes were immediately opened to the knowledge of good and evil just as the serpent had described. But upon hearing the voice of the Lord God calling to them, they hid themselves from His presence amongst the trees because they were naked. Adam and the woman, however, quickly realize they can no longer hide their disobedience from the Lord God and confess their sin. Per *Genesis 3:16-24* we then see the Lord God reading the riot act to each of them, for Adam had specifically been told not to eat of this tree. As a consequence for Adam's disobedience, both are banished from the garden to work the cursed ground from which they came. It is also here in *Genesis 3:20* where Adam names the woman Eve as she will be the mother of all the living.

In the verses of *Romans 5:12-21*, Paul reveals that death had now come from this first act of sin which all of humanity thereafter has inherited. As chapter 4 will detail, the only way for humanity to overcome this inherited curse of sin and death is through a spiritual rebirth from the shed blood of a risen Jesus Christ. Christ will then intercede before the Father for those who believe this through *faith*, as *Romans 6:3-11*, *Romans 8:33-34*, ***Romans 10:9***, *Ephesians 1:3-8*, *2 Corinthians 5:17-19*, and *Titus 3:4-7* all confirm. I realize that many may not agree with the actions of one man condemning all humanity forward, but that is also why the Father gives all of us the free will choice to be saved through *faith* in a risen Jesus Christ, or not...**His creation, His rules!**

We also need to understand the serpent mentioned in *Genesis 3:1* is not the reptile we call a snake, but only a metaphor for Satan's (the devil's) deception and betrayal as the verses of *Isaiah 65:25* and *Revelation 12:7-9* describe. Because Satan had intentionally corrupted Adam and Eve, the Lord God curses him above all beasts of the field to slither about like a snake

while eating dust for all the days of his life. Satan is then told there will be a permanent hostility between his followers, and those of Jesus Christ, the redeemer, in *Genesis 3:14-15*. As chapter 3 will reveal, this prompts Satan to strike at the heel of Christ, just like a snake, through the apostle Judas Iscariot. Jesus, however, will rise from death in eternal victory. Let me also say the so-called apple of Eden has never been a symbol of sin, but rather a symbol of humanity's God-given free will, **a concept seen in the 2016 science fiction film Assassin's Creed.**⁶

Continuing with Genesis, we next see Adam's first-born son Cain murder his brother Abel out of what appears to be jealousy, thus beginning Cain's lineage of sin per *Genesis 4:1-24*. Adam and Eve then conceive a third son named Seth who, unlike his brother Cain, leaves behind a lineage of righteousness up through Noah, as the verses of *Genesis 4:25* through *Genesis 5:32* detail. We will revisit Noah and the great flood in chapter 8, but for now, we see that Noah also had three sons named Japheth, Ham, and Shem, all of whom were fruitful and multiplied following the flood. Their lineages are also listed in *Genesis 10:1-32*. Not forgetting that sin had been passed on to all, it quickly reappears in their offspring to once again consume all of humanity. After witnessing the reappearance of sin, the Lord decides to confuse the language of man from one into many, which scatters humanity from the tower of Babel to all ends of the earth per *Genesis 11:1-9*.

The verses of *Genesis 11:10-32* now detail the genealogy of Shem through Abram, for Abram will become the father of all Israel because of his *faith* and obedience to the Lord. Thus, as a reward for his *faith*, the Lord tells Abram a great and blessed nation (Israel) will come from his seed to prosper in a land flowing with milk and honey. And the only requirement for Israel to keep this promised blessing is to exhibit the same

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faith and obedience their father Abram had demonstrated per *Genesis 12:1-3*, *Genesis 13:14-17*, *Genesis 17:1-8*, and *Genesis 22:15-18*. These verses further tell us that Abram will also be the father of many other nations from a promise of *faith*, so that it can rest on grace as Paul delineates in *Romans 4:16-22*. The Lord then renames Abram as Abraham, being he will become the father of many nations per *Genesis 17:4-6*. We next read about Abraham's son Isaac, and Isaac's son Jacob, who will also be renamed Israel being he will be the father of Israel's twelve tribes as detailed in *Genesis 49:1-28*. Having now completed a brief look at the book of Genesis, we've seen the first pieces of this biblical puzzle come together: the beginning of creation, humanity, sin, and the nation of Israel.

By next reading the books of law, *Exodus-Deuteronomy*, we can see they are all about Israel receiving the law and other traditions to be observed after she is delivered from slavery in Egypt. These books were also written by Moses to the Jews of Israel, and by *faithfully* observing these laws and traditions, Israel will always be a treasured possession unto the Lord as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation per *Exodus 19:3-6*. Yet, *Exodus 32:1-10* reveals Israel's immediate lack of *faith* in response to the absence of Moses. Believing him dead, they quickly fashion a golden calf to worship. For just as the character played by Barbara Streisand cries out "**Papa, can you hear me?**"⁷⁷ in the 1983 film *Yentl*, much of Israel had already forgotten how the Lord had heard their earlier cries for deliverance from the bonds of Egyptian slavery. Moses then pleads with the Lord in *Exodus 32:11-35* to spare Israel, which results in three thousand Israelites slain by the sword along with a plague as a consequence for their idolatrous lack of *faith*.

Israel then begins to repeat this lack of *faith* scenario many times over, always incurring the Lord's wrath and requiring pleas from Moses and other leaders of Israel to spare them. I like to think that no other song expresses

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Israel's repeated request for the Lord's mercy better than "**Kyrie**"⁸ by the rock band Mr. Mister; as Kyrie eleison means "Lord, have mercy" in Greek. Through weeping and repentance, Israel is always restored back to the Lord's good graces, but she will not be permanently restored until all end of days prophecy has been fulfilled as chapter 10 will detail. This cycle of sin and forgiveness humorously reminds me of the 1993 film **Groundhog Day**,⁹ in which Bill Murray must relive the same day over and over again until he has a true change of heart. These examples also demonstrate how the Lord won't hesitate in keeping any of us in the same class of *faith* until we too show enough progress to move forward. This entails moving beyond consuming only milk of the written Word to consuming its solid food, which may take a lifetime for most of us as Paul describes in *1 Corinthians 3:1-3* and *Hebrews 5:12*.

For the rest of these books, Israel begins to enter the Promised Land of milk and honey as well as receiving further instructions from the Lord. But as Israel continues to demonstrate disobedience to the Lord's Word, He causes them to wander in the desert for forty years until all who refused to obey through *faith* had perished per *Numbers 14:18-35*. We also see that no man of God is perfect, as Moses too sins against the Lord in *Numbers 28:1-13*, which results in his own death before entering the Promised Land. This causes the Lord to then anoint Joshua as the leader of Israel per *Deuteronomy 34:1-9*. Under Joshua's leadership, Israel now begins the conquest of all pagan nations who inhabit the Promised Land per the Lord God's instruction. This conquest included instructions to take nothing devoted to destruction and to spare no one from the sword so that none of Israel's men could intermarry with any pagan women of those being conquered, as *Deuteronomy chapters 7-8* detail. The Lord God gave these instructions because He knew the men of Israel would succumb to their

idol worship and forget that it was He who had delivered these nations before them.

Unfortunately, Israel does indeed act *unfaithfully* regarding things devoted to destruction, as does King Solomon in turning to idol worship through the many pagan women he marries into his harem. This is why the Lord didn't just remove all pagan nations from the Promised Land ahead of Israel, as He wanted to see if they would indeed demonstrate *faith* and obedience to His Word. It is for this reason that Paul tells us biblical law has no power to prevent anyone from breaking it, and thus, has no power to make anyone righteous before the Lord per *Romans 3:19-20* and *Romans 4:13-17*. *Faith*, followed by obedience, was all the Lord required of Israel to remain His chosen, but was unattainable as sin had entered the world through Adam. In *Romans 3:21-22* and *Hebrews 10:1-18* we see that animal sacrifice was only a temporary appeasement before the Lord, and why the coming of Jesus Christ with His once-and-for-all blood sacrifice is necessary.

The Books of History: Joshua - Esther

These books of history were written by several known and unknown Jewish authors to and for the Jews of Israel. Beginning with the book of Joshua, these books detail Israel moving into the Promised Land and highlight her peak under King David and his son King Solomon. We know from *Deuteronomy 1:38* that the Lord had appointed Joshua to now lead Israel into the Promised Land. Joshua, however, also sees the *unfaithfulness* of Israel per *Joshua 7:1-15*, but the Lord remains *faithful* to the covenant promise He had made to Abraham, and Israel does indeed begin to receive the Promised Land as *Joshua 13:1* through *Joshua 21:43* details. We then see the death of Joshua in *Joshua 24:27-30*, after which, the book of *Judges*

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begins. It is here where an angel of the Lord rebukes Israel for failing to complete the conquest of Canaan as instructed. The angel further tells Israel that all those left unconquered “will be as thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a snare to you” in *Judges 2:1-5*. As Israel continued in their *unfaithful* ways, they do indeed begin to follow the false gods of all the peoples left unconquered around them. This further angers the Lord who then gives Israel over to their enemies. In *Judges 2:16* we now see the Lord raise up a succession of judges to save Israel from the hands of those who had plundered them, yet, Israel continued to remain rebellious which further incited the Lord’s anger against them. These judges were then forced to beg for the Lord’s forgiveness on behalf of Israel as they were determined to be an *unfaithful* and disobedient nation.

We now move on to the book of *Ruth*, where Israel is collapsing as a result of living only to please themselves, but due to the *faithfulness* of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz, the Lord again redeems Israel from death. It is also here in *Ruth 4:13-22* where the line of King David begins, as the descendants of Perez through David’s father Jesse are listed. In the next book of *1 Samuel*, we see the line of judges come to an end as the last judge, Samuel, is told by the Lord to anoint Saul as king over Israel per *1 Samuel 9:15-17*. Sadly, Saul also succumbs to *unfaithful* disobedience, giving the Lord cause to remove him in favor of a man after His own heart, David, as *1 Samuel 13:11-14* delineates. Thus, I metaphorically liken the Lord’s fondness for David to the song “**More Than You Know**”¹⁰ as sung by Michelle Pfeiffer in the 1989 film *The Fabulous Baker Boys*. Still a boy, David is now anointed by Samuel before the Lord in *1 Samuel 16:12-13*, after which, he demonstrates great *faith* before all Israel in single-handedly killing the Philistine giant Goliath when all others shuddered in fear per *1 Samuel 17:32-58*. King Saul, upon seeing the Lord was with David, begins

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to feel envy and fear as David continues to prevail with great success in everything that he sends him out to do. Upon succumbing to his envy and fear, Saul attempts to kill David as detailed in *1 Samuel 18:5* through *1 Samuel 20:42*. David narrowly escapes Saul's first attempt while also escaping others with the help of his wife Michal and his friend Jonathan, the son of Saul. David could easily have killed Saul on two separate occasions but spared him each time as David knew the Lord had anointed Saul and would remove him at the proper time per *1 Samuel 26:7-12*. Thus, as detailed in *1 Samuel 31:1-4*, Saul falls on his own sword out of fear and cowardice after being overrun by the Philistines in battle.

In the next book, *2 Samuel*, we see the reign of King David detailed along with Israel's rise to greatness under his *faithful* kingship. But after continued triumphs and blessings, King David also succumbs to sin. He begins to lust after Bathsheba, the wife of his soldier Uriah, whom David plots to have killed so that he may have her for himself as described in *2 Samuel 11:1* through *2 Samuel 12:23*. The Lord does forgive David, but the consequences of this terrible sin remain with him for the rest of his life as the Lord takes his infant son, leaving David devastated. Feeling terrible grief, David declares that he will have to go to his son, for his son will not be coming back in *2 Samuel 12:22-23*. Then, toward the end of King David's reign, we again see him sin against the Lord in taking an unauthorized military census, and like before, bring on regretful consequences per *2 Samuel 24:1-15*. These instances further demonstrate that despite being forgiven, the consequences of sin can remain with us forever. We can see an excellent example of this premise in the 2000 film *The Patriot*, where **Benjamin Martin laments his fear**¹¹ that one day his sins over Fort Wilderness would return to visit him, and the cost is more than he can bear.

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In the next book, *1 Kings*, we now see an aged King David proclaim that his son Solomon will succeed him as king over Israel in *1 Kings 1:32-40*. Thus, Solomon begins his kingship by asking the Lord for wisdom to rule justly, just as his father King David had suggested. Because Solomon demonstrates great *faith* in asking for wisdom to correctly administer justice, the Lord further gives him great wealth and honor which he did not ask for, but could have per *1 Kings 3:5-15*. As Solomon possessed great wisdom and wealth above all, the whole world now sought an audience with him to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart, as *1 Kings 10:23-24* delineates. But Solomon also loved many foreign women, clinging to them even as they turned his heart away to other gods. Unlike his father David, Solomon was not wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord God as *1 Kings 11:1-13* describes. Thus, the Lord tells Solomon that He will take all Israel from him, save for one tribe to be left for his son so that David will always have a lamp before the Lord in Jerusalem. As he had been made king for all his days, the Lord tells Solomon that Israel will not be taken from him, but will taken from the hand of his son.

We next see the Lord bring the Edomite Hadad and the Syrian Rezon back to harass Israel. Both men had fled King David's execution of all men when he conquered Edom and Zobah in *1 Kings 11:14-25*. The prophet Ahijah then meets with Jeroboam, an Ephraimite of northern Israel, to inform him that he is to receive ten of Israel's tribes due to Solomon's *unfaithfulness*. But King Solomon, having heard this, attempts to kill Jeroboam, who quickly flees to Egypt until after the death of Solomon per *1 Kings 11:26-40*. Jeroboam then returns to Israel during the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam, who now rejects the advice of his father's elders, leading Jeroboam and all Israel into a rebellion against Rehoboam and the house of David as *1 Kings 12:1-24* details.

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Jeroboam then takes ten of Israel's tribes, creating the northern kingdom of Israel, while the southern kingdom of Judah kept the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, per the Lord's Words to Solomon. But sadly, the northern kingdom quickly sinks into monstrous immorality and idolatry due to poor kingship and *unfaithfulness* as the verses of *1 Kings 12:25* through *2 Kings 17:4* reveal. The Lord then tells the prophet Elijah that He has reserved seven thousand of its people to remain a *faithful* remnant, as the rest have turned to the idol worship of Baal per *1 Kings 19:12-18*. Because the northern kingdom had turned completely away from the Lord, He causes Assyria to invade and disperse the entire northern kingdom from Samaria, its capital city. The king of Assyria then brings people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, and Sepharviam to replace the Israelites he had dispersed in *2 Kings 17:1-24*. As a caveat to this biblical truth, it is also very possible that some Israelites of the northern kingdom could have fled down to the southern kingdom during the Assyrian invasion.

The next book, *1 Chronicles*, begins with a genealogy of Adam through Abraham and the sons of Israel up through the reign of King David, while *2 Chronicles* details the reign of King Solomon and other kings of Judah. Then, just as the Lord had done with the northern kingdom through Assyria, He now sends Babylon from the East to conquer Judah and Jerusalem due to the many *unfaithful* and disobedient acts being committed by her and her kings. Thus, nearly all are taken into captive exile back to Babylon so that the Lord may restore them at a later time. And this is exactly what we see in the next book, *Ezra*, as the Lord now moves King Cyrus of Persia to declare that Judah's captives are to return and rebuild the Lord God's temple and Jerusalem. The reason we see the king of Persia here is that Babylon had been conquered by the Persians during the captivity of Judah. The first group of exiles to return are led by Zerubbabel,

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while the second are led by Ezra, both of whom were men of God. Following a renewal of *faith* through repentance of sin, Ezra also renews Israel's covenant to the Lord and establishes new policies. The next book, *Nehemiah*, details another man of God, named Nehemiah, who, after many years, leads the third and final group of exiles back to Jerusalem.

Lastly, the book of *Esther* takes place in Persia within the palace of King Xerxes during Judah's captivity. It describes Esther's efforts to save her people from a treacherous death. Esther was a Jew and one of many beautiful young virgins sought for the king. She had found favor with King Xerxes who then made her his queen. Per the Father's plan, I like to think King Xerxes saw Esther as similar to the woman praised in the song "Lady"¹² by The Commodores. Thus, through *faith*, Esther intercedes before King Xerxes on behalf of her adopted father Mordecai and fellow Jews who were threatened with death by Haman, one of King Xerxes's chief advisors. Because of Esther's *faithful* courage, Mordecai and her fellow Jews are delivered from death, while Haman and his sons were hanged on the very gallows Haman had intended for Mordecai. At this point, I'd also like to acknowledge the important contributions made by all *faithful* women of the bible through the song "One for the Girls"¹³ by smooth-jazz trumpeter Rick Braun.

The Books of Poetry: Job - Song of Solomon

In these books of poetry, we see several known and unknown Jewish authors, including David, who wrote part of *Psalms*, and his son Solomon, who authored *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, and *Song of Solomon*. Again, these books were all written to and for the Jews of Israel. We start with the book of *Job*, which is considered the oldest book of the bible and speaks of a blameless upright man named Job who feared God and shunned evil. To exemplify

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Job's *faith*, the Lord agrees to let Satan put him to the test in allowing many calamities upon Job to prove that he will not curse the Lord. Fortunately, Job's *faith* endures, but not before he questions the Lord over the calamities he had experienced. As a result, Job is vetted by the Lord, who asks him, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Now humbled, Job submits himself to the Lord who then blesses Job even more than before.

In the next book, *Psalms*, we see several themes, such as praising the Lord, praising His power, praising His forgiveness, and, being thankful while trusting in the Lord. We also see prophecy concerning the future Savior and King of Israel. These themes and prophecies are expressed through songs of praise, worship, poetry, and confessions, all of which convey insight into Israel's edification during the good and bad times of life under King David. Thus, we see in *2 Samuel 6:13-15* and *Acts 13:22* that no one worshiped the Lord from the heart greater than King David as he danced before the Lord, something I liken to the song "**Dancing Queen**"¹⁴ by the supergroup ABBA. David's worship also included music and a choral director per *1 Chronicles 15:25-28*, which I further liken to the song "**El Cantante**"¹⁵ ("the singer") as performed by the great salsa singer Hector Lavoe.

These last books of poetry contain many examples of practical insight. The book of *Proverbs* teaches Israel about the fruits of applying the Lord's divine wisdom to daily Jewish life. The book of *Ecclesiastes* further explains that only by pursuing the Lord's knowledge and purpose can we have true meaning and satisfaction in this life. Remember, Solomon had drifted from the Lord in pursuit of his own desires, only to realize these things meant nothing without the Lord behind them. This is an excellent lesson which should give everyone pause to consider how much time we spend pursuing

our own plans versus seeking God's plan for our lives per *Colossians 3:1-2*! The last book of poetry, *Song of Solomon*, discusses the topics of love, commitment, and looking beyond a person's physical appearance, themes which describe Christ's love for Jerusalem, who will be His bride. The apostle John writes about this very thing in the book of Revelation where he says the New Jerusalem is a bride for Christ per *Revelation 21:2*.

The Major Prophets: Isaiah - Daniel

As we now begin the Old Testament prophetic books, please understand they were all written from the perspective that Israel is, without a doubt, the chosen nation of the Lord, as stated in *Exodus 19:5-6*. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah, along with their capital cities of Samaria and Jerusalem, were all committing acts of idolatry and treachery against the Lord, prompting His threats of invasion, exile, and death for their unrepentant disregard of His word. The Lord repeatedly shouts these warnings at Israel, Judah, Samaria, and Jerusalem through His prophets in order to give them every possible chance to turn from their evil ways and avoid His sentence of exile and death. All Israel needed to do was heed the Lord's call of repentance, and return to Him, reminding me of the song "**Baby Come Back**"¹⁶ by the rock band Player. But as the books of *1 Kings* through *Esther* have already revealed, Israel chose to ignore these prophetic warnings. This gave the Lord no choice but to execute His promise of exile and death upon them all. Thus, these books detail all prophetic warnings and their consequences spoken by the Lord through His prophets, as well as Israel's permanent restoration to the Lord through their prophesized Messiah after the Day of the Lord is complete. The expression "the Day of the Lord" refers to all prophetic judgments to be seen as part of end of days prophecy

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when the Kingdom Gospel is preached to the whole world per *Matthew 24:14*.

We then need to understand there is a difference between a post-exile Judean remnant which rebuilds the temple of God and Jerusalem, and a *faithful* House of Jacob remnant elect to be permanently restored once the Day of the Lord is complete. The apostle Paul also confirms this in *Romans 9:27-29*. As Jacob was the father of Israel's twelve tribes, the phrase "House of Jacob" represents Israel, and specifically, her leaders who govern for the king in Jerusalem. These things are important to discern because Israel will again be dispersed from the temple and Jerusalem by the Romans into a second exile. Then, once the Day of the Lord is complete, the Lord will extend His hand a second time to recover Israel's remnant elect per *Isaiah 11:1-16*. Jesus Himself confirms that He will gather Israel's elect back to Him at His Second Advent in *Matthew 24:31* and *Mark 13:26-24*. At that moment, Israel's righteous dead will rise to join their remnant elect brethren as these prophetic books will reveal. All of Israel will then be permanently restored to their chosen nation status as a kingdom of priests to their Messiah and King—Jesus Christ. This will then complete the Gospel of the Kingdom, or the Kingdom Gospel. The term, "Israel's remnant elect," refers to the 144,000 Jews marked to survive through *faith* the Day of the Lord, for they will serve and follow Christ at His Second Advent per *Revelation 7:3-8* and *Revelation 14:1-5*. Again, the term Gospel of the Kingdom refers to the message proclaimed by God's two witnesses to the whole world during the latter half of the seven-year tribulation, as chapter 10 will detail.

Thus, when we get to chapter 10, everyone will see how the book of *Revelation* brings together all end of days prophecy found in these prophetic books. Chapters 3 and 10 will further show how the antichrist (a.k.a.the

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man of lawlessness per *2 Thessalonians 2:9* and the abomination of desolation in *Matthew 24:15*) is prophesized to come out of ancient Rome during the apostles' generation as Christ confirms in *Matthew 24:1-35*, *Matthew 16:27-27*, and *Luke 21:31-32*. Thus, being released from exile and returning to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem is only the beginning of Israel's restoration. Now that we have a big picture to build on, let's begin with the Major Prophets followed by the Minor Prophets, as they all speak to the Lord's warnings along with end of days prophecy to varying degrees.

The first of these books, *Isaiah*, begins with a summary of Isaiah's message in *Isaiah chapters 1-5*. They detail the Lord's anger over the sins of Judah and Zion (the mountain of Jerusalem), which, if the Lord hadn't left survivors, would have ended like Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord asks Israel to do what is right in seeking justice through obedience so that they may eat the best of the land, but also states that continued resistance and rebellion will end in being devoured by the sword. Isaiah then reveals the House of Jacob has abandoned her people with a day of reckoning to come where only the Lord will be exalted, a clear reference to end of days prophecy. Isaiah further elaborates that an Israeli remnant in Zion and Jerusalem will survive this day of reckoning cleansed by a spirit of judgment and fire; this, again, refers to Israel's remnant elect, or the sealed 144,000 spoken of in *Revelation*. These will be called holy, as Gentiles who also survive this day of reckoning will cling to them, eager to learn the way of the Lord. We then see the Lord asking Jerusalem and the men of Judah to judge between Him and His vineyard, the House of Israel or northern kingdom—for what more could He have done? Per *Isaiah 5:1-14*, we also see the jaws of Sheol are about to swallow the evil in Zion. To conclude Isaiah's summary, we learn that all of humanity will be brought low and

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humbled through the righteous justice of Christ in *Isaiah 5:15-16*, with further confirmation seen in *Psalms 2:6-12* and *Revelation 12:5*.

Isaiah chapter 6 now details Isaiah's heavenly vision and commission, as we see the Lord seated on a throne and the seraphim standing above Him declaring the Lord's Glory. These living creatures are described as having six wings, two of which cover their faces, two their feet, and two which are used to fly about as they call to each other, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts; all the earth is full of His Glory." Their voices cause the doorposts and thresholds of the heavenly temple to shake and fill with smoke. As Isaiah laments about being unclean before the King and Lord of Hosts, one of the seraphim takes a glowing coal from the altar and presses it against Isaiah's lips telling him that his iniquity has now been removed and his sin atoned for. The Lord then speaks to Isaiah telling him to callous the hearts, deafen the ears, and close the eyes of His people lest they become enlightened and turn to be healed. This, of course, is nothing more than metaphoric language for the prophetic warnings and consequences he is to preach to his people in regards to their disobedience and lack of *faith*.

Isaiah must do this until the Lord has driven his people far away, for nothing more than a desolate and ravaged land will be left to the tenth that remain. He is then told to inform King Ahaz that the northern kingdom is planning to invade Judah, but the Lord will use Assyria against them as we saw back in *2 Kings*. The Lord also tells Isaiah that false prophets are speaking in His name and must be rebuked, for their prophecy of comfort and peace will be turned against them. This leads us into the rest of Isaiah's book where he repeatedly prophesizes against the Houses of Israel, Judah, and the Lord's city of Jerusalem, urging them to turn from their wicked ways to avoid the Lord's sentence of invasion and exile. We next see that Ephraim, Samaria, and Damascus within the House of Israel, or the

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northern kingdom, are warned of Assyrian invasion due to their evil ways per *Isaiah 7:17* and *Isaiah 8:4*. For the Lord says only He is to be feared and called Holy; yet they instead consult spirits of the dead or spiritualists who whisper and mutter as opposed to seeking their God per *Isaiah 8:13-19*.

Judgment is then prophesized for the nations of Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Ethiopia, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, and Tyre with God's judgment over the earth to follow as *Isaiah chapters 12-24* detail. We then see full restoration for Zion and the Lord's redeemed along with a renewal prophesized for Israel's *faithful* dead, whose bodies will arise awakened to song per *Isaiah 26:19*. The apostle John also refers to this moment in *Revelation 11:15-18* and *Revelation 20:4*, calling these now risen *faithful* as Jewish prophets, servants, and saints in addition to those who feared the name of the Lord. We can then pair these prophesized events with *Isaiah 11:10-11*, where the Lord will extend His hand a second time to recover His faithful remnant from all countries, as mentioned earlier. Israel's Messiah, Jesus Christ, is also prophesized and described many times over in the verses of *Isaiah 7:13-16*, *Isaiah 9:1-7*, *Isaiah 11:1-16*, *Isaiah 28:16*, *Isaiah 52:13-15*, and most importantly, in *Isaiah 53:1-12*, which details His prophesized torture, death, and resurrection.

We next see the Lord take his sword, which is the Word of God, and bring judgment on Leviathan the fleeing serpent (Satan) or the dragon of the sea, per *Isaiah 27:1* and *Revelation 12:3*. The Lord then pronounces judgment on Ephraim of the northern kingdom along with a woe to the City of David or Bethlehem to the southwest of Jerusalem. But He will have grace for the people who dwell in Zion and Jerusalem. We then see more warnings, judgments, and blessings which pair with the future glory of Zion as Israel and Jerusalem are restored per the Lord's Word to stand

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forever declaring His glory in *Isaiah 40:1-31*. Isaiah ends his book with the Lord's free offer of mercy, while also stressing the works of fasts and keeping the Sabbath to be seen as righteous per Old Testament law. He further speaks of separation for those practicing wickedness, for heaven is the Lord's throne room and the earth His footstool as stated in *Isaiah 66:1*. In summary, we can see the book of *Isaiah* has a full range of warnings and prophecies for all Israel, not to mention Isaiah's heavenly vision, so please study it carefully and compare scripture with scripture.

We next come to the book of *Jeremiah*, which begins with Jeremiah's calling as a youth. This causes him to worry, but the Lord reassures him that He has put His words into Jeremiah and he is not to fear his people. The Lord then expresses His anger over the idolatry and treachery of Judah, telling Jeremiah that her sister, *faithless* Israel the northern kingdom, has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. The Lord also warns Jeremiah of invasion from the north due to Judah's godlessness, for they choose to follow their sister's example even as she was sent away through a writ of divorce because of her harlotry. Jeremiah then speaks at the temple proclaiming repentance for their sins in order to remain in the place of their fathers, for the Lord will make Judah desolate and Jerusalem a heap of ruins.

Like Isaiah, Jeremiah repeats these warnings and judgments to Judah and Jerusalem while also condemning their false prophets and idol worship. Jeremiah then sends a letter to captive Judeans in Babylon explaining they are to prosper within their captivity, for once Babylon's seventy years have passed the Lord will restore them back to the land per *Jeremiah 29:1-11*. But Jeremiah also says that Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials will not escape their Babylonian enemies, nor will anyone remaining in Jerusalem or Judah, for they will all die by the sword or famine as the land will be desolate and uninhabitable. At this point, I'm sure all of Jerusalem must

have felt just like the colonial survivors from the reimagined television series *Battlestar Galactica*, as their enemies the **Cylons suddenly arrive**¹⁷ on their adopted planet of New Caprica to occupy them.

Because of Jeremiah's prophecies there are many plots against his life, but the Lord delivers Jeremiah from these threats only for him to be thrown down into a cistern and imprisoned for his *faithfulness* to the Lord. Like Isaiah, Jeremiah also speaks of a promised restoration for Israel within a Davidic kingdom where a righteous branch of King David will spring forth to execute justice and righteousness upon the earth in *Jeremiah 23:5-6*. This, of course, is all end of days prophecy where there will be a new covenant between the Lord and Israel, for His law will be written on their hearts and He will be their God per *Jeremiah 31:33-34*. Again, this is all language that speaks to Israel's Messiah Jesus Christ at His Second Advent per the Kingdom Gospel, where Christ will reign as King and Israel will at last dwell securely with Him. Echoing Isaiah, Jeremiah also speaks of judgment for the surrounding nations of Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, Hazor, Elam, and Babylon, after which his book abruptly ends with the fall of Jerusalem.

The next book, Lamentations, was also written by Jeremiah. It begins right where his last book ends, after the fall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah starts by expressing his passionate grief over Zion's fate, lamenting his sorrow in describing the city as a lonely widow who is covered with the Lord's anger. He goes on to speak of his physical and mental condition having felt the pain and affliction of Israel, which he then pairs with his hope in the Lord's loving kindness and mercy. Jeremiah goes on to describe the siege against Zion, stating the Lord has accomplished His work. He then ends his lament with a prayer of mercy and restoration. This short but to the point book really expresses the emotional pain Jeremiah felt for Jerusalem and his

people, despite the evil they had intended for him. We will see the apostle Paul express something similar in regards to Israel in a later chapter.

The next book, *Ezekiel*, begins with Ezekiel's commission as a prophet and vision of the Lord. His vision is very similar to what Isaiah had seen. Ezekiel was a priest who received his vision standing by the river Chebar, or Kebar, in the land of the Chaldeans already amongst the exiles of Judah. His vision begins with a coming storm as fire flashes from a great cloud and something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. Within the cloud Ezekiel sees four living creatures gleaming like burnished bronze in the form of a man; each has four faces, four wings, human hands, straight legs, and the feet of a calf. Three of their four faces are described as that of a lion to the right, an ox to the left, and an eagle, with two of their four wings used to cover their bodies and two that were completely spread out. *Ezekiel 10:14* further confirms the four faces were that of a man, lion, eagle, and a cherub, which must be the ox or bull mentioned in *Ezekiel 1:10*.

Each of these four living creatures also has a wheel to accompany them. Their appearance is described as a wheel within a wheel with lofty rims having the color of sparkling beryl or emerald green in *Ezekiel 1:15-17* and *Ezekiel 10:9-10*. Within each wheel resides the spirit of the living creature it accompanies, moving as they move. We also see the living creatures and wheels further described as having eyes all around in *Ezekiel 1:18-21* and *Ezekiel 10:11-12*. Ezekiel then details an expanse of awesome gleaming crystal over the heads of the four living creatures and a voice which came from above the expanse. Along with the voice, there is something like a throne and a figure which has the appearance of a man. This figure from His waist up has a gleam like amber with fire within and all around, while from His waist down has the appearance of fire along with a brilliant light that surrounded Him. This brilliant light has the look of a rainbow within

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a cloud on a rainy day, all of which speaks to the appearance, likeness, and Glory of the Lord God.

The Lord now tells Ezekiel to prophesize to the sons of Israel. They are a rebellious house, but he is not to fear them for their blood will not be on Ezekiel's hands if he does as the Lord instructs. The Lord tells him to besiege Jerusalem through an iron plate, after which Ezekiel is to lie on his left side for 390 days to bear the iniquity of the House of Israel, and then on his right side for forty days to bear the iniquity of the House of Judah as described in *Ezekiel 4:1-8*. The Lord further elaborates that these days are a corresponding number of years that both the northern and southern kingdoms are to suffer for their idolatry and treachery against the Lord before they are restored back to Him, and the land. As we saw in *Ezekiel 1:1-3*, most of Judah was already in captive exile being Jerusalem would have faced repeated sieges by the Babylonians. This explains why Ezekiel is told there will be forty years of iniquitous captivity as thirty years have already passed to total the seventy years of captive exile spoken of in *Jeremiah 29:10-11* and *Daniel 9:1-2*.

Concerning the House of Israel, once we get to the book of *Revelation*, it will be revealed that 490 years are appointed until the Messiah Jesus Christ arrives to be crucified on the cross, and then rise from death per Messianic prophecy. By the time Ezekiel wrote his prophetic book, the House of Israel had already been in dispersed exile for roughly one hundred years, as deduced from biblical history. This leaves 390 years more of dispersed exile before the remnant elect of Israel's twelve tribes can be called back through the ram's horn seen in *Isaiah 27:12-13*. Returning to Ezekiel, the Lord continues to express His anger over the abominations being committed in Jerusalem, especially the profaning of His temple, for which He declares the wicked will be punished. As the Lord had not yet spoken

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to Ezekiel of restoration for his people, I'm sure he must have feared their demise due to the Lord's anger against them.

Ezekiel chapter 10 now speaks of a second heavenly vision where the four living creatures described earlier are named the cherubim, and the four wheels accompanying each of them the whirling wheels. We also see that the translations of *Ezekiel 1:12* and *Ezekiel 1:20* do not capitalize the word spirit, but they do tell us these living creatures move as the spirit moves inferring it is the Spirit of the Lord God. We have further seen that the Spirit of the Lord has the appearance of a man when He speaks to both Isaiah and Ezekiel in *Isaiah 6:1* and *Ezekiel 1:26*. Per these heavenly descriptions, we can now see these living creatures described in *Isaiah* and *Ezekiel* serve a specific purpose and function for the Lord God.

From *Isaiah 6:2-4* and *Revelation 4:6-10*, we see the seraphim constantly declare the Lord's eternal Glory while the cherubim and whirling wheels serve as an ever-present guard and honor guard to the Lord God and heaven per *Genesis 3:23-24*, *Ezekiel 1:12*, *Ezekiel 1:19-20*, and *Ezekiel 28:14*. Again, once we get to chapter 10, the book of *Revelation* will explain how Satan had been the most perfect cherubim created by the Lord God, having held the top position within the Father's heavenly hierarchy per *Ezekiel 28:14-15*. As such, I want to provide a definitive biblical definition of these living creatures so that no one misrepresents these verses as written accounts of advanced extraterrestrial beings or unidentified flying objects as some contend. If these truly were UFO sightings or advanced alien encounters, I'm quite confident the prophets who wrote these books would not have been specifically instructed to warn Israel of an impending exile and future restoration to the Lord...unless of course, they were Jewish extraterrestrials! The bible also doesn't refer to these living creatures as

angels like we see with Gabriel and the archangel Michael in *Daniel 9:21*, *Daniel 12:1*, *Luke 1:19-27*, *Jude 1:9*, and *Revelation 12:7*.

Moving forward, as Israel had not turned from their treachery and idolatry, we now see the Lord, the cherubim, and the whirling wheels depart the temple until the time of the new heaven and earth, as chapter 10 will reveal. The Lord God could no longer tolerate Israel's lack of *faith* and disobedience, prompting His departure from the temple along with His sentence of exile and death to get their attention. Ezekiel is then carried away and shown the leaders of Israel who will be judged because of their iniquity and evil advice, but he is also told that exiles who follow the Lord's statutes and ordinances with a renewed heart will be restored to the land. We then see the Lord speak of Ezekiel's exile as a metaphor for the exile of Jerusalem, stating the city will not be spared as their false prophets and idolaters will be condemned with her.

The Lord next speaks of restoration to the land while also purging Israel of all rebels who had transgressed against Him. Ezekiel further hears the Lord speaking of judgment for the nations of Ammon, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, Egypt, Assyria, and Israel followed by the latter's promised restoration. The Lord then tells him the restoration of Judah and Israel will be within a Davidic kingdom, as those who were long dead will rise from their graves back to life through His Spirit in *Ezekiel 37:1-14*. Again, this complements the verses of *Isaiah 26:19*, *Daniel 12:2*, *Revelation 11:15-18*, and *Revelation 20:4-6*. Israel's restoration is, of course, another reference to end of days prophecy, as we've seen in *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah*, but Christ is now referred to as King David who will rule as King forever.

Ezekiel is then told to prophesy against Gog of Magog, the prince of Meshech, and Tubal in *Ezekiel chapters 38-39*; Magog, Meshech, and Tubal

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were three of Japheth's seven sons who himself was Noah's third son per *Genesis 6:9-10*, *Genesis 10:1-5*, and *1 Chronicles 1:4-5*. We can then pair *Ezekiel chapters 38-39* with *Isaiah 66:15-19* as part of end of days prophecy to be seen on the Day of the Lord. The bible doesn't tell us where these men come from, but does say that Meshech and Tubal were merchants who traded bronze and slaves for merchandise with Trye in *Ezekiel 27:13*. Along with Israel's restoration, Ezekiel ends his book detailing the Lord's instructions for a rebuilt temple and all activities within. These temple activities are further paired with the land in terms of a post-exile Israel, and a forever-restored Israeli remnant elect.

We now come to the last book of the major prophets, *Daniel*, which tells the story of Daniel, who along with other captured sons of Israel had been conscripted at a young age to serve within the court of king Nebuchadnezzar during Judah's captive exile per *Daniel 1:3-7*. Daniel was a youth of great *faith* who did not want to be defiled with food and wine provided for the king's court; he requested only vegetables with water for him and his friends. But the king's commander feared death if the diet Daniel had requested caused them to look haggard when appearing before the king. Understanding the commander's concern, Daniel asked that their diet be tested for ten days prior to their audience with the king. To the commander's surprise, their appearance was healthier and fatter than all other youths of the king's court.

God had given Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego intelligence and knowledge above all others, but there were none found like Daniel, who also understood visions and dreams as stated in *Daniel 1:17*. Because of their gifted abilities, Daniel and his friends engendered great resentment amongst the king's other counselors, who plotted to have them killed. But as their *faith* to the Lord was unshakable

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from death within a furnace of fire per *Daniel 3:1-30*, while Daniel escaped death within a lion's den per *Daniel 6:1-24*.

Daniel's conscripted service lasted the entire seventy years of Judah's captive exile, but his *faith* and abilities earned him the top administrator position while serving the Babylonian kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, followed by the Medo-Persian kings Cyrus and Darius. What happened to Daniel was also reminiscent of Jacob's son Joseph, who was sold into slavery through the treachery of his jealous brothers, to then become second in command over all Egypt per the Lord's plan in *Genesis chapters 37-50*. The rest of this book concerns Daniel's interpretations of dreams and visions, which detail end of days prophecy to be discussed in chapter 10. Thus, we have now completed the Major Prophets, so let's take a look at what the Minor Prophets have to say.

The Minor Prophets: Hosea - Malachi

The first book, Hosea, begins with the Lord speaking to Hosea in a metaphoric manner in telling him to take a wife of harlotry with whom he is to have children of harlotry, referring to the *unfaithfulness* of Israel, the northern kingdom. The southern kingdom of Judah is also mentioned, but this book is specifically directed at the northern tribe of Ephraim, which is to be punished through Assyrian invasion and dispersion. Despite these sins of rampant idolatry, the Lord also promises future blessings for those of the northern kingdom who walk in the righteous ways of the Lord.

The next book, *Joel*, uses a metaphor of locusts that will invade Judah and Jerusalem leaving only devastation, which again is the Babylonian invasion. As such, I can imagine all within the city of Jerusalem trembling

in fear at the approaching Babylonian force, something I liken to the “**Battle Of The Hornburg**”¹⁸ or Helm’s Deep as seen in the 2002 film *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. But like Hosea, Joel also speaks of deliverance for those that call on the Lord, along with judgment for all nations surrounding them on the Day of the Lord.

In the next book, Amos, we see that he too has visions from the Lord concerning the transgressions committed by Israel and Judah, whom the Lord had chosen from among all families on the earth. All of Israel’s twelve tribes were guilty of iniquity against the Lord, to whom they have not returned even as He promised forgiveness. The Lord then tells Amos a judgment of exile and death is coming to all the sinners of His people who will die by the sword. This book concludes with end of days prophecy speaking of Israel’s restoration along with all other nations called by His name as chapter 10 detailing the book of *Revelation* will reveal.

Moving on, the book of *Obadiah* begins with Obadiah’s vision against the kingdom of Edom. Edom shared boundaries with Judah to the southeast, but had committed acts of violence against Jacob or the nation of Israel. Obadiah’s vision then concludes with the Day of the Lord, where all nations will reap what they sew, as Israel will again possess all her land once end of days prophecy is complete.

Many are familiar with the next book, *Jonah*, because it tells the story of Jonah who was swallowed by a great fish as a result of running from the Lord’s commission. The Lord had called on Jonah to preach repentance to the people of Nineveh in Assyria, prompting Jonah’s quick departure as he wanted no part of this. But the Lord responds to Jonah’s departure in causing a great fish to swallow him, leaving Jonah stuck within its belly for three days and nights. In his distress, Jonah prays to the Lord from within

the great fish vowing to fulfill his calling, then declaring, “Salvation is from the LORD!” The Lord then commands the fish, and it vomits him out onto dry land. As *Matthew 12:38-41* reveals, this period of time spent within the great fish is symbolic of the three days and nights Jesus Christ will spend in the heart of the earth before rising from death in an everlasting glory.

This terrifying experience absolutely motivates Jonah to fulfill his commission of preaching repentance to the people of Nineveh, who do indeed repent. But this angers the people of Judah, as they believed these pagans weren't worthy of the Lord's mercy. Jonah is also angered over Nineveh's forgiveness, but the Lord rebukes him in stating, Should I not pity those who cannot tell their right hand from their left? The book of Jonah abruptly ends on this note, but Jonah's decision to run from the Lord's call reminds me of my own dash from His calling through the song “**I Ran**”¹⁹ by the new wave band A Flock of Seagulls.

We next come to the book of *Micah*, which begins with a telling of coming destruction and exile for both Israel and Judah due to their rebelliousness against the Lord. It concerns the transgression of Jacob's leaders in Jerusalem and Israel's rulers in Samaria within the House of Israel per *Micah 1:5-9* and *Micah 3:5-12*. We see how the sins of idolatry and false prophecy perpetrated by the House of Israel had even reached the gates of Jerusalem. As such, the Lord tells Micah the rulers within the House of Israel, along with Jacob's leaders in Jerusalem, will be destroyed through exile and death having led their people astray, as detailed in *Micah chapters 2-3*. The Lord further tells Micah that He will gather His remnant of Jacob and Israel as a flock of sheep, at which time their King and Lord will lead them per end of days prophecy.

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Micah chapter 4 next reveals how in the last days many nations will go to the mountain of the Lord and House of Jacob to learn His ways, for He will judge many people's and arbitrate for strong nations while ruling forever from a restored Zion. It is obviously veiled here, but *Micah chapter 4* is referring to the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ just before Satan is again released per *Revelation 20:6-8*. Again, these are post-Kingdom Gospel events to be detailed in chapter 10. *Micah chapter 5* then speaks of the ruler from Bethlehem who shepherds His flock in the strength of the Lord as the remnant of Jacob is amongst the nations. The Lord now brings His case against the nation of Israel whom He had brought out of slavery from Egypt. Israel's wealthy inhabitants were now full of violence as her residents speak lies through a deceitful tongue. As such, Micah acknowledges there is no upright person among them. Micah then ends his book in stating that though he falls and dwells in darkness, he will rise as the Lord is his light and God of salvation, leaving those who mocked the Lord's Word in shame.

The next book, *Nahum*, speaks of Nahum who, like Jonah, was a prophet to Nineveh. But unlike Jonah, he preached only of coming judgment and destruction, as Nineveh had fallen back into wickedness.

We quickly move on to the book of *Habakkuk*, which concerns a prophet that continually cried out to the Lord. Habakkuk kept asking why he must witness violence and destruction as the wicked continue to surround the righteous while the law is ignored, causing justice to be perverted. The Lord reveals He is stirring up the Chaldeans who are fierce and mighty, but Habakkuk asks why He brings the wicked to swallow up those more righteous than themselves? Habakkuk is told to record his vision for the appointed time, for his people are committing evil acts in carving mute idols which do not hold the Lord's breath, even as they attempt to converse with them anyway. The Lord was telling Habakkuk

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that Israel had turned to idolatry in disregarding the instructions given to Moses back in *Leviticus 19:1-8*. His book ends with a prayer of salvation for his people as he trembles awaiting the day of distress for those the Lord will stir up to invade them.

The following book, *Zephaniah*, opens with the Lord declaring that He will wipe everything from the land of Judah and Jerusalem as they have not sought Him, but have turned to the false god of Baal. He then speaks of the Day of the Lord where His wrath will be on those who fill His house with violence and deceit; all inhabitants of the earth will meet a complete and terrifying end at this time. But the humble that carry out His ordinances are to seek righteousness and humility so they might be hidden on the Day of the Lord, to again dwell in the land of their enemies. Zephaniah ends his book pronouncing the Lord's woe to Jerusalem for her treachery, but also speaks of Israel's remnant elect who remain humble and do no wrong, for the Lord will be in their midst when He deals with their oppressors.

The next book, *Haggai*, begins in the second year of King Darius. We see the remnant of Judah had obeyed the voice of the Lord and demonstrated reverence. The Lord now tells Judah that He is with them and stirs their spirit to begin rebuilding His temple on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius. Having returned to Jerusalem from their seventy years of captivity, the Lord provides Judah's remnant with further encouragement. He instructs Haggai to "tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah that I am about to shake the heavens and the earth: I will take you, My servant, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and I make you like My signet Ring, for I have chosen you."

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The next book, *Zechariah*, is similar to the books of Isaiah and Ezekiel in that he too writes of heavenly visions from the Lord concerning end of days prophecy. Zechariah first speaks of the Lord's call to repentance so that all may return to Judah and Jerusalem, as it has now been seventy years since they were taken into captivity. Zechariah then has a vision in which he first sees red, sorrel, and white horses sent by the Lord to patrol the earth. We next see an angel speaking with Zechariah, telling him the Lord is extremely jealous for Jerusalem and Zion, but is also very angry with the nations who are at ease, for He will return to Jerusalem with compassion and mercy. He then sees four horns, which the angel says are the ones who scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem, after which he sees four craftsmen who have come to terrify those horns which scattered them. As chapter 10 will detail, these four horns represent four beasts which are four kingdoms, while the four craftsmen represent each kingdom that will skillfully conquer the one in power that came before it. Christ will then come as the fourth craftsman to conquer the fourth and last kingdom per *Daniel 2:34-35*. Zechariah next sees a man with a measuring line to determine the width and length of Jerusalem, but he must be told the city will be without walls, as the Lord will be a wall of fire around it, and the Glory within it; this, again, is another veiled reference to the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ per *Zechariah 2:1-13*. At this time, many nations will join themselves to Him and become His people as we previously saw in *Micah 4:1-2*.

Zechariah is then shown Joshua the high priest, who is clothed in filthy garments representing sin standing before the angel of the Lord, with Satan at his right ready to accuse him. The Lord, however, removes his filthy garments of sin and replaces them with festal robes. The Lord then gives this charge to Joshua, telling him that if he walks in His ways and keeps His instructions he will then govern the Lord's house, having charge of His

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courts and a place amongst these who are standing here. Zechariah is further told the Lord is going to bring His servant the Branch, which is the Messiah or Christ, for He will be the stone foundation of the church. His shed blood on the cross will pay for and cleanse the sins of all, after which, He will rise from death bringing life eternal to all who believe through *faith*. This stone is set before Joshua as the Lord of hosts explains He will remove the iniquity of sin from this land in one day, which will be a time when all Israelites will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree per *Zechariah 3:9-10*. Again, this speaks to Christ's blood sacrifice on the cross, which will pay for the sins of all who believe, but will Israel believe?

We next see an angel arouse Zechariah from his vision to ask what he now sees. Zechariah tells him that he sees a golden lamp stand with seven lamps, each having seven spouts with two olive trees standing on each side. As Zechariah doesn't know what this means, the angel tells him it is the Word of the Lord and says, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit." Which is a clear reference to the Holy Spirit that resides within all who believe, as He guides our paths in the way of the Lord, something Jesus explains to His disciples in *John 14:23-26*. The seven lamps and two olive trees are prelude to John's vision in Revelation, as the seven lamps will come to represent the seven scattered Jewish churches in Asia. Per *Revelation 1:10-20* these seven churches also have seven angels held as stars in the right hand of Christ. The reason these lamps are not yet lit in Zechariah's vision is because the Jewish church in Jerusalem has yet to be scattered through the persecution of Saul, as the book of Acts, covered in chapter 4, will detail.

Now these seven lamps and their seven angels also resemble the seven torches flaming with the seven Spirits of God seen in *Revelation 1:4*, *Revelation 3:1*, and *Revelation 4:5*. *Isaiah 11:1-5* describes the Spirits of God as the Spirit of the Lord or the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of wisdom, the

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Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of strength, the Spirit of knowledge, and the Spirit of fear. *Isaiah 11:1-2* further delineates that six of these Spirits of the Father encompass His Holy Spirit who will descend upon a Branch from the stump of Jessie, who is Jesus Christ per *Matthew 3:16-17* and *Luke 3:21-22* as chapter 3 will detail. Zechariah then learns the two olive trees represent the two anointed ones who will prophesy for God as seen in *Revelation 11:3-4*. We also learn the stone set before Joshua contains seven eyes, as these are the eyes of the Lord ranging to and fro throughout the earth per *Zechariah 4:8-10*.

Continuing with his vision, Zechariah now sees a flying scroll which contains the sin of man per *Revelation 5:1-10*, along with a woman in a basket representing wickedness who awaits a temple to be built for her in the land of Shinar, which is Babylon per *Revelation 17:1-5*. Zechariah then sees four chariots pulled by strong red, black, white, and dappled horses representing the four spirits of heaven who patrol the earth. These horses appear to be similar to the ones which Zechariah saw back in *Zechariah 1:8-11*, as well as similar to the four horses of the apocalypse seen in *Revelation 6:1-8*. The LORD of Hosts then tells Zechariah to make an ornate crown of gold and silver and place it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak. He is to tell Joshua this is what the LORD of Hosts says per *Zechariah 6:11-15*: “Here is a man whose name is Branch, and He will branch out from His place and build the temple of the LORD. Yes, He will build the temple of the LORD; He will be clothed in splendor and sit on His throne and rule. And He will be a priest on His throne, and there will be counsel between the two.” This is yet another prophetic biblical truth how the Son of God, Jesus Christ, will rule from the temple in Jerusalem as King and Priest per *Luke 1:32-33* and *Hebrews 9:11-12*; this, again, is the Kingdom Gospel that will be preached in all the world.

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We next see men who come from the town of Bethel seeking the Lord's favor, but the Lord of Hosts tells Zechariah they have a heart of flint as they practice the law hypocritically, refusing to hear His Word. To me, this sounds very much like the Pharisees whom Jesus will call hypocritical practitioners of the law, as chapter 3 will detail. Zechariah is then told of a coming peace at the end of days when the Lord will bring the Houses of Judah and Israel back into the land to dwell in Jerusalem, where He will be their God. In those days, men from all nations will come and seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem to entreat His favor, grasping the garment of a Jew saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" per *Zechariah 8:20-23*. Again, this is yet another veiled reference to the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ. Zechariah then speaks of prophecies against Israel's neighbors and deliverance for His people as God will indeed bless Judah and Israel at the end of days. Zechariah ends his book by again speaking of the Lord battling Jerusalem's foes and becoming King over all the earth per the Kingdom Gospel.

We now come to the last prophetic book, *Malachi*, which is also the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi begins by speaking of the Lord's love for Israel, which she has rejected. He then speaks of the priests whom the Lord will discipline for their sins along with the sins of Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem, as they will all be purified having robbed the Lord of tithes and offerings. This is followed by the Lord's judgment on those who have committed evil acts along with His remembrance of those who have feared and esteemed His name. Malachi then speaks of the Lord's final admonition against every evil-doer, telling Israel they must remember all laws, statutes, and ordinances which the Lord gave to Moses. Malachi ends his book revealing the Lord will again send to them the prophet Elijah

before the great and awesome Day of the Lord as part of end of days prophecy.

To sum up the Major and Minor prophets, we can now see that Jerusalem, along with Israel's northern and southern kingdoms, were warned many times over of what was to come because of their idolatry and evil against the Lord. Despite these many warnings, they all continued to rebelliously charge ahead, giving the Lord cause to decimate them through invasion and exile while watching; something I liken to the song "**Derezzed**"²⁰ as seen in the Disney music video depicting the 2010 film *Tron: Legacy*. Just as the Lord gives Israel every chance to repent of her idolatry and evil, He will also give Israel every chance to believe Jesus is the prophesized Christ and Chosen One come in the flesh to fulfill the promises made to her patriarchs. This is also why there is no mention of the Lord creating a new gospel through the apostle Paul in the Old Testament as chapters 3 and 4 will explain.

The **stories of Genesis along with Jewish law, Jewish history,** and especially **Jewish prophecy** were all the Israelites of the Old and New Testaments knew and believed. That is why their permanent restoration to the Lord is all premised on believing Jesus the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh, as He will rise from death to life eternal as prophesized in *Isaiah 53:1-12*. The good news that Jesus (Israel's Messiah and King) died for the sins of all, was resurrected from the dead, and will return as a King over all the earth, could then be preached to the whole world through His two witnesses per Old Testament prophecy (The Gospel of the Kingdom).

Jesus could then return to complete the Kingdom Gospel during the apostles' generation per *Matthew 16:27-28*, *Matthew 24:33-35*, and *Luke 21:31-32*. This means Israel has the potential to fulfill this destiny and

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bring about all end of days prophecy at some point after Jesus Christ ascends back into heaven. As we will see, the tail end of chapter 3 really hammers home this idea. But again, this opportunity is all premised on Israel believing that Jesus Christ is the Father's Servant and Chosen One described in *Isaiah 11:1-16* and *Isaiah 42:1-9*.

The verses of *Isaiah 43:11-13* and *Romans 11:26-32* confirm the Word of God cannot be undone. This means the Kingdom Gospel will come to fulfillment as written, but under a new Pauline gospel of life eternal, as chapter 4 will detail. This new gospel will be the result of Israel's refusal to believe that Jesus Christ is indeed the Chosen One and Son of God come in the flesh as chapter 3 will detail. This is also why we need to view the bible from a big picture perspective before examining specifics, or we may miss important connections from one book of the bible to another. For those who don't know or are new to the bible, keep on reading and see how the Father fulfills all Old Testament prophecy without any gaps or contradiction of the written Word. Thus, the back of this book includes two timelines: One showing fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecy within Israel's apostolic generation, and a second showing Paul's gospel and current age of grace, as both timelines conclude with end of days prophecy and the Kingdom Gospel.

As we now begin to examine the New Testament, keep in mind that it has always only been a remnant of Israel to demonstrate *faith* and obedience to the Word of the Lord. Let's see if this pattern continues into the New Testament, and beyond.

CHAPTER 3

THE NEW TESTAMENT GOSPELS OF CHRIST

Old Testament Prophecies of the Coming Messiah

The gospels of Christ were written by the apostles Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (John the apostle, not John the Baptist) to Jewish followers of Jesus Christ at some point after His resurrection and ascension to show that He was indeed Israel's prophesized Messiah and King come in the flesh. The word apostle simply means one who is sent, or messenger, which in this case means messenger of Jesus Christ. I would also like to make it clear that while Mark was not one of the original twelve apostles, he was a follower of Jesus Christ as the verses of *Acts 12:11-12* and *Acts 15:36-38* reveal. The prophesized arrival of Jesus was part of the promises made to Israel's patriarchs, as He would deliver them from her enemies in fulfillment of the Kingdom Gospel per the Old Testament prophetic books. Thus, as these gospels will show, the important thing to understand about the first advent of Jesus Christ is that **His earthly ministry was for Israel only, which means it did not include the Gentiles!**

The purposed roles of Jesus were as follows: a **Savior, Redeemer**, and **Messiah** per *Isaiah 49:7-8*, *Jeremiah 33:14-16*, and *Daniel 9:25-26*; a **Priest** per *Psalms 110:4*, *Zechariah 6:11-13*, and *Hebrews 5:1-10*; a **King** per *Psalms 2:6-9*, *Jeremiah 23:5-6*, and *Zechariah 9:9-10*; and finally, a **Suffering Servant** who will be **lifted up and exalted** per *Psalms 16:10*, *Isaiah 52:13-15*, and *Isaiah 53:1-12*. In Israel's case the role of Savior and Redeemer is twofold. For in addition to His prophesized role of shedding His blood on the cross as payment for the sins of all, Christ is also

prophesized to redeem Israel back to her chosen nation status and deliver them from all enemies that surround her. Thus, it was being delivered from her enemies that Israel considered more important, especially with the cruelty of Rome's legions marching into Jerusalem shouting "**Legio Aeterna Victrix**."²¹ Thus, I'm sure that everyone in Jerusalem felt like shouting the words, "**Let's take it back**"²² in regards to their city, just as we hear smooth jazz saxophonist Najee sax to his song of the same words.

By looking back at *Isaiah 11:1-2*, we can see that Jesus did indeed come from the seed of King David as prophesized, with His complete genealogy listed in *Matthew 1:1-17*. By next reading *Micah 5:2* and *Isaiah 7:14-15*, we further see that Jesus was prophesized to be born of a virgin in Bethlehem, and know enough as a boy to refuse evil in favor of what is good. Lastly, by looking at *Isaiah 40:1-5*, we can also see that John the Baptist, who was related to Jesus, is also the unnamed person prophesized to prepare the way for His arrival.

Again, the important point to remember is that the earthly ministry of Jesus was for Israel alone in order to fulfill what had been promised to her patriarchs per *Matthew 15:21-24* and *Acts 3:25-26*. This was because Gentiles were never part of the original covenant promises the Father had made to Israel as *Ephesians 2:11-13* reveals. Fortunately, as we will see in chapter 4, all Jew and Gentile believers of Paul's gospel have now been grafted onto the olive vine along with Israel's remnant elect as a result of Israel's unbelief in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh. Now that we have a knowledge base to build on, let's dig into the four gospels and see what they tell us about Jesus and what He did in fulfillment of all that was prophesized about Him.

The Beginning of Jesus

Beginning with *Luke 1:26-45* we see a young woman named Mary being told by the angel Gabriel she has found favor with the Lord, having been chosen to conceive a Son through the Holy Spirit who will be called Jesus, Son of the Most High. To further encourage Mary, Gabriel reveals that her relative Elizabeth, who was old and barren, will also conceive a son. Mary then travels to the hill country of Judah to see Elizabeth, and upon hearing Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's baby leapt in the womb, for Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary then stays with Elizabeth for three months, after which, she returns home to Nazareth. The verses of *Luke 1:59-64* and *Luke 1:76-80* also confirm the child born to Zechariah and Elizabeth will be named John, who will become John the Baptist. But before her trip to see Elizabeth, Mary had also been pledged in marriage to a man named Joseph, and upon seeing that she was now with child at her return, he decided to quietly divorce her as they had not yet come together. But an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream telling him not to fear, as this conception is of the Holy Spirit per *Matthew 1:18-25*.

Luke 2:1-5 next reveals that Caesar Augustus had ordered a census be taken of the entire Roman Empire which required all Israelites to return to their land of birth for registration. As Joseph was from the House and line of David, he traveled with his new wife Mary back to Bethlehem, which is the City of David, in order to fulfill this decree. While there, Mary went into unforeseen labor giving birth to the Christ child, but as there was no room at the inn, they sought refuge elsewhere, laying Him in a manger as described in *Luke 2:6-7*. Jesus had been born in this humble fashion as He came not to be served, but to serve, which is something Jesus tells His apostles they also must do in order to receive honor per *Matthew 20:25-28*.

Continuing with *Luke 2:8-20*, we now see an angel of the Lord tell nearby Jewish shepherds a Savior has been born to them who is Christ the Lord. Upon hearing this, they hurried to see Him and began to spread this grand message, which can be joyously heard in the song “**O Come, O Come Emmanuel**”²³ as performed by Anna Hawkins.

For me, no one tells this part of the Christmas story better than Linus at Christmas play practice in the 1965 Christmas program **A Charlie Brown Christmas**,²⁴ which I like to pair with the 1968 Christmas program **The Little Drummer Boy**²⁵ per my Christmas memories as a boy. Along with the nativity scene, the best examples I’ve seen representing the Christmas peace spoken of in *Luke 2:13-14*, comes from two films depicting the 1914 World War I Christmas Eve truce. The first is a film short depicting **British and German soldiers**²⁶ on Christmas Eve, while the second is a 2005 film called **Joyeux Noel**²⁷ depicting something similar through the eyes of French, Scottish, and German soldiers. Both are very inspiring and worth every second of your time! Thus, I offer the song “**Christmas All Year Long**”²⁸ to soldiers all over the world away from home during the Holiday’s, as sung by Erica Gimple on the television show JAG.

After Jesus was born, *Matthew 2:1-11* reveals that Magi from the East came to Jerusalem asking where they could find the One who was born King of the Jews. For they were following His star so they might see and worship Him. Disturbed upon hearing this, King Herod had his priests search for this prophecy, which they found in *Micah 5:2*. Herod then tells the Magi to come back and report to him where they found Him so that, he too could go and worship Him. The bible doesn’t define who or what the Magi were, but they must have been of high social status for King Herod to invite them to dine with him. After the Magi had found the newborn

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Christ child, **they worshiped Him and presented their gifts**²⁹ of gold, frankincense, and myrrh before Him, as seen in the 1959 film Ben Hur.

The magi were then warned in a dream not to return to King Herod, as was Joseph, who was redirected to Egypt by an angel of the Lord so that Herod could not kill the Christ child as *Matthew 2:12-15* details. Realizing the Magi had outwitted him, Herod immediately orders the deaths of all children two years and under in and around Bethlehem, but Joseph and family had already escaped to Egypt. Following Herod's death, Joseph was then told by an angel of the Lord to return to Israel. But fearing the son of King Herod now ruling in place of his father, Joseph settles in the town of Nazareth within Galilee; thus fulfilling the words of the prophets, "He will be called a Nazarene" per *Matthew 2:19-23*. By looking back at *Isaiah 11:1*, we can see the line of David is referenced using the word branch, or shoot, which in Hebrew is netzer. As Nazareth originates from this same root word, some historians believe Nazareth was named "the town of the Branch."

Before moving on, let me interject that Mary, as well as others of the bible purposed by the Father and Christ, had their parts to play, but were certainly not without sin. These great Jews of the bible were chosen by the Father because they had a heart for *faith* and obedience. Mary had found favor with the Lord, but this does not mean that she too wasn't born without original sin just like rest of humanity. Many people, however, believe she was free from Adam's original sin from the moment of her conception, a doctrine known as the Immaculate Conception. This idea was propagated on the premise that being perfect Himself, God the Father would only want a perfectly pure woman to carry His Son Jesus Christ. This idea, however, is completely absent from the written Word of God. In fact, *Luke 1:31-35* reveals how the power of the Most High was needed

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to overshadow Mary, so that her sin would be covered for this period of conception through birth. We saw something similar happen to Isaiah in *Isaiah 6:5-7*. As further proof, Mary could never have paid for our sins on the cross, for if she could have, there would have been no need for the coming of Christ as prophesized. Paul in *Romans 3:8-10* and *Romans 3:22-24* clearly teaches that there is no one righteous, not even one, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. This further validates the verse of *Luke 1:35* concerning Mary and original sin!

Let's then remember the bible also reveals Jesus had younger brothers and sisters as the verses of *Matthew 13:54-57* and *Mark 6:2-4* clearly delineate. To then say the bible is incorrect about Jesus having brothers and sisters conceived by Joseph and Mary would be writing a different gospel to fit the narrative of the Immaculate Conception. There isn't anywhere within the written Word of God where Jesus declares the one who bore Him is without sin and without need of His blood sacrifice to come. Thus, the only one to be born without sin from birth to death is Jesus Christ. He is the only Son of God conceived by the Holy Spirit, making Him the only one who could pay for our sins on the cross; Paul and Peter affirm this point in *2 Corinthians 5:20-21* and *1 Peter 1:18-19* respectively. For those who believe an Immaculate Conception doesn't affect the free gift of life eternal, would that not negate the written Words of God found in *Luke 1:35*, *Romans 3:8-12*, and *Romans 3:22-24*? Remember, there are no contradictions within the written Word of God, as this would undermine its authority and cause the entire bible to come tumbling down on itself per the words of Christ in *Matthew 12:22-30*.

To treat any human as divine and without sin is to follow old pagan ways of idol worship as many did with Roman emperors or wood and stone images that contain no breath of God per *Habakkuk 2:18-19*. Ask yourself,

do you really believe the Triune Godhead sees any human within creation as on par with them free of any and all sin? After all, it is thinking like this that got Satan into trouble. We also need to remember that when Christ shed His blood on the cross to pay for our sins, that doesn't mean we are now sinless for the rest of our lives; it means that our sins have been forgiven as stated in *1 John 2:12* and *Romans 8:8-11*. Being without sin is the one true attribute of divinity and holiness that only those of the Triune Godhead possess. Keeping all of this in mind, that doesn't mean we can't admire Mary, or the apostles, as representing the best of humanity for their *faithful* service to the Father and Jesus Christ. But never forget the words of *Romans 3:10*, **As it is written: "there is no one righteous, not even one"** where Paul was likely referencing *Psalms 14:1-3* written by King David.

Jesus Begins His Ministry

We next see Jesus, now a grown man, ask John the Baptist to water baptize Him, after which the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus as His Father elates, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" per *Matthew 3:13-17*. I liken this to the moment **Clark Kent becomes Superman**³⁰ as seen in the 1978 film *Superman: The Movie*. For having spent time with his father, Superman was now ready to serve earth's collective humanity. My inclusion of this metaphor, however, does not mean in any way that I believe Jesus Christ is an extraterrestrial being as I have heard others imply, so pay this idea no mind, as it is pure fantasy created by those who don't know the biblical Jesus Christ and Son of God who came in the flesh. Thus, at this point, I can imagine the Father now telling His Son "**Take it Away**"³¹ in regards to His prophesized purpose, words which Paul McCartney and company sing to.

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Moving on, *Matthew 3:13-17* further confirms that Jesus had officially received His spiritual connection with His Father and was now ready for His work. But did He really need water baptism to receive the Holy Spirit? Of course he didn't, but Jesus was being *faithful* and obedient to Old Testament prophecy concerning His coming by way of John the Baptist per *Isaiah 40:3-5*. He was also modeling what His Jewish followers needed in order to be spiritually reborn. For the apostle Peter declares in *1 Peter 3:14-22* that in Noah's day only eight souls were saved through water, symbolizing this baptism, which saves per a pledge of a clear conscience toward God through a resurrected Jesus Christ. Peter further delineates that our earth was formed out of water by water and flooded by water per *2 Peter 3:3-6*, giving further credence to the cleansing purpose of Noah's flood and John's water baptism.

Jesus is then led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where He fasted for forty days while being tempted by Satan as *Matthew 4:1-11* and *Luke 4:1-13* delineate. It is here where Satan, well aware of Jesus and His divine status, tempts Him to use His divine power to satisfy and save Himself, along with a final offer of all the world's kingdoms in exchange for His worship. It was Satan's hope that he could tempt Jesus with the same vanity he felt during his earlier attempt to be worshiped like God Most High in *Isaiah 14:12-14*. And yes, these verses in *Isaiah* absolutely refer to the actions of Satan, as chapter 10 will detail.

But Jesus gloriously overcomes these temptations, and by not giving in to them, He demonstrates that His *faith* and obedience to His Father are far greater than any of Satan's deceptive temptations. Having now recovered from His wilderness experience, Jesus begins His ministry by entering the synagogue and reading from *Isaiah 61:1-2*. He stops, however, after speaking the words "to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor" in

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verse two. Jesus then tells all present that this scripture has now been fulfilled, for He is the prophesized Savior Israel has been waiting for in *Luke 4:16-21*. The reason Jesus didn't finish reading all of *Isaiah 61:2* is because the rest of this verse is prophetic in nature, to be completed on the Day of the Lord.

Jesus then begins to recruit His apostolic inner circle as *Matthew 4:18-22* and *Mark 1:16-20* describe. There were twelve, whose names were: Simon Peter or Cephas along with his brother Andrew, James along with his brother John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew the tax collector, James son of Alphaeus, Judas Thaddeous or Jude, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who will later betray Jesus as *Matthew 10:1-4*, *Mark 3:13-19*, and *Luke 6:12-16* all detail. Now there seems to be considerable debate whether Judas Thaddeous is the son of James as Luke writes, or the brother of James as written in *Jude 1:1*. For purposes of this book, neither designation changes what's written concerning the Jewish gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus then begins to perform many signs and miracles to prove His claim that He is indeed their prophesized Messiah and King come in the flesh, as Peter confirms in *Acts 2:22-24*.

As there was no biblical New Testament for all Israel to read at this time, the signs and miracles that Jesus performs were necessary works to back up His claim of being their prophesized Messiah and King. In fact, John reveals that if all the things Jesus had done were written down, the world itself would not have enough space to contain the number of books necessary to list them per *John 21:24-25*. Jesus knew His purpose was to fulfill the Old Testament promises His Father had made to Israel's patriarchs, which is something He explains to His disciples in *Luke 24:44-48*. As such, His earthly ministry was for Israel alone, which Jesus Himself confirms in *Matthew 15:24-27*. The only instances we see Jesus interacting

with non-Jews involve the centurion of *Matthew 8:5-13*, the Canaanite woman of *Matthew 15:21-28*, and the Samaritans of *John 4:1-43*. Recall that Samaria in Israel's northern kingdom had been conquered by the king of Assyria, who then dispersed and replaced its Jewish citizens with other peoples per *2 Kings 17:24*.

This realization that the earthly ministry of Jesus was to fulfill the Old Testament promises made to Israel was a definite shock to me. I was brought up to believe that His earthly ministry was for everyone and that the gospels of Christ were written to everyone. But as I have come to understand, it wasn't until Israel had thoroughly rejected Christ, following His resurrection and ascension, that Jesus intercedes with a new gospel of life eternal for all Jews and Gentiles (circumcised and un-circumcised) through the apostle Paul, as chapter 4 will detail.

Israel Refuses to Believe

We next see that nearly all Israel refused to believe Jesus was indeed the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh per *Mark 6:1-6*, for most were following to see the show and be entertained as *Matthew 23:37-39* laments. Besides His signs and miracles, Jesus also feeds five thousand of His people and, on another occasion, four thousand more, with as little as five loaves of bread and two fish per *Matthew 14:13-21* and *Matthew 15:29-38*. As most of Israel lacked the necessary *faith* to believe, Jesus asked His disciples who they believed He was. Peter responded in telling Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" per *Matthew 16:13-17*. Peter's answer pleased Jesus, after which He tells Peter that he is blessed, as it was the Father who revealed this truth to him. Very few Jews in Christ's day possessed the necessary *faith* required to believe that Jesus was indeed their Messiah come in the flesh as **the Christ and Son of God**, which is the **Jewish**

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gospel. Jesus makes this very clear in *Matthew 10:32-36* and *Luke 12:49-53* where he tells those present not to assume that He came to bring peace to the earth. He instead came with the sword of the Word of God to separate a household between those who believe, and those who do not, as *Matthew 25:31-46* confirms.

The scribes and Pharisees also did not possess the necessary *faith* asking Jesus to provide further signs in *Matthew 23:1-36* and *Luke 11:37-54*. This prompted Jesus to call them an evil and unbelieving generation as they preferred **absolute proof** over *faith* as *Matthew 16:1-4* and *Mark 8:11-12* delineate. Jesus was pointing out how they practiced the law in a hypocritical manner; meaning their *faith* was in the law rather than in Jesus Himself per *Matthew 23:1-36* and *Luke 11:37-54*. This hypocrisy is further stated in *Luke 16:13-17*, which says it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than one stroke of a pen to drop from the law. Paul further teaches in *Romans 10:1-4* and *Ephesians 2:13-16* that Jesus had come to fulfill Old Testament prophecy and do away with the law to be seen as righteous before the Father. But nearly all Israel remained blinded with hardened hearts to this biblical truth, even as Jesus endeavored to tell them “**You’ll Never Find Another Love Like Mine**”³² as sung by the great Lou Rawls.

Along with these events, Jesus speaks of His death and resurrection in all four gospels. By then reading *Mark 9:30-32* and *Luke 18:31-34*, we can see the apostles understood none of these things, as the meaning was kept hidden from the understanding of all, despite being prophesized in *Psalms 16:10*, *Isaiah 52:13-14*, and *Isaiah 53:1-11*. Christ had also been prophesized to come as a Redeemer for all Israel who would deliver or redeem them from her enemies. But as Jesus had not fulfilled this part of biblical prophecy, nearly all Israel continued to reject His claim that He was indeed their prophesized Messiah. Adding to that, He was from the village

of Nazareth, which was considered by most Jews to be a place of undignified status, and certainly not a place where Israel's king would hail from. Even the apostle Nathaniel expressed his initial doubt in remarking to Philip, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" per *John 1:43-46*.

Israel should have known who Jesus was, but as certain knowledge had been kept hidden from the apostles, so too was the true identity of Jesus Christ kept hidden from all Israel and Rome per God's plan as *Romans 11:5-10* and *Romans 11:30-32* reveal. This was necessary so that Christ could fulfill His prophetic role as a Savior in shedding His blood on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of all, followed by His resurrection from the dead as *Isaiah chapter 53* and *Acts 2:22-24* again delineate. If all Israel and Rome had truly known who Jesus was, they certainly would never have put Him to death, as stated by Paul in *1 Corinthians 2:6-8*. This is why Jesus utters the words "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" while suffering on the cross per *Luke 23:33-34*. Without Jesus completing this important prophesized role, everyone, including Israel, would still be guilty of sin, and we would have no advocate before the Father to receive mercy as *1 Timothy 2:5-6* confirms.

Jesus Is Betrayed

In order to fulfill this prophecy, the Father uses Satan's vanity and scorn for the purpose of sacrificing His Son. Thus, Satan enters the apostle Judas and puts in his heart the desire to betray Christ as seen in *John 13:1-2* and *John 13:20-30*. We next see Jesus in a garden praying while His disciples were asleep and resting nearby. Jesus then shouts to them, "the hour is near, rise, let us go! My betrayer is approaching!" Judas then arrives with a large crowd carrying swords and clubs sent from the chief priests and elders of the people. Judas had already told those accompanying him, "The One I

kiss is the man; arrest Him.” Judas then goes directly to Jesus with greetings, and kisses Him. “Friend,” Jesus replies, “do what you came for” as delineated in *Matthew 26:45-50*. Keep in mind that Judas had made a personal choice in succumbing to Satan, for we all have free will over our own thoughts and actions. We then see Jesus bound and led away to Annas, the father-in-law of the high priest Caiaphas, after which, He is brought before Caiaphas for questioning as *John 18:12-14* details. Caiaphas then declares Jesus a blasphemer before all the chief priests and elders, who then conspire against Jesus in handing Him over to the Roman governor for crucifixion.

Now standing before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, Jesus remains silent, except to answer the charge of claiming to be King of the Jews: “**It is as you have said,**” Jesus tells Pilate per *Luke 23:1-3*. Jesus is then insulted, scourged, and beaten by Roman soldiers before His march to the cross where His crucifixion and death quickly follow, as prophesized in *Psalms 22:1-31*, *Psalms 69:20-21*, and *Isaiah 53:1-12*, to name but a few. Remember, Jesus had told His apostles all He must suffer before being raised to life eternal on the third day per *Matthew 16:21*, but again, they understood none of this.

Christ’s Death and Resurrection

As Jesus agonized on the cross, there was a period of complete darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour, followed by the tearing of the temple veil within the Holy of Holies from top to bottom, along with an earthquake the moment Jesus yielded up His spirit in death per *Matthew 27:45-51*. The tearing of the temple veil means there is no longer any barrier between the Father and man, for Jesus Christ will now be our mediator before the Father as *Roman 8:34*, *1 Timothy 2:5-6*, and *1 John 2:1-2* all tell us. With that, I

invite everyone to take a few minutes and meditate on the incredible sacrifice Jesus willingly made for us all, through the song “**Admiral and Commander**,”³³ from the reimagined series *Battlestar Galactica*.

We now need to look closer at the words, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,” which Christ spoke on the cross back in *Luke 23:33-34*. The earthly ministry of Jesus was for Israel alone, which means His words were directed specifically at all Jews present that did not believe in Him. It was the Jewish leadership who had strongly advocated for Christ’s death before the Roman governor, and it was they who were sneering and shouting insults as He suffered on the cross per *Luke 23:35*. Other than a few Roman soldiers, the bible mentions no other Gentiles present at the crucifixion, which means it was strictly a Jewish event in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy as the apostle Peter confirms in *Acts 2:22-23*.

Per *Matthew 27:52* we next see that Jewish tombs broke open. The bodies of many Jewish saints who had fallen asleep (died) were now raised to life and seen by many in the city. This event, however, did not take place until after Jesus Himself had first been resurrected from the dead, as the very next verse of *Matthew 27:53* confirms. Paul then tells us in *1 Corinthians 15:20-23*, “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Thus, we can now see that the saints who were raised to life in *Matthew 27:52* provides absolute proof of the words Jesus spoke to Martha in *John 11:20-27*; for they will accompany Christ at His Second Advent. This is also an excellent preview how Israel’s *faithful* dead will be raised at the end of days per the Old Testament verses of *Isaiah 26:19*, *Ezekiel 37:1-14*, and *Daniel 12:1-2*.

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As chapter 7 will detail, this is yet another reason why the Lord had created two sides to Sheol (a.k.a. Hades or Hell) within the earth. The souls of all *faithful* and obedient Jews also needed a place to go before Jesus Christ, the first fruits of the resurrection, had risen from death. *Genesis 15:15* and *1 Samuel 2:6-10* speak of this very thing concerning Abraham and King David. The resurrection of Christ had been prophesized back in *Psalms 16:9-10*, *Isaiah 52:13-15*, and *Isaiah 53:9-12*, with Jesus Himself confirming this in *Matthew 16:21*.

Moving forward, the verses of *Luke 24:1-11* now speak of two women who were bringing spices for the body of Christ, only to find His tomb empty. As they stood puzzled over the empty tomb, two angels in radiant apparel suddenly appeared asking why they look for the living amongst the dead. Reflecting on what the angels had told them, they indeed began to remember the words Christ had spoken concerning His resurrection, and went quickly to the apostles to tell them. But the apostles considered their story total nonsense; for the truth of Christ's resurrection had been kept hidden from their understanding per *Mark 9:30-31* and *Luke 18:31-34*, as we've already seen. However, Peter, and another other disciple, quickly set out for the tomb only to find it empty; they still could not understand per scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead as *John 20:3-9* describes. If they truly understood what Jesus had told them regarding His resurrection, they surely would have been camped out at His tomb awaiting this glorious moment! The other irony to all of this is that instead of a victory for Satan, Christ's death and resurrection not only brings forgiveness and life eternal to all who believe, but also ensures Satan's eternal doom per *Hebrews 2:12-17*.

The Commission

We now see a risen Jesus Christ at last meet with His apostles, but Thomas, who had not been with them, still doubted His risen status (nonbelief). Upon seeing this, Jesus tells Thomas to feel the wounds He received on the cross; Thomas does so, and believes. Jesus then tells him, “you have seen Me and believed, blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed” per *John 20:24-29*. Jesus also gives them a commission in *Mark 16:15-19*: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Through this commission, Christ was giving all Israel one last opportunity to believe, and thus, fulfill their destiny as spoken to Moses back in *Exodus 19:5-6*. The 2016 film *Risen* does an awesome job representing this period after the death and resurrection of Christ through a Roman tribune who pursues the apostles in order to uncover the truth behind the disappearance of Christ’s body. The look of utter disbelief when the tribune **Clavius sees a risen Jesus Christ**³⁴ face-to-face is priceless! After Jesus had met with His apostles for the last time, He **ascends into heaven**,³⁵ at which point Paul tells us the Father exalts Him such that every knee in heaven, on earth, and under the earth will bow at His name and confesses Jesus Christ is Lord per *John 17:3-5* and *Philippians 8-11*.

After Christ had ascended into heaven, the apostles do begin to fulfill their commission in preaching the Jewish gospel to Jews from many other countries who were visiting Jerusalem per *Acts 2:1-47*. These verses begin detailing the moment the apostles receive the Holy Spirit through a loud gush of wind that came from heaven and filled the whole house they were sitting in. They saw tongues like flames of fire which separated and came to rest on each of them; they then began to speak in tongues as the Spirit

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enabled them. Many God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven, along with converts, now came together as they heard the apostles speaking to them in their own native languages. Astounded and amazed, they asked, “How is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?” Many also asked, “What does this mean?” While others mocked the apostles and said, “They are drunk on new wine.” Peter then stood up and preached the Jewish gospel to all present, with those who believed and were baptized numbering three thousand. Jesus had officially passed the torch of telling all Israel about His fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and life eternal, to His apostles through the Holy Spirit. This was yet another chance for all Israel to hear and believe, but as *Acts 2:41* reveals, only three thousand Jews embraced and believed Peter’s message of Christ.

The book of Acts records only a few other incidents where Peter, Philip, and other believing Jews preach the Jewish gospel to Gentiles, leaving the commission unfulfilled to this very day. We can surmise at least four reasons for this. The first is that the apostles never left Jerusalem, as the apostolic letters make no mention of the Holy Spirit directing them out into the world as purposed by Jesus. And the only reason I can see for this is the unbelief of Israel, for they had been deemed a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, but continued to reject Jesus as the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh. Thus, we can assume Israel’s lack of *faith* prevented the commission from moving forward as intended.

This all makes sense from an apostolic perspective. For how could any of them go out into the world preaching that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God who came in the flesh when their own leaders and countrymen refused to believe? After Christ had risen from death and was seen by over five hundred brethren at the same time per *1 Corinthians 15:6*, there should have been no remaining doubt that Jesus was indeed the prophesized King

and Messiah they had been waiting for. Israel could then have gone on to fulfill their intended role as a holy nation and kingdom of priests, but instead continued to remain blinded with hardened hearts as *Romans 11:7-10* and *Romans 11:25* confirm. The second reason is that Christ had also told them in *Matthew 10:5-7* not to go on any road of the Gentiles or in any town of the Samaritans, but only to the lost sheep of Israel. The third reason, as we will see in chapters 4 and 9, is that the apostles still believed in following the works of Jewish law as the basis of their *faith*, in spite of their belief that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh. The fourth and final reason is that it had been decided in the Council at Jerusalem that Paul was now the one entrusted to preach the gospel to the uncircumcised Gentiles, just as Peter had been entrusted to preach to the circumcised Jews of Israel in *Galatians 2:6-9*. This is something which pairs with third reason as chapter 4 will detail.

The Unbelief of Israel

By next revisiting the verses of *Luke 21:5-6* and *Luke 21:12-17*, we can see that everything Jesus spoke of had been fulfilled, even the destruction of Jerusalem's holy temple by the Romans in AD 70 had become fulfilled. Jewish prophecy which has yet to be seen includes a rebuilt temple and all events encompassing the Day of the Lord, as Jesus describes in *Luke 21:6-11* and *Luke 21:20-28*. This includes the Kingdom Gospel where the return of Jesus Christ is preached to the whole world; for the kingdom of heaven is near and those who persevere to the end will be saved per *Matthew 4:13-17*, *Matthew 24:9-14*, and *Mark 1:14-15*. Again, the reason for these last pieces of unfulfilled prophecy is because of Israel's unbelief in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh. Thus, as mentioned earlier, this

is also what had stalled the apostolic commission, so let's explore this further.

As this chapter has detailed, we know everything was predicated on the premise that Israel would believe Jesus is the Chosen One prophesized in *Isaiah 42:1-4*. But when He arrived, He didn't destroy their enemies as prophesized, and instead, preached that all Israel must have *faith* in Him to be seen as righteous before the Father, versus following Old Testament law. This, of course, angered the Pharisees and Israel's leaders, which further hardened their hearts to His divine purpose as Jesus details in *Luke 16:16-17*. Thus, as we will see in the following chapters, this is why Paul is called to receive his new revelation of Jesus Christ and why John is given further revelation concerning Old Testament end of days prophecy. Indeed, the book of Revelation would never have been necessary if Israel had believed, especially as it is only John in the book of Revelation that numbers Israel's remnant elect at 144,000 and denotes a specific thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.

As previously mentioned, Old Testament verses such as *Deuteronomy 4:8-10*, *Joshua 1:6-8*, and *Malachi 4:4* clearly espouse following the law, which much of Israel still keeps to this very day as they await the very Messiah they had rejected per *2 Corinthians 3:13-15*. I metaphorically liken Israel's refusal to give up the law in favor of Christ to the music video "**Days Go By**"³⁶ by Dirty Vegas, where a man loses his love because he could not give up dancing, even as he continued to do so one day each year in the hope of bringing her back. Jesus, however, knew Israel would never believe His claim, but had to afford them every opportunity as God's chosen to believe in Him and potentially fulfill Old Testament prophecy within the apostolic generation as stated in *Matthew 16:27-28*, *Matthew 24:33-24*, and *Luke 21:31-32*. Again, this is why the Father kept hidden any prophetic

knowledge of Paul and his gospel to the Gentiles; for it would not have been needed if all Israel had believed as purposed. As mentioned earlier, *Luke 18:31-34* also reveals the Father had kept hidden any understanding of Christ's earthly sacrifice so that Jesus could fulfill Old Testament prophecy concerning His crucifixion and resurrection, a point that *1 Corinthians 2:6-8* hammers home. Understanding this, we should all be shouting the words "**thank you very much**"³⁷ to Jesus Christ for His blood sacrifice on the cross as payment for our sins, words of gratitude that are also cheered for the death of Scrooge in the 1970 musical film *Scrooge*.

We must then remember that Israel, being a treasured possession to the Lord out of all nations, had also been told to keep themselves separate and pure from Gentiles, for even Jesus referred to Gentiles as dogs in *Matthew 7:6* and *Matthew 15:22-27*. But, as mentioned earlier, how could the apostles ever make disciples of the world if their own leaders and holy priests refused to espouse the truth that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh? Thus, as a result for their lack of *faith*, the Lord again disperses Israel from their land through the Romans, just as He had done through Babylon once before. We can see it is here where Old Testament end of days prophecy had the chance to become fulfilled during the apostle's generation per *Luke 21:31-32* and *Mark 13:29-30*, if Israel had believed.

Understanding all of this, we should now see the apostolic commission has become prophetic in nature, especially as **the Holy Spirit never leads the apostles out to make disciples of all nations**. In chapter 10, we will see how Israel's remnant elect fulfills the apostle's prophesized role as a holy nation and kingdom of priests in leading all Gentiles who survive the great Day of the Lord to come and plead before Him in Jerusalem per *Isaiah 45:14* and *Zechariah 8:20-23*. We know this to be true as God will show mercy for her past trespasses and restore all Israel through grace of a

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remnant elect as Paul teaches in *Romans 11:1-6*. Even while humanity often fails to keep its promises, as heard in the very first words of the song “**Promises**”³⁸ by Basia, the Father never goes back on His word as *Romans 11:28-29* absolutely confirms. Israel will always be God’s great and chosen nation not only because of the promises made to Abraham, but also because they were entrusted with the very oracles of God, as Paul delineates in *Romans 3:1-2*. Thus, the Father is far from being done with Israel as many believe. To close this chapter, we can see that Jesus had fulfilled all that had been written about Him, leaving only Israel’s rebuilt temple, the Day of the Lord, and the Kingdom Gospel as yet to be seen and heard at the end of days.

CHAPTER 4

THE TWO GOSPELS OF LIFE ETERNAL AND THE BOOK OF ACTS

The Jewish and Pauline Gospels

Before we start, and for those who aren't sure, a biblical gospel in simplest terms means "good tidings" or "good news," as proclaimed by Moses, the Jewish prophets, Jesus Christ, His apostles, and God's two anointed ones to come. As we have just learned, the Jewish gospel seen in all four gospels of Christ was meant for Israel in order to fulfill the Old Testament promises, as stated by Jesus Himself in *Matthew 15:22-24* and Paul in *Romans 15:7-8*. So, beginning with the Old Testament and followed by the four gospels of Christ, we can see the Jewish gospel is all about believing that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh as the prophesized Chosen One per *Isaiah 42:1*. Thus, all Israel needed to do is believe this through *faith* to then receive life eternal in His name, also stated by Jesus Himself in *John 3:13-18*, *John 5:36-40*, *John 6:47-51*, and *John 11:24-27*, to name but a few!

We have seen Peter confirm this in *Matthew 16:15-16* where he tells Jesus, "You the Christ, Son of the living God," as does John in *John 20:29-31*. Undoubtedly, the most famous verse espousing this biblical truth is *John 3:16*, which specifically says "that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but receive eternal life." Thus, Jesus constantly performed signs and miracles to show that His claim of being their Messiah and King is real and true. This was all He expected the Jews of Israel to believe during His entire three-year ministry, especially as the foreknowledge of His death and

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resurrection had been kept hidden from the understanding of all as we've already seen.

We also see as part of the Jewish gospel the requirements of repentance and water baptism following the belief that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh as *Matthew 4:13-17*, *Mark 1:14-15*, *Luke 13:1-5*, and *Acts 2:37-39* all detail. Once any Israelite had fulfilled these requirements they immediately received the Holy Spirit and life eternal. For Jesus Himself stated that without being born of water and the Spirit there is no entering the kingdom of God in *John 3:4-6*. But we need to understand there is a big difference between receiving the Holy Spirit for spiritual blessing and life eternal, versus receiving the Holy Spirit and being apportioned specific spiritual gifts per *Acts 2:1-4* and *1 Corinthians 12:7-11*. For it wasn't until after Jesus had ascended back into heaven that specific spiritual gifts were then given to all believers as *Luke 24:49*, *John 14:25-26*, and *Acts 1:3-5* delineate. Also of interest is that the bible never mentions the apostles themselves ever having received water baptism repentance before they begin baptizing new believers in *John 4:1-2*.

Again, this symbolic act of water cleansing began with the flood of Noah, and was continued through John the Baptist in preparation for the coming of Jesus. The flood had cleansed the whole earth of evil, while John preached the kingdom of heaven is near and offered a water-cleansing baptism for those of Israel who repented of their sins per *Matthew 3:1-6*. John had also told the Pharisees and Sadducees in *Matthew 3:7-11*, "I baptize you with water only for repentance, but after me One will come more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." We have also seen Jesus telling Jews in Galilee, "The time is near, so repent and believe in the gospel" per *Mark 1:14-15*. These verses, along with those of *John 3:1-6*, clearly espouse

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that repentance and water baptism were important requirements in order to receive the Holy Spirit and life eternal per the Jewish gospel. The reason these were important is because Christ had not yet done the work of sacrificing Himself on the cross as a blood payment for the sins of all, to then be raised from the dead on the third day.

Putting these puzzle pieces together from all four gospels, it seems perfectly clear the words “believe in Me,” which is the Jewish gospel, followed by repentance and water baptism, were all necessary requirements to receive the Holy Spirit and life eternal. This is yet another example why it is necessary to use more than one verse and gospel of Christ to fully understand and see the big picture concerning life eternal through the Jewish gospel. One caveat to all of this is that Christ never instructs the apostles to teach those of the world who become disciples that Jewish law and tradition must also be observed as part of the Jewish gospel. This is how we know for sure that Jesus had indeed come to do away with such works to be seen as righteous before the Father, as Paul teaches in *Romans 10:1-4* and *Ephesians 2:13-16*.

As discussed earlier, observing Old Testament law was the requirement for all Israel to be seen as righteous before the Father. Something which has now been replaced with Jesus and His once and for all sacrifice on the cross. But, as the Council at Jerusalem will shortly reveal, the apostles still believed in the works of Jewish law as the basis of their *faith* to be seen as righteous before the Father per *Acts 21:19-30* and *Romans 10:1-4*. As I now move on to Paul and his new Revelation of Jesus Christ, you will see that it too requires *faith* in order to receive the Holy Spirit and life eternal, but without the requirements of repentance, water baptism, and especially, without the need to observe Jewish law in order to be seen as righteous before the Father. This is because **Paul’s gospel is a post-crucifixion gospel**

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based completely on the other side of the cross through a resurrected Jesus Christ as its sole authority, as opposed to the **pre-crucifixion Jewish gospel** of believing Jesus the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh through His signs and miracles before His death and resurrection. Paul hammers home this biblical truth in *2 Corinthians 5:14-17* to further illuminate everyone as to **why his new revelation of Jesus Christ has now permanently replaced the Jewish gospel as the only way to receive life eternal** per *Romans 2:16*. Also, for those who don't know, Paul's new Revelation of Jesus Christ and Paul's gospel are synonymous expressions.

Thus, Paul's new revelation of Jesus Christ is found in *Romans 10:8-10*, with ***Romans 10:9*** specifically declaring **that if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.** This is **THE SALVATION EQUATION** of ***faith* + nothing else = life eternal**. Both *Romans 10:8* and *Romans 10:10* validate this equation in stating that *faith* in Paul's gospel must come from the heart, for it is with your heart that you believe and are justified to then confess with your mouth and be saved. By then looking at *1 Corinthians 12:1-3* and *Ephesians 1:11-14*, these verses further tell us that no one may confess Jesus is Lord from the heart unless sealed with the Holy Spirit. Once we believe through *faith* and are sealed with the Holy Spirit, Paul declares that we know Christ in the flesh no longer, for we have become a new creation in Christ as the old has passed away and the new has come per *2 Corinthians 5:16-17*. This is the essence of Paul's gospel of life eternal, which again must be believed through *faith* in order to be sealed in the Holy Spirit and confess "Jesus is Lord."

By now reading *1 Corinthians 15:3-4*, we see Paul delineate that he passes on which is of first importance: that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and raised from death on the third day, according to the scriptures.

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It is because of these verses that Paul's post-crucifixion gospel of *Romans 10:9* possesses all the necessary power and authority to offer the free gift of life eternal without the requirements of repentance, water baptism, and the law. With His spoken words "it is finished" per *John 19:30*, Jesus has done everything necessary for us to be seen as righteous before the Father if we believe through *faith* the words of *Romans 10:9*; hence, **THE SALVATION EQUATION**. This is also why Paul reminds his Corinthian brethren that the gospel he preached to them, which they received and stand firm in, is also the gospel by which they are saved, **unless they have believed in vain** per *1 Corinthians 15:1-2*. By that reckoning, *Romans 1:16* leaves no doubt that Paul's gospel of life eternal is available first to the Jew, but also to the Greek or Gentile, which was absent from the Jewish gospel as *Ephesians 2:11-12* has revealed. By then applying the verses of *Romans 2:15-16*, we see there is no doubt that Paul's new revelation of Jesus Christ has permanently replaced the Jewish gospel as the only way to freely receive life eternal, whether Jew or Gentile.

For me, this feeling of finally knowing without a doubt how to receive the free gift of life eternal was so hip and freeing, that all I can do is parrot back the words spoken by Cyrus in the 1979 film *The Warriors*: "**Can you dig it–Can you dig it–Caaan-yooou-dig-iiit!**"³⁹ The other example I like to use is "**You Should Be Dancing**,"⁴⁰ as we see John Travolta do in the 1977 film *Saturday Night Fever*. A summary of Paul's calling to the Gentiles through grace of a risen Jesus Christ can be seen in *Romans 1:1-6*. As chapter 4 of this book will now reveal, the book of Acts details this transition from a Jewish-only audience to a Gentile one, as confirmed by *Acts 9:15-16* and *Acts 13:45-47*. Thus, we have now seen the Kingdom Gospel, the Jewish gospel of life eternal, and Paul's gospel of life eternal, which has permanently replaced the Jewish gospel. Remember, it is

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through a heartfelt *faith* by which this gift of life eternal is freely received and changes a person spiritually from the old Adam, to a new creation in Christ. As *Romans 8:25-27* reveals, He (the Father) who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, for it is the Spirit who intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. It is also the Holy Spirit that provides Pauline believers with unlimited access to the Father's will for our lives through prayer and conversation, a status I liken to lyrics heard in the songs "**I'll Be Around**"⁴¹ by The Spinners and "**Call On Me**"⁴² by Chicago.

Unfortunately for the apostles, their commission of preaching to all nations had ended due to the unbelief of Israel and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem's holy temple in AD 70 by the Romans. Again, this is why Gentiles were never meant to follow Jesus during His earthly ministry, as He was purposed to fulfill Old Testament prophecy for Israel per the Father's promises made to her patriarchs. However, much of what we hear in church sermons today blends the Pauline gospel with the Jewish gospel, as if both are the same message intended for all. We can also see that Paul doesn't teach the gifts spoken of in *Mark 16:17-18*, as Paul's gospel comes from the Father's grace through *faith* in a risen Jesus Christ alone, versus through works or signs per *Romans 5:1-2* and *Ephesians 2:6-9*. So please don't make the mistake of blending Paul's gospel with the Jewish version, for *Romans 2:16* makes it very clear that Paul's gospel is now and forever the only way to life eternal with Christ and the Father.

Thus, I'm sure there will be many who take issue with my book being their cup is already full with the Jewish gospel or a blended version thereof. For just as Israel had refused to believe in the authority and authenticity of Jesus Christ, most of the world will likely not accept the authority of Paul's gospel as the only way to eternity through a risen Jesus Christ. Again, I realize this biblical truth may cause great dissent amongst the world's

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Christians, but I cannot disregard the written Word for the sake of tradition and comfort, as most people usually stay with what feels comfortable, even if it is at the expense of the truth.

With that said, it is my hope that some Christians will see the truth and begin a Pauline ministry in their churches to further build the Body of Christ. As *Romans 15:4* and *2 Timothy 3:14-17* confirm, the four gospels of Christ are definitely there for our learning and Christly edification to understand the basis and reason for Paul's new gospel. Thus, every Pauline believer is expected to know and apply the entire written Word of God, rather than just a few verses from Paul's letters or the gospels of Christ. Again, looking to the other side of the cross through a risen Jesus Christ is where all the power resides, and without Christ having risen from the dead, there is no life eternal for anyone, as *1 Corinthians 15:12-19* absolutely confirms.

With all of this biblical truth staring right at us, we can now understand why Paul's gospel of life eternal would need to be completely different from the Jewish gospel, meant to bring all Israel together as a holy nation and a kingdom of priests per *Exodus 19:5-6*. In light of Israel's unbelief, however, the only way for the Father to then offer life eternal to all Gentiles, would be through a new gospel, with a risen Jesus Christ as its foundation. This would then free all who believe from the requirements of repentance, water baptism, and works of the law to be seen as righteous. If this were not so, meaning if the Jewish gospel and the law were sufficient, there would have been no need for the calling of Paul and his new revelation of Jesus Christ per *Hebrews 8:6-13* and *Philippians 3:7-9*. As stated earlier, the Kingdom Gospel will again be heard per Jesus in *Matthew 24:13-14*, but make no mistake, Paul's gospel will now and forever be the only way to receive life eternal, as *Romans 2:15-16* again makes very clear.

Now that we have a clear understanding of the Jewish and Pauline gospels, let's take a closer look at Paul's ministry to the Gentiles in greater detail.

The Beginning of Paul

Let me start by saying the book of Acts was authored by the apostle Luke, which means it is written from the Jewish gospel perspective. Luke had been a companion of Paul as *Colossians 4:11-15* confirms, but, as we will see, the book of Acts details nothing concerning the difference between Paul's gospel and the Jewish gospel. The reason for this is that Luke knew only the Jewish gospel that he and the other apostles had been taught, but we will explore this further in chapter 5. As such, Luke's lack of knowledge concerning Paul's gospel is seen right away in the verses of *Acts 9:18-22*, where he states that after Paul's Damascus Road experience, Paul promptly began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, declaring, "He is the son of God." In fact, the closest thing we see resembling Paul's message of life eternal is Luke quoting Paul's words in *Acts 20:22-24*: "if only I may finish my course and complete the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus, the ministry of testifying the good news of God's grace." Again, the important point to remember is that the book of Acts only details the transition from a Jewish audience to a Gentile one through Paul's gospel.

We now need to recall how Jesus had told the scribes and Pharisees they were an evil generation being hypocrites of the law, as they had no *faith* in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh. For this is exactly where Paul was before his Damascus Road conversion. The verses of *Galatians 1:13-14* and *Philippians 3:3-6* describe Paul as a Pharisee advancing in Judaism well beyond many of his contemporaries, as well as being a zealot for keeping the traditions of his father's. Ironically, it is this

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same zealot attitude of keeping the traditions of their father's which Paul encounters later in the council at Jerusalem, as we will see shortly.

We start with *Acts 8:1-4*, which reveals that Paul was known as Saul of Tarsus, the most feared persecutor of his Jewish brethren that followed Jesus Christ. This fanaticism led Saul to enter the homes of his believing brethren in order to drag them off to prison, and with the exception of the apostles, this begins to scatter the Jewish church. These verses further reveal that not only was Saul present at the stoning of Stephen, but also gave his approval to Stephen's death. Thus, the verses of *Acts 9:1-2* next reveal how Saul continued to ruthlessly speak threats of murder against disciples of the Lord, even going to the high priest for letters to the synagogue in Damascus giving him the authority to bring followers of Christ bound back to Jerusalem. Let me now ask this question: If we all had to pay this same price as these Jews who followed Christ, would we? That being said, it this famous journey along the Damascus Road that changes the course of Paul's life forever. Eternally speaking, it is also the most pivotal event for all of Gentile humanity!

Beginning with *Acts 9:3-9*, we see that somewhere along Paul's journey to Damascus, a light from heaven suddenly flashes all around him. As Saul falls to the ground he hears a mysterious voice asking him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Saul, not knowing who this mysterious voice is, responds by asking, "Who is it that I hear?" The mysterious voice then replies, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." The men traveling with Saul stood speechless having heard the voice, but seeing nothing. Jesus then tells Saul to get up and enter the city where he will be told what he must do. Saul's encounter with Christ had also blinded him even with his eyes closed; further inferring that Jesus was present in His glorified form similar to what we see in *Matthew 17:1-2*. This experience so traumatized Saul

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that he did not eat or drink for three days; for he had been “**Blinded by the Light**”⁴³ in the words of Manfred Mann’s Earth Band. We can also look back to the verses of *Exodus 33:18-23* and *Exodus 34:27-30*, which describe how the face of Moses shined with residual glory after his encounter before the Lord.

We next learn of a disciple in Damascus named Ananias who has a vision of Jesus. Jesus tells him to go to the house of a man named Judas and inquire about a man from Tarsus named Saul. He further tells Ananias that he will find this man praying, for this man also had a vision about a man named Ananias who would lay hands on him and restore his sight. But Ananias was fearful, for he knew of the harm Saul was doing to followers of Christ, and expressed this fear to the Lord. The Lord tells Ananias that Saul is a chosen instrument of His who will bear the Lord’s name to Gentiles, kings, and the sons of Israel while suffering for His name’s sake. Thus, having *faith* in what the Lord had told him, Ananias does indeed find Saul and lays hands on him. At that instant, something like scales fall from Saul’s eyes, and his sight is restored just as the Lord had told both men. Saul is then baptized and strengthened following the consumption of food, after which he spends several days with the disciples in Damascus per *Acts 9:10-19*. Thus, Paul was now primed and ready for the Lord’s purpose!

Can you imagine going through such a traumatic event and not be affected or changed by it in any way? Obviously, such shock and awe was necessary to overcome Saul’s hardened heart so that he would truly believe Jesus is the Christ and Son of God who came in the flesh. I believe this is one of many events the bible speaks of where simply reading about it cannot be compared to actually being there, a dynamic I liken to the song “**Nineteen**”⁴⁴ by Paul Hardcastle which speaks to the horrors experienced in

the Vietnam War. Reading about such events in a newspaper or history book cannot convey the same physical or psychological trauma as experiencing it firsthand. Jesus knew that Saul needed something divine and traumatic to change his heart in order to steer him toward the purpose He had in mind. But isn't that also the way for most of us, as something traumatic is often needed to change our hearts before we are able to see or do something we never would otherwise? Without this one single event, Gentiles may never have received the opportunity and hope of life eternal as *Ephesians 2:11-13* reminds us. And this is why Paul's Damascus Road experience must never be slighted or taken for granted, lest we end up taking the elevator down to our eternal destination.

Paul Gets Started

According to the book of Acts, Paul goes on three missionary journeys throughout many non-Jewish regions to announce and preach his gospel of life eternal per the vision given to Ananias. At this point, we need to take a look at *Galatians 1:14-20*, written by Paul, which provides more detail concerning the time-line of events immediately following his conversion. In these verses, Paul states that after he had regained his strength he went immediately to Arabia, and only later did he return to Damascus. Then, after a period of three years, Paul traveled to Jerusalem to confer with Peter and see James, the Lord's brother. *Galatians 1:19* also confirms that Paul saw no other apostles except Peter and James. The book of Acts, however, mentions none of this, which, again, is something I will detail further in chapter 5. For now, let's pick back up with the book of Acts.

After Saul had regained his strength, Luke tells us that he promptly began preaching that Jesus is the Son of God to Jews in the synagogues of Damascus. This angered many religious Jews who then plotted kill him,

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but Saul's disciples help him escape through a window, lowering him to the ground in a basket during the night per *Acts 9:21-25* and *2 Corinthians 11:32-33*. Paul then travels to Jerusalem, but the disciples there would not associate with him out of fear. So Barnabas brings Saul before the apostles to speak of all that had happened on the road to Damascus, after which, Saul speaks out boldly in the name of Jesus. Saul then begins to move about freely, but he argues with Hellenistic Jews who then attempt to kill him. In response, the brethren quickly bring him over to Caesarea, and then on to Tarsus in Cilicia, where Saul was born. The book of Acts doesn't tell us why he argued with Hellenistic Jews, but it must have been over theology concerning his new revelation of Jesus Christ, of which they did not know. As Saul had changed from a persecutor of Christ to a believer in Him, all of Judea and Galilee began to enjoy a time of peace as *Acts 9:26-31* delineates.

Acts 11:19-25 next details how believing Jews, previously scattered from Saul's persecution, had traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cypress, and Antioch speaking the Jewish gospel to Jews only. Some of them, however, began preaching the Lord Jesus to Greeks, with large numbers turning to the Lord as He was with them. These events were heard back in Jerusalem, giving the church cause to send Barnabas, a man full of the Holy Spirit and *faith*, up to Antioch, where he did indeed witness this grace of God. Excited at what he was seeing, Barnabas quickly traveled to Tarsus seeking Saul to take the lead in this new ministry of the Gentiles. *Acts 11:26* then reveals how for an entire year both men met together with the church in Antioch and taught large numbers of people. This verse further reveals that Antioch is also the place where these new disciples are first called Christians, as this was the first church founded on Saul's new revelation of Jesus Christ. We can also surmise that Barnabas must have understood and believed

something of Saul's new revelation of Jesus Christ in order for him to seek out Saul to teach these new Gentile believers.

First missionary journey

Beginning with *Acts 13:1-3*, we see Saul and Barnabas in Antioch worshipping the Lord when the Holy Spirit said "Set apart for me Saul and Barnabas for the work to which I have called them." It is also in *Acts 13:9* where Saul is first referred to as Paul. Dual names was a common practice at that time, just as Peter is also referred to as Simeon Peter or Cephas. We also see Paul demonstrate his vast knowledge of the Old Testament while speaking at the synagogue in Antioch per his past vocation as a Pharisee zealot. With the necessary groundwork completed, we now see **The Holy Spirit send out Paul and Barnabas** on their first missionary journey. They begin preaching to Jews at different synagogues while drawing large crowds, even prompting a proconsul of Rome to hear the Word of God in *Acts 13:4-44*. Many embraced Paul's new revelation of Jesus Christ, which caused extreme jealousy amongst religious Jews, who then begin to blaspheme and contradict him. At this time, Paul spoke only to his Jewish brethren in the synagogues, but the Lord now commands Paul and Barnabas to preach only to Gentiles, many of whom rejoice and become believers per *Acts 13:45-49*. These events provoke even more jealousy in religious Jews of the synagogues, who then incite devout women and leading men of Antioch to drive them out. Thus, Paul and Barnabas simply shake off the dust of dissent and leave Antioch for Iconium in *Acts 13:50-52*.

In *Acts chapter 14* we learn that Paul and Barnabas begin to speak in such a way that large numbers of Jews and Greeks become believers. This divides the city between those who believe Paul and those who side with the dissenting religious Jews. This division prompts an attempt by both

groups to have Paul and Barnabas stoned, forcing both men to leave for the city of Lystra. As they were drawing large crowds, jealous Jews from Antioch had followed both men to Iconium and Lystra, where they successfully lobbied to have Paul stoned and left for dead. Severely injured but not dead, Paul recovers, and both men leave Lystra speaking the Word through many cities before returning to the church in Antioch with the good news of all that God had done through them for the Gentiles.

The Council at Jerusalem

Acts 15:1-3 next reveals that men had come down from Judea into Antioch teaching Paul's brethren they could not be saved unless they were circumcised per the Law of Moses. Please keep in mind that Antioch is lower in elevation than Judea, and circumcision was a custom established by the Lord through Abraham as part of the covenant for His people back in *Genesis 17:10-14*; it was not, however, part of Paul's gospel. Paul and Barnabas having great dissent with this quickly travel up to Jerusalem in order to confront the apostles and brethren over this issue. Paul speaks on this further in *Galatians 2:1-6*, telling us that he traveled back to Jerusalem after fourteen years in Antioch to deal with this issue and explain his gospel message to the apostles. He begins by speaking of all that God had done through them, but some from the party of believing Pharisees asserted that it is also necessary to be circumcised per the Law of Moses, as *Acts 15:4-6* reveals.

Peter then stood up to recount what God had done through him in the Roman household of Cornelius. Prelude to this, Cornelius had a vision instructing him to send for Peter, who, also had vision regarding this encounter back in *Acts 10:1-33*. Peter begins by telling everyone how the Holy Spirit had fallen on all Gentiles present in the house of Cornelius as

they listened to Peter preach the Jewish gospel. These Gentiles then began to praise God, even speaking in tongues before water baptism repentance, which astounded Peter and his circumcised companions per *Acts 10:34-48*. After witnessing this extraordinary event, Peter immediately reported back to his Jewish brethren and began to detail how God had made no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Thus, after Peter had finished recounting his experience, he asks all present at the council in *Acts 15:7-11*, why put God to the test in placing a yoke on Gentiles which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? Peter's account before the council makes it perfectly clear that God had prepared Peter in advance with this experience, so that when the time came, he could vouch for Paul concerning this matter before the council.

After listening to all that had been said, James stood up and declared that it is his judgment the brethren should not trouble those with Jewish customs who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, as detailed in *Act 15:13-20*. Peter, James, and John then give Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship to bring the gospel message to the uncircumcised Gentiles, while they remain devoted to the circumcised Jews of Israel per *Galatians 2:4-9*. Paul and Barnabas then travel back to Antioch along with Judas and Silas; but this decree that only Paul would bring the gospel to the Gentiles doomed any further possibility of the apostles themselves making disciples of the whole world.

Paul's Second and Third Missionary Journeys

Paul and Barnabas now desired to revisit every town where they had proclaimed Paul's new revelation of Jesus Christ, but having disagreed over whom to bring in *Acts 15:36-41*, they depart ways, as Paul now brings Silas with him. Paul begins his second missionary journey in returning to Syria

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and Cilicia to strengthen those churches he had previously established through his gospel message. Paul and Silas then travel to Derbe and Lystra, where Paul takes on another disciple named Timothy, whose mother was a Jewish believer and father a Greek. The brethren in Lystra and Iconium spoke very well of Timothy, as he now accompanied Paul and Silas from town to town per *Acts 16:1-8*. Paul then has a vision concerning a Macedonian man pleading with him to come help them in *Acts 16:9-15*. He concluded that God had now called them to preach the gospel there. So Paul and company travel to Philippi, the region's leading city, where they encounter a woman named Lydia, whose heart was opened by the Lord to Paul's message.

Days later, while going to prayer, Paul and Silas encounter a slave girl possessed by a spirit of clairvoyance. She followed them for many days proclaiming, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation!" Paul eventually grew aggravated and said, turning to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" The spirit left her at that very moment, which angered the slave girl's masters, as she was earning large sums of money fortune-telling for them per *Acts 16:16-18*. Now infuriated at their loss of income, her masters have Paul and Silas jailed. But upon seeing their great *faith* in choosing not to escape when they had the chance, the jailer and his family become saved as detailed *Acts 16:19-34*; a truly inspiring story. Being Roman citizens, Paul and Silas were also released with an official apology, having been illegally imprisoned without a trial as the verses of *Acts 16:35-40* detail. In *Acts chapters 17-18*, we now see Paul traveling through Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth speaking His gospel message before returning to Antioch. The verses of *Acts 18:4-7* again depict Paul trying to speak his gospel message to Jews in the synagogue at Corinth, but

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to no avail. Paul's missionary journeys remind of the song "Africa"⁴⁵ by the rock band Toto, as the line "I bless the rains down in Africa" speaks to the missionary work of Catholic school teachers in Africa who had educated a member of the band.

Paul begins his third missionary journey in *Acts 18:23*, bringing the Holy Spirit to many who had only received John's baptism, in addition to performing many other miracles while ministering at Ephesus. *Acts 19:1-6* also provides another example of the Jewish gospel, for Luke delineates that Paul was laying hands on believers as part of being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to receive the Holy Spirit, just as the apostles were doing in *Acts 8:14-17*. While it's true that Paul does baptize a few believers early on, Paul's letters never make mention that he lays hands on any Jews or Gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit as part of his gospel.

We also see Paul attempt one last effort to cultivate Jewish believers in *Acts 19:8-9*, but with little success. This is why the Holy Spirit had told Paul early on that he is to preach only to Gentiles, for most religious Jews remained blindly devoted to Judaic law with hardened hearts. After spending time in Ephesus, **Paul was purposed in the Spirit to return to Jerusalem**, and then on to Rome per *Acts 19:21*. In keeping *faith* with the Spirit, Paul does indeed return to Jerusalem, but he is immediately seized in the temple as the Jewish council plotted to kill him. However, as Paul had been born a Roman citizen, he claims the right of appeal to Caesar. This leads Paul to plead his case before the Roman governors Felix and Festus, the Jewish King Agrippa, and then on to Rome for his rightful audience with Caesar. The verses of *Philippians 4:20-22* further reveal that even members of Caesar's household had heard Paul's gospel and believed.

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We now see complete fulfillment of the vision Ananias had received back in *Acts 9:10-16*, where the Lord had told him how Paul must suffer for His name's sake while also bearing His name before the Gentiles, kings, and sons of Israel. Having now completed the book of Acts, we can see this book is all about the transition from Jew to Gentile through Paul's new revelation of Jesus Christ. It was because of Israel's hardened hearts and their hypocritical devotion to Judaic law that the Jewish gospel never grows beyond the few scattered Jewish churches resulting from Saul's persecution. With the transition of Jew to Gentile now established, let's examine some specifics concerning Paul's gospel within his letters (epistles) written to his newly established churches.

As this chapter has a lot to reconcile and process, I offer a brief recharge through the gospel house tracks of "**Inside My Soul**"⁴⁶ by Groove Junkies Feat Solomon Henderson and "**The Light**"⁴⁷ performed by Michelle Weeks.

CHAPTER 5

PAUL'S GOSPEL MESSAGE

Specifics on Paul's Gospel and Its Beginning

Let me begin by stating that Paul's gospel is not a religion, but a **lifestyle**, practiced by those who believe in *Romans 10:9* through *faith* and sealed in the Holy Spirit. A religion implies adhering to certain rituals, rules, and traditions as requirements for righteousness, recognition, and membership as the foundation of its *faith*. That's not to say Paul doesn't also instruct us to follow the traditions he teaches per his revelation of Jesus Christ in *1 Corinthians 11:1-2* and *2 Thessalonians 2:13-15*, but this is quite different than following a set of rules or traditions in a legalistic fashion to be seen as righteous before the Father. Thus, the only way to stay grounded in a Pauline lifestyle is through the daily devotion of prayer and reading of the written Word, so that our minds are consistently renewed as *Romans 12:1-2* and *Ephesians 4:19-25* teach us. I liken this concept of daily devotion to the Japanese culture Tom Cruise observes⁴⁸ where he is being held captive in the 2014 film *The Samurai*.

As previously mentioned, Paul wrote only to his believing Gentile churches. His letters (epistles) begin with *Romans*, written to believers in Rome; *1 & 2 Corinthians*, written to believers in Corinth; *Galatians*, written to believers in Galatia; *Ephesians*, written to believers in Ephesus; *Philippians*, written to believers in Philippi; *Colossians*, written to believers in Colossae; *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, written to believers in Thessalonica. Along with his three pastoral letters of *1 & 2 Timothy* and *Titus* written to address problems in Ephesus and Crete, and his final letter of *Philemon*

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written to beloved fellow workers. These letters convey Paul's message of life eternal along with all traditions and spiritual truths which define the Pauline lifestyle. Another important thing to keep in mind is that Paul's definition of a church refers to a called-out assembly of people, rather than a structure or building as it seems to imply today.

I'd also like to again state for the record that Paul was indeed a Jew by birth, a Pharisee zealot, and an apostle of Jesus Christ by revelation, as *1 Corinthians 15:9-10*, *2 Corinthians 11:21-22*, and *Philippians 3:3-6* very much confirm. As a former Pharisee, Paul possessed a thorough knowledge of Old Testament prophecy, but he did not receive nor was taught his new gospel from any person or book. He received it solely from a revelation of Jesus Christ as stated in *Galatians 1:11-14*, so that it could be preached to the Gentiles per *Galatians 1:15-17* and *1 Timothy 2:5-7*. This means everything concerning the Pauline life style comes directly from Jesus Christ Himself. Chapter 4 has revealed that Saul was an extreme zealot for his ancestral traditions and well advanced in Judaism beyond most of his contemporaries; someone I liken to the fictional Harvard law professor Charles Kingsfield, as seen in the **1973 film *The Paper Chase***.⁴⁹ Thus, as Saul possessed an extreme knowledge of Old Testament scripture and Jewish tradition, the only possible way he could have received his new gospel is from a direct revelation of Jesus Christ. Again, per *Galatians 1:15-17*, this explains why Paul went first to Arabia, and then back to Damascus, so that he could receive his new gospel through a direct revelation of Jesus Christ. Thus, per *2 Corinthians 12:1-5*, we see Paul refer to himself in the third person as he speaks of a man who was caught up to the third heaven and paradise, which is where and when he likely received his revelation of Jesus Christ while in Arabia.

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As we've already seen, it wasn't until after a period of three years following his Damascus Road experience that Paul travels to Jerusalem to confer with Peter and see James per *Galatians 1:17-19*. Luke had told us in *Acts 9:26-27* that Saul was brought before the apostles in Jerusalem, but as *Galatians 1:18-19* reveals, Paul saw only the apostles Cephas and James. We do know that Paul had encountered other disciples as evidenced by his arguing with Hellenistic Jews in *Acts 9:28-30*, but he did not meet with any other apostles in Jerusalem. Putting this all together, we can see that immediately following his Damascus Road experience, Paul knew nothing more than the same Jewish gospel as the disciples he once persecuted. It wasn't until after his direct revelation of Jesus Christ in Arabia that Paul then possessed a thorough knowledge of his new gospel message.

Thus, we can now see the book of *Acts* must be paired with *Galatians chapter 1* in order to give us a clear timeline concerning Paul's new revelation of Jesus Christ that he preaches to the Gentiles. Paul's early *faith* journey needs to be very clear, for Luke in the book of *Acts* only tells us that Paul went immediately into the synagogue preaching Jesus is the Son of God. The obvious reason for this discrepancy is that neither Luke nor the apostles were privy to Paul's new revelation of Jesus Christ in Arabia. Luke likely assumed that Paul now believed the same Jewish gospel that he and the other apostles had been taught, which is why he authors the book of *Acts* from this perspective per *Acts 9:20* and *Acts 20:20-21*. This distinction is very important to understand as the apostles were never meant to preach Paul's new gospel to the Gentiles. Paul himself delineates this in *Galatians 2:7-8* which pairs with the words of Peter in *2 Peter 3:15-16*. We can see another example in *Acts 18:24-26*, where Apollos is further instructed by Priscilla and Aquila concerning the way of God, as he knew only the baptism of John, which again is the Jewish gospel. As an addendum to all

of this, I do think it's fair to say that Luke most likely came to understand and believe Paul's new gospel, just as Barnabas had.

This all means that despite the assistance Paul received from many other spirit-filled disciples, this new gospel to the Gentiles was received by Paul alone per *Acts 20:24*, *Romans 11:13-14*, and *2 Peter 3:15-16*. Only by reading *Galatians chapter 1* can we see that Paul was most likely rerouted by the Holy Spirit to Arabia in order to receive his new gospel through a direct revelation of Jesus Christ. Without these additional details, the book of *Acts* can appear disjointed and even contradictory in places; this is why it must be paired with *Galatians chapter 1*. As we've already learned, Paul's new revelation of Jesus Christ is found in ***Romans 10:9***, with all of its power and authority grounded in the verses of *1 Corinthians 15:1-4*. These examples again reinforce the truth that scripture never stands alone, but will always accompany other books and verses of the bible to provide further context and authority.

Only One Requirement for Life Eternal

Everyone should now be able to see that the only requirement to be sealed in the Holy Spirit and freely receive life eternal is through *faith* in ***Romans 10:9***, and, nothing else. This means add-ons like repentance, water baptism, and observing biblical law are no longer required to be seen as righteous before the Father. If anyone were to practice these as necessary requirements, it would nullify the words "It is finished" spoken by Jesus on the cross in *John 19:30*, something Paul further confirms in *Hebrews 6:4-6*. In addition to His blood sacrifice, if Christ doesn't rise from death to life eternal as the first fruits of those who fell asleep, then neither will the Body of Christ rise from death to forever be with Him as *1 Corinthians 15:12-20* confirms. Paul hammers this home with his words "unless you have

believed in vain” at the end of *1 Corinthians 15:2*. Christ has done everything necessary for the Body of Christ to be seen as righteous before the Father on our behalf per *Romans 8:33-34*.

Things like repentance, water baptism, and observing biblical law are indeed good works of *faith*, but are done in vain if one's reason is to be seen as righteous before the Father. Thus, if anyone preaches another gospel of Christ other than ***Romans 10:9***, we are to turn away from them, as they are to be cursed per *Romans 16:17-18*, *2 Corinthians 11:1-6*, and *Galatians 1:6-9*. Again, per the verses of *Hebrews 6:4-6* and *Hebrews 10:25-27*, practicing these things in order to be seen as righteous before the Father puts the cross to shame and disqualifies any person from the free gift of life eternal. Unfortunately, most Christians still feel they must earn their way into heaven per Old Testament law rather than believe through *faith* that Christ has already done the work for us. Jesus also speaks on *faith* in *Matthew 9:11-13* and *Luke 18:15-17* where He tells His disciples to let the children come to Him, for He knew their hearts were full of *faith* versus pride and doubt. As an analogy to this biblical concept of *faith*, we can see Jedi Master Yoda in the 1980 film *The Empire Strikes Back* teaching Luke Skywalker about this very thing over his doubt in the power of the Force through his words, “**That is why you fail.**”⁵⁰

We do know, however, that Paul did receive water baptism so that he could receive the Holy Spirit and be rerouted to Arabia to receive his new revelation of Jesus Christ per *Acts 9:17-19* and *Galatians 1:15-17*. *Acts 13:2* further demonstrates that it was also the Holy Spirit who sets Paul and Barnabas apart for the work which He had called them, just as Paul was resolved in the Spirit to return to Jerusalem before his journey to Rome in *Acts 19:21*. Water baptism was also necessary so that Paul would have a

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solid understanding of the difference between the Jewish gospel and his new revelation built solely on the foundation of a risen Jesus Christ.

As mentioned earlier, we know that Paul had baptized Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas in *1 Corinthians 1:11-17*, but we know of no others. These verses also make it clear that Paul did not want anyone to boast of being baptized in his name, for Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel. He goes on to say that in one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jew, Greek, slave, or free per *1 Corinthians 12:12-13*. As Jesus has already completed the work of forgiveness, all we need do is believe in **Romans 10:9** through *faith* to forever be seen as righteous before the father per *Ephesians 3:12* and *1 Timothy 2:5-7*. Everything else is foolishness as Paul declares in *1 Corinthians 1:18-25* if done for the purpose of being seen as righteous before the Father.

Further proof of needing *faith* alone to receive life eternal can be found in *Ephesians 2:6-10* where Paul says, “For it is by grace you have been saved through *faith*, and this is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.” As we will see in chapter 6, works are definitely part of the Pauline lifestyle, but only for heavenly reward. Just imagine if someone was totally alone or within minutes of death but had no access to water baptism or any other religious work per the Jewish Gospel. In those circumstances, how could anyone hope to receive life eternal unless it is truly a personal choice made through *faith* between an individual and the Father? Thus, I liken this personal moment to the song “**Just the Two of Us**”⁵¹ as performed by Bill Withers and Grover Washington Jr. For Paul declares in *Romans 4:1-3* per *Genesis 15:6*, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.” This also pairs with his message to his Jewish brethren in *Hebrews 11:1-40*. Finally, we have already seen *1 Corinthians 15:14* confirm that if Christ has

not been raised, then our preaching and *faith* are worthless. But like I always say, if you're willing to bet eternity on something other than *faith* in Paul's gospel, then bring it with you and see what happens!

The Body of Christ Was Predestined

Unlike the words heard in the song "**Just the Way You Are**"⁵² by Billy Joel, the Father will not accept anyone as they are due to our innate disease of sin, unless we've been predestined to be cleansed through a spiritual rebirth per *2 Corinthians 5:14-17*. Paul tells us in *Romans 5:12-15* and *1 Corinthians 15:21-22* that sin came from one man, Adam, which then spread to all humanity. This brought into being the requirement of a spiritual rebirth through a risen Jesus Christ to now be seen as righteous before the Father, as ***Romans 10:9*** clearly delineates. But only the Father knows which of us has a heart for belief to then be called predestined as one of His children per *Romans 9:18-21*. Jesus tried to explain this to Nicodemus in *John 3:1-12*, telling him that we hear the wind but do not know where it comes from or where it's going, and so it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

Building on this biblical truth, Paul tells us in *Romans 8:28-30*, *Ephesians 1:3-14*, and *2 Thessalonians 2:13-14* that all Pauline believers are predestined and chosen as sons of God even before the foundations of the world were created. That is why Jesus uses the metaphor of the wind, as only the Father knows which direction we will go, even before being born. This doesn't mean the Father has made the choice for us, but rather that He foreknows which of us will make that choice through *faith*. He (the Father) searches our hearts for the Holy Spirit who intervenes for us with groans too deep for words as *Romans 8:26-27*, *1 Corinthians 2:9-13*, and *Ephesians 1:13-14* confirm.

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Putting this all together, we can now understand that being predestined means the Father can look into our hearts and see if the Holy Spirit is truly there as the unequivocal evidence of our *faith*. This makes it perfectly clear to the Father that we desire to please Him rather than ourselves, or the world, as Paul describes in *Galatians 1:10*, *1 Thessalonians 2:3-4*, and *1 Thessalonians 4:1-12*. Remember, the Holy Spirit is the only way to commune with the Father and Christ, as He is our Advocate who guides all Pauline believers in the way of the Lord in communicating all spiritual truth of the Father and Christ per *John 14:25-26* and *1 Corinthians 2:11-14* and *Galatians 5:24-25*. I liken this concept to the 2001 comedy *Shallow Hal*, where Anthony Robbins dehypnotizes Hal to **only see the beauty**⁵³ within the heart of every woman in place of her actual physical appearance...Hmm, imagine what we might see if this happened to us all?

The Body of Christ

In *Matthew 12:47-50* and *Mark 3:31-35*, Jesus tells His Jewish audience that despite His mother and brothers being blood relations, those who follow Him are His true eternal family per the Jewish gospel. Likewise, Paul teaches that after being sealed in the Holy Spirit through *faith* in ***Romans 10:9***, we become members of what he calls the Body of Christ as the verses of *Romans 12:4-5*, *1 Corinthians 12:12-27*, and *Colossians 1:18-19* delineate. These verses further reveal that Jesus Christ is Lord and the head of this body, with Pauline believers completing its torso, arms, forearms, fingers, thighs, legs, feet, and toes. Thus, all who believe will have an important and specific function in support of this body, just as each member of a musical band has a specific function. The difference being, Christ will never grow old and tired, as Dan Fogelberg sings in tribute to his father through the song, "**Leader of the Band**."⁵⁴ Membership within

the Body of Christ also bestows a heavenly citizenship and the special status of being joint heirs with Jesus Christ per *Romans 8:15-17* and *Philippians 3:20-21*. And make no mistake...Membership definitely has its privileges!

For the Body of Christ, this means our eternal destiny will be as great as that promised to the Jews of Israel; meaning, any difficulties we experience in this life are nothing compared to the glory that will be revealed in us in eternity, as Paul declares in *Romans 8:17-18* and *2 Corinthians 4:16-18*. Thus, membership within the Body of Christ should give every believer reason to shout "**I've got a golden ticket**,"⁵⁵ as Albert Brooks sings in the 1971 film *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. To further sweeten the deal, written on the golden ticket are the words, "In your wildest dreams you could not imagine the marvelous surprises that await you." Words which I liken to eternity's unknown glory per *Romans 8:18*, and, words which Willy Wonka sings about through his song "**Pure Imagination**."⁵⁶

Speaking of which, I believe the bible purposefully omits describing heaven as it is the Father's personal space, where His glory illuminates everything. A place where no living human could exist in the presence of His glory, and specifically, a place where no human could see the face of the Father and live, per *Exodus 33:18-23* and *Isaiah 66:1-2*. For I have a very specific image and sound of the Father's throne room which I cannot convey in this book. Thus, I can only relate the glory of the Father to brief moments like a stunning sunset or the perfect piece of music, such as **Hardison playing the Scheherazade violin solo**⁵⁷ on the television show *Leverage*. Everyone longs to go to places of awe and beauty like those seen in the Peter White smooth jazz video "**Love Will Find You**,"⁵⁸ so the Creator's workmanship can illuminate and fill our spirits per *Romans 1:20*!

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Moments like these can stun us into an almost hypnotic awe, which is just a taste of the spiritual bliss to be had in the eternal presence of the Father and Son. Even music like “**Hymn of the Cherubim**”⁵⁹ by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky cannot convey the Holiness and Glory emanating from the Father in heaven. That’s why Jodie Foster as Dr. Ellie Arroway declares, “**They should have sent a poet**”⁶⁰ while witnessing a grand celestial event of the Creator in the 1997 film *Contact*. Beyond its perfect beauty, eternity will also be a place of wonder and tempo where the Body of Christ will be very busy per *1 Corinthians 6:1-3*, something I liken to the awesome guitars of Rodrigo and Gabriela performing the song “**Tamacun**.”⁶¹ As we will see in chapter 10, heaven is only a temporary abode for those saved souls before a new heaven and earth are created to replace the old, where the Father’s eternity will at last be amongst His servants per *Revelation chapters 21-22*. This further explains why the bible never describes heaven beyond the Father’s throne room, for a new earth along with an ever-present new heaven will be the eternal abode for Israel’s remnant elect and the Body of Christ.

Free From All Works of Biblical Law

As members of the Body of Christ we are then set free from keeping all biblical law to be seen as righteous before the Father, as Paul teaches in *Romans 4:13-16* and *Romans 7:1-6*. Again, we as Pauline believers are now guided in the new way of the Spirit and not the old way of the written code as *Galatians 3:22-26* delineates. This same truth can also be seen in the Old Testament verses of *Jeremiah 31:31-34*, *Ezekiel 11:16-20*, and *Ezekiel 36:24-28* where Israel’s remnant elect will be led in this same fashion after the Day of the Lord is complete. Paul further confirms this in *Hebrews 8:10-12* which also pairs with *Exodus 19:5-6* in describing Israel’s purposed

role as a holy nation and kingdom of priests. Paul lastly reveals that although the written law and commandments had come from God, they were only given to reveal sin and death, so that through the coming of Christ the Chosen One, His once and for all blood sacrifice would do away with those requirements to be seen as righteous before the Father, per *Romans 3:19-20*, *Romans 7:8-11* and *Romans 10:4*.

Having now examined these verses, we can see that observing biblical law to be seen as righteous only brings death due to our innate disease of sin, of which, only *faith* can overcome as delineated in *Galatians 3:10-16*. For the law can tell us what to do, but it contains no mercy to be made perfect, only condemnation. The verses of *Romans 3:19-20* and *Galatians 2:15-16* also reveal that following the law to be seen as righteous amounts to nothing more than works of which we could boast; thus, if righteousness did indeed come through the law, then Christ died for nothing as *Galatians 2:17-21* confirms. Again, most Jews and Christians, however, still cling to the idea that observing biblical law is necessary to be seen as righteous before the Father instead of believing through *faith* Paul's gospel of ***Romans 10:9***, and nothing else.

Being free of biblical law, however, does not mean that we have license to do as we please, for the Father expects spiritual growth beyond the consumption of milk to solid food, as Paul teaches to both Gentile and Jew in *1 Corinthians 3:1-3* and *Hebrews 5:12-14*. This can only come in submitting to the guidance of the Holy Spirit through *faith*, which doesn't nullify the law, but leads the Body of Christ to uphold it; meaning, **we follow the law as a result of our *faith*, and not as the basis for it**. This includes submitting to the governing authorities as *Romans 3:31*, *Romans 8:1-4*, *Romans 13:1*, and again *Ephesians 3:22-26* all detail. But keep in mind that doing our duty as a citizen does not supersede our duty in living

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a visible Pauline lifestyle through *faith*. For *Romans 3:28-30* confirms the circumcised Jew will be justified by this *faith* and the uncircumcised Gentile through that same *faith*. Remember what Jesus had told the Pharisees in regards to paying taxes to Caesar, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and give to God what is God’s” in *Mark 12:14-17* and *Luke 20:21-26*. Thus, a good biblical example of submitting to government authority is the prophet Daniel, who submitted to the Babylonian and Medo-Persian kings for the entire seventy-year period of Judean captivity, but not did relinquish even one ounce of his Jewish *faith* and lifestyle. He was, however, sent to the lion’s den for his *faith*. Indeed, martyrdom will be required of many believers in the last days, just as it was in the days of Christ per *Matthew 24:7-13* and *Luke 21:8-20*. Paul in *Galatians 5:22-25* elaborates further in stating that only through living by the Spirit can we walk in step with the Spirit, and avoid the sins of *Galatians 5:19-21*, for these will not inherit the kingdom of God. This means that other than our spouse, the Holy Spirit should be the biggest part of all believers within the Body of Christ, which is also reminiscent of the song “**Biggest Part of Me**”⁶² by the soft rock band Ambrosia.

Paul further explains in *Romans 7:14-25* and *Galatians 5:17-18* how the flesh and the spirit constantly war against each other. These verses describe how Paul does not do what he wants to do, but rather does what he hates to do, as the flesh will always be full of sin. This is also why the flesh must perish before moving on to eternity within a new incorruptible body as Paul delineates in *1 Corinthians 15:41-54*. Remember, we must all appear before the judgment seat to account for what we have done in the body, good or bad, per *Romans 14:5-10* and *2 Corinthians 5:9-10*. In summary, everyone should now understand that belief in ***Romans 10:9*** through *faith* only frees us from observing works of the law to be seen as

righteous before the Father, but it does not give us license to do as we please as part of the deal.

Permanently Grafted In

Finally, after believing through *faith* Paul's gospel of **Romans 10:9**, we have the knowledge and hope the Body of Christ has been permanently grafted onto the olive vine along with the remnant elect of Israel, as *Romans 9:19-26* and *Romans 11:11-24* confirm. This grafting is all-inclusive, which means those from the line of Ishmael who were excluded from the original covenant promises of *Genesis 17:18-21*, may also partake of these membership privileges promised to the Body of Christ. This means the Body of Christ should encompass the most diverse membership in the world as persons from any ethnic group or race who believe in **Romans 10:9** through *faith* are welcome. We can see a great metaphoric example of a committed diverse membership in the Assassin's Creed video "**Love and Family**."⁶³ This clip demonstrates not only commitment to love and family, but a first and foremost commitment to the creed, which is analogous to the first and foremost commitment all Pauline believers must have for the Body of Christ. Jesus also speaks of this in *Matthew 12:46-50* and *Mark 3:31-35*. For the biblical truth of *Ephesians 2:11-12* again reminds us that Gentiles were separate from Christ at one time, alienated from Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise without hope and without God in the world, leaving **Romans 10:9** as the only way to overcome this biblical truth per *Romans 2:15-16* and *Ephesians 2:13*.

Always remember, it was because of Israel's unbelief that some of its olive branches were removed to then allow Gentiles to be grafted in, but if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare us as *Romans 11:17-21* reminds us. We should then always be grateful and never boast

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over those branches, as it is the root which supports the vine and not the vine which supports the root. Paul affirms this in stating that he endures all things for the sake of the elect (Israel's remnant elect), so that they too may obtain salvation in Jesus Christ per *2 Timothy 2:8-10*. As such, this grafting is nothing short of a risen Jesus Christ miraculously saving the Body of Christ from certain eternal doom, something I liken to **Superman saving Lois Lane**⁶⁴ in the 1979 film *Superman: The Movie*.

In summary, we can now see that Paul's gospel of life eternal is a grafting onto the olive vine along with Israel's remnant elect for all who believe in ***Romans 10:9*** through *faith*. As stated earlier, this entails a heavenly citizenship and joint heir status with our Lord Jesus Christ. From a biblical perspective, this means the purpose of this life is to determine our place in eternity based on what we believe through *faith*. And so, for the Body of Christ, this life is all about service versus being served, as stated by Jesus Himself in *Matthew 20:25-28*. Something which Jesus also modeled to perfection during His entire three-year ministry. Like it or not, this is why we are all here, for we exist for the Father per *1 Corinthians 8:6...PERIOD!*

CHAPTER 6

AFTER WE BELIEVE

Speak the Word

What exactly do we do after we believe through *faith* in Paul's gospel of **Romans 10:9**? As I will discuss shortly, the answer will depend on which spiritual gifts you've been apportioned in support of the Body of Christ. With that said, all Pauline believers are charged with being ready to speak the Word in order to reprove, rebuke, and encourage all with instruction per *2 Timothy 4:1-4*. Thus, just like the song "**Ring the Bell**"⁶⁵ by The Gibson Brothers blue grass band; we ring the bell in speaking the Word to all who would listen, praying that it will be music to their ears per another Gibson Brothers song, "**They Call it Music**."⁶⁶ So "**Listen to the Music**"⁶⁷ as we hear The Doobie Brothers sing!

The first step is to become grounded in Paul's gospel so that we can show why it is the only way to life eternal with Jesus Christ. We then cast the seeds of *faith* and water them to provide a crop for the Father to grow as He sees fit per *1 Corinthians 3:5-8* and *1 Thessalonians 1:4-10*. Paul further instructs us not to use persuasive words of wisdom or trickery while speaking the Word; instead, he teaches that we are to speak it through the power of the Holy Spirit. This demonstrates that our *faith* does not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God through His Holy Spirit as *Zechariah 4:1-6*, *Ephesians 1:13-18*, and *1 Thessalonians 2:3-8* all delineate. Thus, if we are not knowledgeable concerning Paul's gospel and the Word of God surrounding it, we cannot accurately convey his gospel message to all who need it. Just as the house remix of "**Another One Bites the Dust**"⁶⁸

by The Miami Project owns everyone on the dance floor, the Holy Spirit should own everything we do and say while speaking the Word.

Constant Training

The next step is to discern and reprove false doctrine, lest we also become tempted and get lost in the forest as *Colossians 2:6-8* and *2 Timothy 3:12-15* speak of. This means minding what we've learned in order to stay grounded, for all will be challenged in this fashion per *2 Corinthians 4:1-6* and *2 Timothy 4:5*. This includes disarming the many biblical cliché's that incorrectly infer the free gift of life eternal. For deception in all of its forms, whether supernatural or manmade, will be rampant during the last days as Paul delineates in *1 Corinthians 6:9-10*, *2 Corinthians 11:1-15*, *Galatians 1:6-9*, *Colossians 2:16-23*, and *1 Timothy 4:1-3*. This includes being mindful of those that will try and suppress or distort the written Word of God to their own destruction, as *Philippians 3:18-19* and *2 Peter 3:15-16* describe.

The Body of Christ, however, has the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God to disarm the servants of Satan who masquerade as apostles of Christ per *2 Corinthians 11:12-15*. But this can only be done through constant practice, something I liken to the opening scene of the 1991 Jeff Speakman martial arts film **The Perfect Weapon**.⁶⁹ For Satan constantly practices his art of deception so that he may easily overwhelm and disarm all who would be against him, just as Darth **Vader easily overwhelms the third sister Reva**⁷⁰ in the television miniseries *Kenobi*. Thus, only through continuous practice with the biblical Word and prayer can the Body of Christ contend with Satan and His demonic forces, just as **Jeff Speakman again demonstrates**⁷¹ during a gym fight against those who uphold the status quo of evil. But most importantly, the Body of Christ must learn to

expect the unexpected when dealing with Satan and his servants of deceit, something I liken to the **ninja training scene**⁷² in the 2009 film *Ninja Assassin*. *Revelation 9:20-21* also speaks of many other evil things that will be rampant during this time, such as extreme drug use and the seeking of psychic services, both of which invite demonic influence as *Isaiah 8:13-19* and *Acts 16:16-18* have demonstrated. Indeed, everyone will be looking for the drug seen in the 2011 film **Limitless**⁷³ in order to become rich and powerful, for just as the pop band Tears for Fears sings, **“Everybody Wants to Rule the World.”**⁷⁴

These dangers are especially important regarding children, who must to be brought up in the way of the Lord as they are particularly vulnerable to these influences per *Proverbs 22:4-6* and *Ephesians 6:2-4*. To further illustrate this point, I once heard a story concerning an unbelieving man whose soul went to the torment side of Hades or Hell after he had died. As he wandered about, he suddenly saw his son quickly approaching, causing him to shout, “My son, my son, what are you doing here?” His son after reaching his father tells him, “Dad...I was just following you!” These eternal destinies are very real, which is why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding as *Psalms 9:10-11* and *Proverbs 1:1-7* teach us.

But even with our best efforts, we already know that most of the world will desire to have their ears tickled by a gospel which fits their own desires, as opposed to knowing and following sound biblical doctrine per *2 Timothy 4:3-4*. This is something we can already see happening in our present day. By again looking to the 1980 film *The Empire Strikes Back*, we see Jedi Master Yoda warning Luke Skywalker about the seductive **temptations of the dark side**⁷⁵ of the Force, and their consequences. As for the Body of Christ, when a fellow believer becomes immoral, especially sexually

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immoral, and refuses gentile correction, we are then not to associate with him or her anymore. They are to be handed over to Satan for the destruction of their flesh, so their soul may be saved on the Day of the Lord as Paul teaches in *1 Corinthians 5:1-11*.

Lastly, those in the Body of Christ must encourage and support each other by focusing on the things above which are pleasing to God. Again, this can only be done by renewing our minds through the daily practice of prayer and reading of scripture, just as the verses of *Romans 12:1-2*, *Colossians 3:1-10* and *1 Thessalonians 5:11-23* teach us. Or, to quote a term often referred to in modern culture, the Body of Christ must practice **mindfulness** concerning the Pauline lifestyle. The other important key is to pass on what we have learned to those of lesser knowledge within the Body of Christ per *Titus 1:5-9* and *Titus 2:1-8*. We see **Master Yoda remind Master Luke Skywalker**⁷⁶ of this very thing in the 2017 film *The Last Jedi*, and we get a similar lesson from the great Bruce Lee during "**Lao's Time**"⁷⁷ in the 1970 film *Enter The Dragon*. However, it takes time and training to become strong in the Lord. Thus, as these metaphors illustrate, the importance of a student-teacher relationship cannot be stressed enough, so that all within the Body of Christ are prepared to persevere the prophesized events to come.

Spiritual Gifts

In the last chapter, we learned that Pauline believers are members of the Body of Christ, with Jesus as Lord and head of this body. We then need to discover which spiritual gifts we've been apportioned in support of this body per *Romans 12:4-8* and *1 Corinthians 12:7-11*. It is the Holy Spirit, however, who apportions these gifts as He determines, for they are to be used as a single unifying force for the common good of the Body as *1*

Corinthians 12:12-26 delineates. An outstanding example of using combined talent for the good of an organization can be seen at the tail end of the Phantom Regiment drum and bugle corps brass warm-up called “**Pitch Perfection**,”⁷⁸ which is nothing less than awesome to hear and see. My dad always loved being blown away by the brass!

Paul then instructs us to desire the greater gifts listed in *1 Corinthians 12:27-31*, all of which must be performed through love or they mean nothing per *1 Corinthians 13:1-13*. Some of us may even be fortunate enough to use our gifts in earning a living; these include being a teacher, nurse, doctor, lawyer, plumber, carpenter, etc. But again, these talents must first and foremost be used in support of the Body per *Ephesians 4:10-13*, or it profits us nothing in terms of spiritual reward. I liken this collective effort to the following “Brooksism” of USA Olympic ice hockey coach Herb Brooks: “**The name on the front of the jersey is a hell of a lot more important than the one on the back.**”⁷⁹ Which is something Herb screams at his 1980 US Olympic hockey team in the 2004 film *Miracle*. Herb was trying to get his players to understand that playing for the team is more important than **playing out of ego or building a brand**,⁸⁰ something which Rocky Balboa does to his detriment while training for his first fight against Clubber Lang in the 1982 film *Rocky III*. This all means that being a Pauline Christian is not a spectator sport, for all must work in support of the Body in addition to earning a living, or **we shall not eat**, as Paul teaches in *2 Thessalonians 3:7-12*. There are no free rides in the Body of Christ. Again, this means all members are called into action as defined by the word **verb**⁸¹ per the School House Rock Saturday morning cartoon short!

I liken the process of being apportioned spiritual gifts to the 1990 film *Days of Thunder*, where Robert Duvall, as crew chief Harry Hoggie, **builds his NASCAR from scratch**.⁸² Just as we see Harry put incredible thought

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and care into the building of his car, *1 Corinthians 12:11-12* has already told us the Holy Spirit will equip every Pauline believer with the right spiritual gifts to fulfill his or her role in support the body. We then see Harry use his knowledge and experience to guide his driver during the race, just as the Holy Spirit guides each of us during our race toward the imperishable crown per *Romans 8:13-16*, *1 Corinthians 9:23-27* and *Philippians 1:27-28*. For most of us, discovering which gifts we've been apportioned will require a certain amount of trial and error paired with prayer and *faith* in order to find our niche within the Body of Christ. Using *faith* alone, however, may feel uncomfortable, especially if our spiritual path isn't what we had in mind. I'm sure that Paul felt like this immediately after his Damascus Road experience. But if you let the Holy Spirit guide your steps, you may find your Pauline journey even more adrenaline-pounding than the **wingsuit proximity flight**⁸³ seen in the 2015 film Point Break.

Thus, through hindsight, you will come to see that your own race within the Body of Christ contains more blessing and fulfillment than anything you could have imagined for yourself, something which Paul touches on in *Philippians 3:7-9* and *2 Timothy 4:5-8*. We need only remember the Father knows the end from the beginning and works all things together for the good of those who love Him called according to His purpose per *Romans 8:28*. Ironically, the Father will also use the talents and ambitions of unbelievers to assist in His plans, as the Old Testament examples of Assyria and Babylon demonstrate. But only Pauline believers are joint heirs with Jesus Christ and receive heavenly reward per membership in the Body of Christ. Never forget, membership definitely has its privileges!

Reward for Work

As part of fulfilling our purpose within the Body of Christ, we also receive heavenly reward for our work, which is the result of our *faith* and not the basis for it. I like to illustrate this point using the metaphor of a sporting event, where-in our good work will yield the reward of coaching or participation on the field; work which does not survive the fire of God, however, will earn only a seat in the stadium. As master builder of his gospel, Paul states very clearly in *1 Corinthians 3:10-13* that our work must begin atop the foundation of (a risen) Jesus Christ, as it will be tested by fire. If our work survives the fire, we receive reward; but, if it is consumed, reward is lost per *1 Corinthians 3:14-15* and *2 Corinthians 5:9-10*. Of course, either outcome gives rise to life eternal for Pauline Christians. Most people then believe biblical reward is earned in doing good deeds and obeying biblical law, which is certainly true, but for the Body of Christ, our greatest reward will be earned in fulfilling our designated function in support of the Body as *1 Corinthians 3:7-9*, *1 Corinthians 9:16-19*, and *Ephesians 2:8-10* all confirm.

The amount and difficulty of our work will also vary depending on our gifts. So never worry about keeping score, as all work *faithfully* carried out will be noticed and rewarded by Jesus Christ at His judgment seat per *2 Corinthians 5:9-10* and *Revelation 20:11-13*. This concept of using gifts for the common good can again be seen in the 2004 hockey film *Miracle*, where Herb Brooks tells assistant coach Craig Patrick, “**I’m not looking for the best players Craig I’m looking for the right ones.**”⁸⁴ This means Herb chose players with specific talents to serve within a system designed for the betterment of the team and promote team chemistry, all of which will defeat mere talent alone every day of the week and twice on Sunday.

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As an example, the 1989 film *Rudy* shows how Rudy, the least talented member of the Notre Dame Football team, also makes the greatest contribution to **team chemistry**,⁸⁵ and thus, team success. Another example can be seen in the 1968 sports comedy **The Paper Lion**,⁸⁶ where Alan Alda as writer George Plimpton **tries out**⁸⁷ for the Detroit Lions. These examples further demonstrate the importance of coaching and leadership, without which, even the best talent will never reach its potential for the individual or the team. In this same way, the Holy Spirit is also our head coach in directing our gifts and talents to serve a specific purpose in support of the Body of Christ, and thus, advance the free gift of life eternal through a risen Jesus Christ. By diligently performing our work, we can then imagine Christ echoing the words, "**So shines a good deed in a weary world**,"⁸⁸ just as Willy Wonka does in response to Charlie's unselfish act in the 1971 film *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*.

Some of our most important work may also come in the form of forgiveness, meaning it may take an entire lifetime to forgive even one evil act, but produce an eternity of reward. While some of us may prosper more than others during our earthly stay, please keep in mind that reward for those in the Body of Christ is eternity-based, unlike what Israel had been promised in the Old Testament. This means many of us may never find external peace and security while living this earthly life, as the peace of Jesus Christ which Paul speaks of in *Romans 5:1-2* and *Philippians 4:6-9* is a spiritual peace, to be redeemed in eternity. At the same time, don't let this promise of peace fool you, for eternity will also be a place of intense activity, unlike the image many have of only plucking harp strings or chanting "Holy, Holy, Holy" as the seraphim of *Isaiah 6:2-4* and *Revelation 4:6-10* are seen doing. In fact, just like the song "**Sing, Sing, Sing**"⁸⁹ performed by the Benny Goodman Orchestra in the 1937 film *Hollywood Hotel*, our

reverent shouts of “Holy, Holy, Holy” will be out of joy and excitement, being forever in the presence of the Father and Christ. Remember, as joint heirs with Jesus Christ, we will have many responsibilities, not the least of which will be judging the world and angels as Paul reminds us in *1 Corinthians 6:1-3*.

Trial and Tribulations of *Faith*

Just like the holy prophets and the apostles, the last and most difficult part of any Pauline Christian walk will be suffering through life-long trial and tribulation in order to produce perseverance, character, and hope, as the verses of *Romans 5:1-5* again describe. It is only through trial and tribulation that the Father can grow our *faith*, so that even when we are weak, we become strong through His grace, as Paul teaches in *2 Corinthians 12:6-10*. One of the best examples from my own experience is consistently being humbled, which seems to happen a daily basis. But, as I have come to learn, this too is necessary so that I don't become puffed up with pride and deluding self-confidence. This goes right along with my grandfather's saying, “Don't break your arm patting yourself on the back!”

This sort of constant humbling often causes me to feel despondent and angry, but the Father knows what He is doing despite the way it appears. Thus, praising the Father for trial and tribulation is always the correct response, but is something I find difficult, at best, to do. Most often I shout the defiant words “**He task's me**”⁹⁰ as Khan Noonien Singh does in the 1982 film *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Kahn*, which is really camouflage for the profanity I'm truly shouting...Mother-Fucker! I apologize for the vulgar language, but this is what I have shouted at the Father many times, to my discredit. We can also see Joseph Fiennes as Martin Luther rage

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against the Father in response to what he believes Satan is allowed to get away with in the **2003 film Luther**.⁹¹

Thus, there have been many times I would rather whine or complain about my difficulties instead of embracing them as training for spiritual growth. However, with maturity comes greater understanding, and thus, greater perseverance. At least I keep telling myself that! None of us wants or believes we deserve a life sentence of trial and tribulation in return for our commitment of *faith*, and I certainly haven't met the person who embraces this truth with gladness and anticipation the way Paul does in *Colossians 1:22-24* and *Colossians 3:15-17*. But if we are indeed *faithful* members of the Body of Christ, task us He will, for this is the only way the Father can mature and refine our *faith* for His purpose! Per this biblical truth, Paul further acknowledges that he is a prisoner for Christ on behalf of the Gentiles in *Ephesians 3:1-3* and *2 Timothy 2:8-10*. By then using Paul's example, the Body of Christ can remember this life is all about service, versus being served!

Thus, it is because of all the trial and tribulation that we need prayer, support, fellowship, and especially brotherly love along our journey, lest we wither on the vine. We can see an excellent example of this in the 1995 film *Rocky V*, where Rocky remembers the **special friendship**⁹² he shared with his manager Mickey, a character very similar to my maternal grandfather. As for me, I draw strength and sustenance from the time I spend with God, my special woman, and music, such as Four80East jamming to "**Noodle Soup**,"⁹³ "**Phat City Huslter**"⁹⁴ by Down To the Bone, and my favorite song of "**Reminiscing**"⁹⁵ by The Little River Band.

This brings us to the realization that our spiritual *faith* must be rock-solid, or the Body of Christ will not last during the great day of the Lord.

For this will be a time when the Body of Christ will need to have thousands of small intimate groups all over the world in order to persevere and survive, lest we get eaten alive by the antichrist. This precaution will also help limit the infiltration of those who wish to report on and destroy the Body of Christ. Don't lose heart if family, friends, and associates disapprove of your Pauline Christian walk, for Jesus tells us in *Matthew 10:18-23* and *Luke 21:11-19* that we will be hated because of His name. That is why Jesus says, "Enter through the narrow gate for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it" in *Matthew 7:13-14*. This means our walk will likely require great leaps of *faith*, which I liken to the **leap of faith Indiana Jones must make**⁹⁶ to pass the last of three tests and reach the Holy Grail in the 1989 film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

Indeed, there are pivotal moments in every person's walk of *faith* when we must rise above and be more man or woman than the challenge in front of us, which is something **Apollo Creed shouts at Rocky Balboa**⁹⁷ in the 1982 film *Rocky III*. No person of God demonstrated this better than the apostle Paul, who, in my opinion, is the third-greatest man of the bible after King David and Moses. Thus, everyone should now be able to see that the whole purpose to this exercise of enduring life-long trial and tribulation is to finish the race for the Body of Christ. Per *Hebrews 12:1-3*, Paul tells his Jewish brethren this is a race of endurance for heavenly applause, which I liken to the applause that Paul Bettany, as pro tennis player Peter Colt, receives for reaching the Wimbledon Finals as he arrives at the hotel lobby in the 2004 film **Wimbledon**.⁹⁸ But we must always be mindful to run the race with discipline and awareness in order to avoid disqualification. Let me say that again: the race must be run with discipline and awareness in

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order to finish and receive our imperishable crown as promised per *1 Corinthians 9:24-27*.

Paul details his own race in *2 Corinthians 11:21-33* where he describes the tremendous physical, emotional, and mental anguish he endured for the Body of Christ. It's times like these when Satan will attempt to frustrate us into anger and depression so that we lose heart and curse God, and thus, give Satan cause to grin. Remember, this is what Satan had attempted with Job, making discipline and awareness necessary components to our commitment of *faith*. It is this commitment which pushes each of us to keep getting back up after being repeatedly knocked down, **as Rocky tells his son**⁹⁹ in the 2006 film *Rocky Balboa*, as well as **Rudy during Notre Dame football practice**¹⁰⁰ in the 1993 film *Rudy*.

Just as Rudy's football equipment functions as a kind of armor against injury, Paul instructs us to put on the entire armor of God in *Ephesians 6:10-18*. This armor helps to protect us against Satan and his forces, for Paul declares it's not the earthly skirmishes we need fear, but the invisible ones fought in the heavenly realms, that's where the real battles are fought. Thus, the armor of God and prayer are the only defensive weapons available to the Body of Christ, while the sword of the Word of God is the only offensive weapon at our disposal for these battles of spiritual warfare. Paul further instructs us to present our petitions to the Father while praying in the Spirit at all times, for it is the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us with groans too deep for words, so that we may persevere per *Romans 8:24-26*. Praying in the spirit will also keep us focused on God's plan for our lives versus praying only for self-serving needs and desires, of which, we are all guilty! Just as Martin Luther claimed he was too full of sin to serve the Father in the 2003 film *Luther*, the reality of the Father's purpose may also cause each of us to feel overwhelmed and inadequate per *Romans 7:18-25*.

But without trial and tribulation, we will never grow to our potential in serving the Father's purpose within the Body of Christ.

Thus, along with our prayers of petition, we must also give prayers of service that mirror the words of John F Kennedy. This means we must also ask the Father, **what can we do for Him**.¹⁰¹ But there is a big difference between knowing the walk and walking the walk, which is why the armor of God and prayer are so important. While the gift of life eternal is free, walking the walk through life-long trial and tribulation is the cost of our *faith*, so that we too may be made perfect like Christ as the verses of *Acts 14:20-22*, *1 Thessalonians 3:1-6*, *2 Timothy 3:10-12*, and *Hebrews 2:9-10* all delineate. As this age of grace is all based on *faith* per *Ephesians 2:8-9*, Paul doesn't promise the Body of Christ any of the spiritual gifts seen in *Mark 16:14-18* per the Jewish gospel. Thus, it is only through the testing of trial and tribulation that our *faith* can grow and mature in this age of grace. Just as Superman's father encourages Superman to keep testing the limits of his abilities during the **first flight scene**¹⁰² in the 2013 film *Man of Steel*, the Father through His Holy Spirit will continue to test and refine the limits of our *faith*...Outstanding, as we say in the Marine Corps!

The Body of Christ is never promised fairness and comfort during this life per *2 Timothy 3:10-12*. That is why Paul teaches us to encourage one another through psalms and hymns in *Ephesians 5:18-20*. *2 Timothy 4:5* also teaches us to remain sober in all things while enduring hardships so that we are able fulfill our role in speaking the Word! Again, our worldly afflictions are only temporary and will produce an eternal glory to far outweigh any difficulties that we may encounter during our earthly stay, per *2 Corinthians 4:15-18*. However, even with these words of encouragement, many around the world may still feel this life is not worth living, but the next one certainly is! So if you feel like you are constantly

walking through hell, then keep on walking, as it will not be forever. Thus, another great analogy to this biblical truth is the **galley scene from the 1959 film Ben-Hur**,¹⁰³ where Charlton Heston as Judah Ben-Hur had become a galley slave through treachery of a friend; through *faith*, however, Judah knew he would not be there forever as God had a plan for him. This attitude reminds me of the song “**Rain Drops Keep Fallin’ On My Head**”¹⁰⁴ from the 1969 film Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, for even if our sufferings feel like an eternity, the Body of Christ has the peace of God through a risen Jesus Christ to redeem in eternity. Indeed, the pain and misery of this life may have many barely hanging on from minute to minute, but with continued prayer and the hope of *Romans 10:9*, we must keep telling ourselves, “**I Will Survive**,”¹⁰⁵ as we hear Gloria Gaynor sing.

Don't Worry

I'd like to end this chapter with the equally difficult biblical precept of never worry or be anxious about anything, as the Body of Christ has the peace of God through a risen Jesus Christ to always comfort us. Paul speaks about this in *Philippians 4:5-7*, but it is also seen throughout the bible in verses such as *Psalms 55:22*, *Matthew 6:25-34*, and *1 Peter 5:7*, to name but a few. These verses tell us to cast all burdens and worries upon the Lord as we cannot add a single hour to our lives through worry. For most of us this is difficult at best, meaning worry is our middle name. Especially for those who have had a life of nothing but injustice and tragedy while constantly feeling fear, anger, and hopelessness. But *Romans 8:28* again teaches us that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him called according to His purpose. Thus, with dedicated time and training, all in the Body of Christ can become strong in the Lord, a concept I liken to the **words Jedi Master Yoda preaches to Luke**¹⁰⁶ in regards to Jedi training in

the 1980 film *The Empire Strikes Back*. When tragedy does strike, however, such the death of a loved one, all we can do is pray, lament, and remember, just as the song “**Voyager**”¹⁰⁷ from the 2003 film *Interstellar 5555: The 5tory of the 5ecret 5tar 5ystem* demonstrates.

We then look to *Philippians 4:6* which says: be anxious for nothing, but in everything through prayer, petition, and thanksgiving present your requests to God. A biblical concept I liken to the songs “**Don’t Worry Baby**”¹⁰⁸ by the Beach Boys and “**I Ain’t Worried**”¹⁰⁹ by OneRepublic. We put our trust in God who raises the dead as Paul teaches in *2 Corinthians 1:3-11*. Then, with the peace of God guarding our hearts and minds in Christ per *Philippians 4:7*, we need not worry what comes our way; this is something the apostle Luke explains to his fellow jailed Christians when he tells them, “**there will be games tomorrow**,”¹¹⁰ in the 2018 film *Paul, Apostle of Christ*. For Luke also tells them “It will be a moment of pain, but only a moment, only a moment, and then we shall be home in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ forever.” For those who aren’t familiar with ancient history, the Roman emperor Nero treacherously killed many Christians in the arena for entertainment. He falsely blamed them for Rome’s great fire in an effort to deflect blame from himself, while also killing them for treasonous gathering and refusing to worship the divinity of the emperor.

Make no mistake, this will be the price for nearly all who demonstrate a visible Pauline *faith* during the last days as chapter 10 will detail.

So when life gets difficult, everyone think of the above video clip from the film *Paul, Apostle of Christ* to renew your mind, knowing that we are moving toward the eternal company of a risen Jesus Christ!

CHAPTER 7

PAUL'S MYSTERY

Paul mentions the word mystery several times in his letters, but the two most important are the mystery of the gospel, which Paul preaches to the Gentiles, and the mystery of the event Christians call the rapture. As we will now see, the rapture merely details how all within the Body of Christ receives the free gift of life eternal promised in *Romans 10:9*. The reason Paul uses the word mystery is because these things were unknown and hidden from any man or prophet until revealed to Paul through his Revelation of Jesus Christ. As mentioned earlier, this is because the Father and Christ were providing Israel with every possible chance to fulfill their prophesized destiny during the apostles' generation. Again, this reveals how the Old Testament would have been all that was needed if Israel had believed as purposed. But, because of their unbelief, a new gospel, which Paul refers to as the mystery, ensures that all Pauline gospel believing Jews and Gentiles will be grafted onto the olive vine along with Israel's elect as *Romans 1:16*, *Romans 11:1-24*, and *1 Corinthians 1:23-24* again confirm.

Thus, the verses of *Ephesians 3:1-12* reveal that Paul was given full stewardship of this mystery, which has been hidden in God since ages past, and through the Father's grace, he preached the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Paul says something similar in *Colossians 1:24-27*, but instead of calling himself a steward of the mystery, he describes himself as a servant commissioned by God to preach the glorious riches of this mystery to the Gentiles. In *Romans 1:4-6* and *1 Corinthians 4:1-2*, he goes on to say that as members of the Body of Christ we too have become fellow

stewards of this mystery; thus, we must always be ready to speak the Word. This means the Body of Christ must also be prepared to work in the darkness of this world to serve the light of a risen Jesus Christ as Paul did, per *2 Corinthians 4:1-6*, *Ephesians 4:21-24*, and *Ephesians 5:8-20*. As such, I metaphorically associate these words with the **final oath**¹¹¹ taken by assassins in the 2016 science fiction film *Assassin's Creed*...to different ends of course.

The Rapture

The other important instance where Paul uses the word mystery is the event Christians call the rapture, which, again, is nothing more than a detailed account of how the Body of Christ receives the free gift of life eternal promised in *Romans 10:9*. I say "event" as neither Paul nor the bible actually uses the word rapture to describe this future happening. The word rapture is defined as ecstasy, euphoria, joy, or a blissful event, all of which cannot begin to describe what those in the Body of Christ will experience at this divine moment, which I metaphorically liken to the song "**Caught Up in the Rapture**"¹¹² by Anita Baker. In the twinkling of an eye, all Pauline believers, whether dead or alive, will be transformed within a new imperishable eternal body, to then meet Jesus in the clouds as He descends, to forever be with Him per *1 Corinthians 15:51-54* and *1 Thessalonians 4:13-17*. These verses further delineate that Christ will descend with a loud command, the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God. At that moment, our transformed bodies will be as eternal as the resurrected Jesus Christ who had told Thomas to feel the wounds He had received on the cross as *John 20:24-29*, *1 Corinthians 15:34-49*, and *Philippians 3:20-21* all describe. I liken this incredible transformation to **the transformation of Clara**,¹¹³ who was changed from a frightened girl into a beautiful woman

while following her nutcracker prince in the 1986 film *Nutcracker: The Motion Picture*.

The Body of Christ being caught up into the clouds with Christ is a moment I further liken to the songs “**Caught Up in You**”¹¹⁴ by the rock band 38 Special, and “**Turn To the Sky**”¹¹⁵ by The March Violets. I also imagine the joy at this glorious moment to the joy expressed by the apostles as they reunite with Christ on the shores of the Sea of Galilee after the **miracle of the fish**¹¹⁶ in the 2016 film *Risen*. Keep in mind that the bible clearly delineates the Body of Christ will be caught up to Jesus in the clouds as He descends. It does not say that Christ will then bring us all back into heaven after we are gathered to Him. As we will now see, heaven is the place where Christian souls and spirits go before the rapture takes place; where as our eternal imperishable bodies are meant for the earth to serve Christ when He returns. The verses of *1 Corinthians 15:50-57* further explain how flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, for the perishable cannot inherit the imperishable. Death will be swallowed up in victory along with the sting of sin whose power is in the law, for God has given us victory over sin through our Lord Jesus Christ. Never forget the verses of *Romans 8:1-4* and *Romans 10:1-4*, which have revealed that Christ came to do away with the law as the requirement to be seen as righteous before the Father, so that the righteous standard of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

We saw something similar to Paul’s rapture prophesized in the Old Testament regarding all righteous Jews at the end of days in *Isaiah 26:19-21*, *Ezekiel 37:7-14*, and *Daniel 12:1-3*, which again pairs with *Revelation 20:4-6*. We have also seen a live preview of these events in *Matthew 27:51-53*, where Jewish saints who had fallen asleep in Christ were raised to life and seen by many after Jesus had risen from death to life eternal. As Paul’s

gospel is based entirely on the other side of the cross through a risen Jesus Christ, we should now understand that without Christ rising as the first fruits of the resurrection, we could not rise and be transformed at His second coming per *1 Corinthians 15:12-23*.

Again, this is why the bible is absolutely infallible, as all scripture fits together so tight and neat that each book of the bible backs up the one which follows, ensuring the integrity and authority of the entire written Word of God. Now that we have a grasp on the rapture, **the most dramatic representation**¹¹⁷ I've seen regarding this moment can be found in the 2013 movie *Revelation Road: The Beginning of the End*. Remember, it is only a representation and not an exact biblical re-creation of Paul's mystery, but check it out and be inspired. I also hope that everyone now understands why this event is so very important to the Body of Christ. For we, along with Israel's remnant elect, all desire to follow a risen Jesus Christ wherever he goes. A sentiment captured in the song "**We'll Follow the Old Man**"¹¹⁸ seen in the 1954 film *White Christmas*.

The Human Soul after Death

To further understand the rapture, we need to examine what man is made of in biblical terms by first looking back at *Genesis 1:26-27*. By then reading *1 Thessalonians 5:23*, we again learn those verses of *Genesis* mean that man is also a triune creation encompassing a spirit, a soul, and a physical body. Our spirit is the immaterial part of all humans that enables Christian believers to have a personal relationship and connection to the Father and Christ through the Holy Spirit. The verses of *Job 32:6-8*, *Proverbs 20:27*, and *1 Corinthians 2:9-13* then reveal it is the Holy Spirit that teaches our spirit to understand what He has freely given us, after which, our spirit returns to the Father at death when the silver chord is snapped per

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Ecclesiastes 12:6-7. The human soul is our eternal essence of the Father which never dies, but can be illuminated or corrupted as seen in *Jeremiah 6:16*, *Matthew 10:28*, and *Matthew 16:26*. I think Jedi Master Yoda said it best when he told Luke, “**Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter**”¹¹⁹ as he pinches Luke’s shoulder in the 1980 film *The Empire Strikes Back*. The third and final part is our physical body, which is destroyed upon death until its renewal at the return of Jesus Christ for believers, or at His judgment seat for all unbelievers per *Daniel 12:2*, *Revelation 20:4-6*, and *Revelation 20:11-15*.

Knowing the soul lives forever per *Matthew 10:28*, it has to go somewhere after death, which is why Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus in *Luke 16:19-31*. Jesus describes Lazarus as a poor beggar who lay outside the gates of the rich man. His only comfort was the dogs licking his wounds while the rich man lived in joyous splendor, ignoring the suffering of Lazarus. After Lazarus died, the angels carried his soul to Abraham’s bosom within Hades or Hell, where he received rest and comfort from the misfortunes of his earthly existence. Meanwhile, the rich man had also died, but his soul went to a place of constant torment in Hades where only fire and pain existed. As the rich man stood there within the unrelenting fire and heat, he saw Lazarus from afar standing next to Abraham. So the rich man cried out to Abraham for help, asking for relief from his ever-present pain and agony; but Abraham said that he could do nothing, “for a great chasm has been fixed between us and you, so that even those who wish cannot cross from here to you, nor can anyone cross from there to us.” Thus, the rich man had no choice but to accept the fact that he was doomed to pain and torture for all eternity. This story depicts the first death or death of our human body, after which there will be a second

or eternal death reserved only for unbelievers currently residing in the place of constant torment where the rich man is.

We can see further proof to the existence of Hades in the verses of *1 Peter 3:17-20* and *1 Peter 4:1-6*, which speak of Christ's descent into the earth after His death on the cross in order to testify to those who had disobeyed long ago. After Jesus had finished, He led those captive souls within Abraham's bosom back with Him into heaven or paradise, as seen in *Ephesians 4:7-10*. We need only look back at *Luke 23:39-43* where Jesus tells one of the criminals suffering on the cross next to Him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise," as the criminal had recognized his own sin. Again, Paul also speaks of a man he knew who was caught up to the third heaven and paradise in *2 Corinthians 12:1-5*. He further elaborates in stating that we prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord in *2 Corinthians 5:7-9*. As mentioned earlier, it should be obvious that it was Paul himself who was caught up to the third heaven and paradise where he likely received his revelation of Jesus Christ while in Arabia, per *2 Corinthians 12:1-5*. I also like to associate the word paradise to the song "**Paradise**"¹²⁰ by Sade, being the special person in paradise for the Body of Christ is Jesus Christ.

Per *Revelation 20:4-6* we know the souls of all unbelievers do indeed remain within the place of constant torment until the end. It is then before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ where all unbelieving souls will receive their imperishable eternal bodies and judged for their deeds done in the body as detailed in *Revelation 20:11-15*. Thus, along with their unbelief, their deeds will further determine punishment in the Lake of Fire. Again, this is what the bible calls the second death which is reserved only for unbelievers per *Luke 10:20*, *2 Thessalonians 1:6-10*, and *Revelation 2:11*. This judgment further includes all disobedient souls of the Old Testament,

whether Jew or Gentile, that did not fear the Lord, for *Romans 1:17-25* confirms their evil acts.

To conclude this concept of a spirit, soul, and body, we can see that creation also awaits the renewal spoken of in *Isaiah 65:17* and *Revelation 21:1*, as it was unwillingly subjected to futility by the Creator in hope as Paul delineates in *Romans 8:19-23*. Nature declares the glory of the Creator's workmanship as we saw in *Romans 1:20*; this is why the words "**the hills are alive with the sound of music**"¹²¹ as sung by Julie Andrew's in the 1965 film *The Sound of Music* ring so true. These words can also be seen in creation's response to changes in light, temperature, food, water, shelter, love, caring, indifference, and finally death. Only by possessing some essence of a soul and spirit from the Father can creation desire renewal to be set free of bondage and decay into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Peter also confirms the current heavens and earth will indeed be destroyed on the Day of the Lord, after which, a new heaven and earth will come where only righteousness dwells per *2 Peter 3:10-13*.

Now that we have a solid understanding of what happens to the human spirit, soul, and body after death, let's see if we can determine when Paul's rapture will take place.

Answering the Big Question...WHEN?

One of the biggest and most debated questions is when will the rapture take place. There are two main schools of thought regarding this question: a **pre-tribulation timeframe** and a **post-tribulation timeframe**. For those who don't know, the tribulation refers to the period of seven years during which the antichrist appears and the Father unleashes His terrible judgments upon the earth before His Son Jesus Christ returns. Most bible

teachers, along with much of Christian media, seem to advocate for a pre-tribulation rapture, as it is believed the Body of Christ will not fit within John's book of Revelation. Many also believe that Jewish law along with the Jewish gospel will make their return during this time-frame to again be seen as righteous before the Father. But that idea is completely in error, for *Romans 10:4* has already told us that Jesus Christ came to do away with the law as the requirement to be seen as righteous before the Father. *Romans 2:16* further declares that Paul's gospel will be the sole authority by which Jesus Christ will judge the secrets of men in regards to life eternal.

That being said, we do know that during the last days Israel will still be practicing the law and temple sacrifice as part of their continued unbelief that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God who came in the flesh, as chapter 10 will detail. It will also be the time when the kingdom gospel referenced in *Mathew 24:3-14* is preached, as the Father completes the Day of the Lord in collecting the sin blood payment from all unbelievers through His judgments. It is for reasons like these that many believe the Body of Christ will not fit within end of days Jewish prophecy, especially as *1 Thessalonians 5:9* states the Body of Christ is not meant to suffer wrath. Thus, a pre-tribulation rapture was the school of thought I had believed for many years, that is, until I began writing this book. Since then, my perspective has made a 180-degree change, and I would now like to make a solid argument for a post-tribulation rapture.

I used to believe that Paul's gospel doesn't tell us when the rapture will take place; with some careful study, however, I've changed my mind on this. So let me begin with some background to set the stage for my argument. From previous chapters we know that Paul had been thoroughly educated in Old Testament prophecy, as he was advanced in Judaism and the traditions of his father's well above his peers. Again, this means his

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entire gospel message could only have come from a direct revelation of Jesus Christ, something which had been hidden from everyone until its revealing to Paul per *Colossians 1:24-27*. Next, we need to remember that Paul, along with the other apostles, all expected the return of Jesus Christ at some point during their generation per *Matthew 16:27-28* and *Matthew 24:33-34*.

Paul would definitely have learned of Christ's expected return during both his persecution of his believing Jewish brethren, and his subsequent stay with Peter. That being said, we never see Paul delineate a separate coming for the Body of Christ in addition to His Second Advent, which he and the apostles were waiting for. This is important, so let me say that again: Paul never speaks of a separate coming for the Body of Christ prior to His Second Advent; otherwise, he would have made mention of it in His letters. In fact, **Paul says the Body of Christ will receive relief from those who oppress them when Jesus is revealed from heaven along with His mighty angels per 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10.** This statement, along with the truth that Paul's letters make no mention of a separate coming for the Body of Christ, provide solid support to a post-tribulation rapture timeframe. Paul also makes no mention of the unbelieving world's reaction to our sudden disappearance. Thus, *2 Thessalonians 1:3-10* is really all we need to prove a post-tribulation rapture, but let's have a look at even more evidence.

In *2 Thessalonians 2:1-12*, Paul speaks of the Day of the Lord and the rebellion of the lawless one (the antichrist) that will accompany these judgments. These verses, along with *Daniel 9:26-27*, further reveal how the rebellion of the lawless one will not begin until the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation. Paul then teaches that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, but those of the Body of Christ are sons of the light not appointed to suffer wrath. We are to remain awake and sober so the Day of the Lord won't overtake us, for the Lord will sustain the Body of Christ

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till the end per *1 Corinthians 1:7-8* and *1 Thessalonians 5:1-11*. These verses also mirror what we see in *Zephaniah 2:1-3* and *Revelation 13:8-10*, as John in the book of Revelation also speaks of perseverance and *faith* for the Jewish saints during this time. Thus, we can see that both Paul and John were preparing their churches to persevere the Day of the Lord, versus being removed before its coming.

As mentioned before, the biblical expression the Day of the Lord refers to those judgments the Father will inflict on all humanity during the seven-year tribulation per terms written in the scroll. To accompany all of this, Paul further reveals in *2 Thessalonians 2:9-12* how the Father will send a powerful delusion to those who refused the truth of Jesus Christ; this will beguile them into believing the lie of the lawless one who is the antichrist. Paul lastly reveals how the Body of Christ lacks no spiritual gift as we await the revelation of Jesus Christ who will sustain us to the end, so that we will be blameless on the Day of the Lord per *1 Corinthians 1:7-8*. That being said, I'm not sure the Father's powerful delusion hasn't already begun based on what I'm seeing around the world today, but let's continue to further unwind this mystery of the rapture.

We now look to the verses of *1 Corinthians 15:51-52* and *1 Thessalonians 4:16* where Paul specifically speaks of a trumpet to sound the coming of Jesus Christ. Paul uses the words last trumpet in *1 Corinthians 15:51-52* and trumpet of God in *1 Thessalonians 4:16*, both of which mirror John's seventh trumpet in *Revelation 11:15*. By then reading *Revelation 8:1* through *Revelation 9:21*, we see the first six trumpets that John speaks of only sound the release of the Father's apocalyptic judgments, whereas John's seventh trumpet along with Paul's trumpets all sound the return of Jesus Christ. We then compare *1 Thessalonians 4:16-17* with the Gospel's of *Matthew 24:29-30*, *Mark 13:24-27*, *Luke 21:25-27*, and *Revelation 1:5-*

7. All of which give identical descriptions of Christ descending in the clouds to a trumpeted return. These comparisons clearly demonstrate there is no discrepancy between Paul's trumpets and John's seventh trumpet, being that all three signal the return of Jesus Christ through the clouds. An event I liken to the brass heard in the "**The Olympic Spirit**"¹²² by John Williams!

We lastly need to look at the verses of *Matthew 24:13-14* where Christ says, "But the one who perseveres till the end will be saved. And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." The kingdom gospel is another point that many people base their belief in a pre-tribulation rapture on, as the Body of Christ isn't meant to suffer wrath and blend with Old Testament Jewish prophecy as *Revelation 9:1-6* speaks of. We then look to the verses of *Matthew 24:37-42* and *Luke 17:30-36* which tell us at the coming of the Son of Man one will be taken and one will be left. Thus, after reading these verses I find it quite ironic that so many are willing to blend the two different gospels of life eternal together as one, while at the same time declare that Jew and Gentile must be kept separate during end times tribulation events. To me, this makes absolutely no sense and is completely backwards. Paul's gospel only replaces the Jewish gospel in regards to receiving life eternal; it does not replace Old Testament prophecy concerning end of days events encompassing the Kingdom Gospel.

In chapter 3, we saw how John the Baptist had prepared the way for the First Advent of Jesus Christ in declaring the kingdom of heaven is near, while also preaching repentance and performing water baptism. Moving forward, the two witnesses of *Zechariah 4:11-14* and *Revelation 11:3-12* will then prepare the way for the Second Advent of Jesus Christ in preaching the Kingdom Gospel during the seven-year tribulation per *Matthew 24:1-*

31. By again looking back to the Old Testament prophetic books, we can see these also speak to the Day of the Lord and the Kingdom Gospel, for the whole world will hate Israel's remnant elect per the Father's great delusion as *Matthew 10:22*, *Mark 13:13*, *2 Thessalonians 2:9-12*, and *Revelation 12:17* all describe. The Kingdom Gospel will then culminate with Christ's Second Advent, the time when He will reign as King over all the earth, and Israel's remnant elect along with her risen saints will be permanently restored back to their chosen nation status as His kingdom of priests, per *Matthew 24:30-31*, *Mark 13:26-27*, *Revelation 11:18*, and *Revelation 20:4*. The point to all of this is that in no way will the testimony of God's two witnesses hinder or invalidate Paul's gospel, which will remain the only way to life eternal with Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, as *Romans 1:16-17* and *Romans 2:15-16* again confirm. This explains why it will be unnecessary for the Father to separate the Body of Christ from Israel before or after the seven-year tribulation.

Now that we have a clear picture, we can see that Christ's first coming was meant for Israel to fulfill the covenant promises made to her patriarchs, in addition to the role of shedding His blood on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Likewise, His Second Advent will include not only Israel's remnant elect and righteous dead per *Romans 11:1-6*, *Revelation 7:3-15*, and *Revelation 11:18*, but also Jews and Gentiles who believe in Paul's gospel of ***Romans 10:9*** through *faith* as *Romans 1:13-16* and *Romans 11:11-24* again confirm. This also means that Paul's rapture and John's book of Revelation are olive vine companions, making it unnecessary for the Father to move backwards in order to fulfill the Kingdom Gospel; which is why I make an argument for a post-tribulation rapture. Why would the Father bring back the law and temple sacrifice when His Son Jesus Christ has already done away with these through His own blood sacrifice and

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resurrection from the dead per *Hebrews 6:4-6*? Remember His words “It is finished,” uttered on the cross just before yielding up His spirit in *John 19:30*. Again, this means there is nothing left to be done unless you have believed in vain per *1 Corinthians 15:1-2*.

To summarize, my arguments for a post-tribulation rapture begin with Paul never delineating a separate coming for the Body of Christ that is apart from Christ’s Second Advent. He then says the Body of Christ will receive relief from their oppressors at the return of Jesus Christ, as we, along with John’s Jewish saints, are meant to remain awake and sober for the coming of the lawless one in order to persevere the Day of the Lord. We then saw how Paul’s description of a trumpet to signal the coming of Christ through the clouds fits hand and glove with the same scripture seen in all four gospels of Christ and John’s book of Revelation. Lastly, Paul’s gospel of ***Romans 10:9*** will in no way interfere with or contradict the Kingdom Gospel prophesied to again be heard during the seven-year tribulation. Without a doubt, the words “**We’ve Only Just Begun**”¹²³ as sung by Karen Carpenter will take on new meaning immediately following the rapture, but only for those who have believed in ***Romans 10:9*** through *faith*.

Most importantly, we must remember that the timing of the rapture does not determine life eternal for Pauline believers. Paul provides this information so that we know exactly how our path to life eternal per our belief in ***Romans 10:9*** through *faith* will take place. This gives the Body of Christ the opportunity to have *faith* in the event itself, and not in its timing.

In conclusion, whether you are a pre-tribulation or a post-tribulation believer, the most important thing is the event itself and not its timing; for only the Father knows the exact hour of Christ’s return per *Mark 13:31-33*.

CHAPTER 8

THE AUTHORITY BEHIND IT ALL

Paul's Gospel

Before we proceed, let me again address why we need Paul's gospel of life eternal as written in *Romans 10:9*. From a biblical perspective, we only have two choices for eternity: being eternally with Jesus Christ and the Father, or eternal separation from Both as Paul delineates in *1 Thessalonians 4:16-17* and *2 Thessalonians 1:3-10*. Again, as chapter 10 will detail, eternal separation and eternal destruction are referred to as the second death within the Lake of Fire, a place reserved only for unbelievers. The precipitating factor for these two choices comes from the verses of *Romans 3:8-12*, *Romans 3:21-23*, and *Romans 5:12-19* where Paul says there is not one righteous as all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God due to the innate disease of sin passed on to all humanity through Adam. Jesus also tells the Pharisees and scribes in *Luke 5:29-32*, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick," meaning those who are able admit to their disease of sin and be healed through a spiritual rebirth.

But if we cannot admit to our innate disease of sin, then we must accept the biblical truth that there will be no place for us in eternity with the Father and Christ. Only by accepting our innate sinfulness can we be spiritually healed and eternally reborn through the shed blood of a risen Jesus Christ. Lastly, we know from reading *Romans 2:16* that it is through Paul's gospel alone God will judge the secrets of men through Jesus Christ at His judgment seat, as detailed in *Romans 14:9-12*, *2 Corinthians 5:9-10*, and *Revelation 20:11-15*. Biblically speaking, we should now understand why

there is an absolute need for Paul and his gospel of life eternal. For it was Jesus Christ Himself that revealed this new gospel to Paul in heaven, so let's take a closer look at the authority given to Jesus by His Father.

The Authority of Jesus Christ

No matter what our beliefs, there has to be an authority behind them, whether it is the government, the military, science, philosophy, religion, education, money, karma, luck, your psychic, or simply man himself (humanism). It's the authority behind what we believe that gives our *faith* its strength and validity, and why it is also an absolute must in order to receive life eternal. Understanding this, we can see that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Jesus Christ by His Father per *Matthew 11:25-28*, *Matthew 28:16-20*, *John 3:31-36*, *Ephesians 1:18-23*, *Philippians 2:4-11*, and *Colossians 2:8-10*. *Romans 1:20* and *1 Timothy 1:16-17* further reveal the Father is invisible, save His declared qualities seen within creation through His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit through Mary and born of flesh into this world as the precise visible image of His Father. Again, this was to fulfill the promises made to Israel's patriarchs as He was prophesized to be their Messiah, Priest, and King, in addition to the promise of His blood sacrifice for the sins of the world. As we saw earlier, *John 1:1* states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and was God." *John 1:14* further declares, "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us."

From these verses, we can see without a doubt that Jesus created all that we know through the Word of the Father. He then came in the flesh as the Christ and Son of God per *John 1:1-4* and *Colossians 1:15-20*. As discussed earlier, we also know that before His death and resurrection, Christ had indeed attempted to prove His Messianic and divine status in

performing many signs and miracles per *Acts 2:22-24*. In fact, in addition to what *John 21:24-25* tells us, Christ had also performed many other signs and miracles in the exclusive presence of His disciples as stated in *John 20:29-31*.

We then learned from reading *1 Corinthians 15:4-8* that a risen Jesus Christ had appeared to Cephas, the apostles, five hundred other brethren at once, James, and finally Paul himself, leaving no doubt to His resurrected and divine status. Lastly, we see that Christ is now seated at the right hand of the Father awaiting His promised glory of the Kingdom Gospel having completed the Father's purpose per *John 17:1-8* and *Ephesians 1:18-23*. These are just a few examples of biblical truth which clearly establish the authority of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Creator of all that we know. Then, just as Christ had given authority to His apostles, He also gives authority to Paul through revelation of a new gospel.

Paul's Authority from Jesus Christ

Per *Acts 8:1-3* we saw that Saul was a zealot and a persecutor of all Jews that followed Jesus, as Paul himself confesses in *1 Corinthians 15:9-10*, *Galatians 1:13-14*, and *1 Timothy 1:12-16*. It wasn't until his Damascus Road experience in *Acts 9:1-20* that we saw a complete change from a persecutor of Christ, to a believer in Him as the Son of God who came in the flesh. We also know the men traveling with Saul saw nothing, but heard everything spoken between Saul and Christ, leaving them speechless and afraid. As we've already learned, Paul had received his new gospel, not from men, but through a revelation of Jesus Christ Himself per *Galatians 1:11-20*.

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This begs the question of why a Pharisee of such ability and status would suddenly reverse his beliefs and theology to now preach that Jesus is the risen Christ and Son of God who came in the flesh. This would mean trading a life of great esteem and wealth for one of difficulty and death, the very thing he had once imposed on all Jewish followers of Christ. The only plausible answer for this sudden reversal is that Saul did indeed have a true salvation experience so that he might preach his new revelation of Christ to the Gentiles through the Holy Spirit. Remember too, that back in *Acts 9:10-16*, we had seen Jesus tell Ananias that Saul was going to suffer greatly for His name being he was the greatest persecutor of Jews who followed Jesus.

We have also seen Paul successfully defend his new authority before the apostles in the council at Jerusalem, where believing Pharisees had demanded that all new Gentile believers receive circumcision per the Law of Moses. Paul then spoke further concerning his authority and apostleship in *2 Corinthians 10:1* through *2 Corinthians 11:33*, having endured beatings, lashes of pain, hunger, thirst, hypothermia, shipwreck, imprisonment, and false apostles throughout his entire ministry. As we just saw in *Acts 9:13-16*, these trials and tribulations were necessary to mature Paul's *faith* and cleanse his past actions against his Jewish brethren that followed Jesus Christ per *Matthew 10:22* and *John 15:20-21*.

Lastly, we saw Paul speak of his heritage as a Hebrew, Israelite, and descendant of Abraham while also being greater in labors for Christ than his false Jewish brethren who only boast about their accomplishments. Paul further told those who examined him that he preaches his gospel free and voluntarily, so as not to burden any of them while running the race to its finish and the imperishable wreath per *1 Corinthians 9:1-27*. These verses show us that Paul had demonstrated the utmost *faith* and loyalty to the task

which the Holy Spirit had purposed him in preaching his new revelation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Without a doubt, Paul is the master builder of his gospel message, which he built upon the foundation of a risen Jesus Christ as *1 Corinthians 3:10-11* and *Ephesians 2:18-22* detail. With the authority of Jesus and Paul clearly established, let me detail the insight behind this book.

Counsel Behind This Book

From a young boy, I was raised attending weekly Sunday school at Calvary Baptist church, but discontinued during junior high as I wanted to have fun on Sunday, and didn't want Sunday school to interfere with that. Then, as I grew older, anyone who tried to preach Jesus Christ to me only pushed me farther away, as I didn't want anyone in my face telling me that I needed Jesus. In a lot of ways, I felt just like Arthur Bach, played by Dudley Moore in the 1981 comedy *Arthur*, **who just wanted to have fun**¹²⁴ chasing girls, playing sports, and maybe **get into a little bit of trouble**.¹²⁵ Later, while serving in the U.S. Marine Corps, I felt a tugging within my heart from the Holy Spirit which had been planted there many years before courtesy of my maternal grandparents. I struggled my first two years in the Marine Corps, and it wasn't until I was transferred to another squadron, which was a better fit for me, that I began to excel and really hear the Holy Spirit speak to me. He seemed to be saying, "Try God one more time, and the Word will set you free." Which reminds me of the song "**One More Time**"¹²⁶ by Daft Punk as seen in the 2003 animated film *Interstella 5555: The 5tory of the 5eret 5tar 5ystem*.

Still not sold on Christianity, however, I decided to look at all the world's religious *faiths* and choose the one which made the most sense. I even considered agnostic and atheistic viewpoints but dismissed them

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almost immediately, as I knew in my heart I didn't agree with them. To my surprise, Christianity not only made the most sense, but also appeared to have the greatest authority and promise of life eternal backing it up. So, by my own choice, I continued my Christian walk, or I should say, kept one foot in Christianity and one in the world, as I still wasn't motivated to consume the bible's solid food beyond the drinking of its milk per *1 Corinthians 3:1-3*. I did at least begin to enjoy going to church at Grace Christian in Saint Louis, Missouri while attending graduate school. But it was in my early thirties that I began to receive my first real introduction to the bible through the taped radio program of Dr. Vernon McGee. His presentation was so appealing that I rode his bible bus for the next several years. I had just been dumped by a girl, and even though I knew better, due to an irrational romantic *faith*, I ignored the fact that it always takes two in a relationship; and thus, I foolishly believed I could make it with her as heard in the song "**Make It With You**"¹²⁷ by the soft rock band Bread. Listening to Dr. McGee, however, really helped lift my spirit and set me straight, as did listening to the song "**Walk Like a Man**"¹²⁸ by The Four Seasons. Little did I know this was just the beginning of my journey with God, courtesy of the Holy Spirit! It wasn't until writing this book that I fully understood the impact of the Holy Spirit's message, "and the Word will set you free!"

Then, in my forties, the Holy Spirit rerouted me from a career in medicine to a more important endeavor. It was at this time that I stumbled across the television program of bible teacher Les Feldick, who really hammered home the importance of Paul's gospel, as well as knowing who authored each book of the bible, the author's intended audience, and the context in which they were written. Thus, I began to see how reading the bible in this manner provides an important big picture, without which, it is

very difficult to place specific truths of the bible into their proper perspective. I had never heard of Les, and just like Dr. McGee, his personality made learning the bible so much fun. The next thing I knew, I had received a solid biblical foundation while enjoying myself...And that was the trick for me!

Previous to these two men, learning the bible had been such a painful endeavor. But has since become as satisfying as listening to the smooth jazz of Chuck Loeb's "**The Music Inside**,"¹²⁹ the relaxing jazz of "**Poinciana**"¹³⁰ by the Ahmad Jamal Trio, "**Peg**"¹³¹ by Steely Dan, and, of course, "**Summer Song**"¹³² by rock guitarist Joe Satriani. I could also see that without having this big-picture panorama, nearly everyone throws the entire bible into a blender creating messages and meanings without proper perspective and separation. This is why individual bible verses must be compared with other scripture and interpreted from the perspective of who authored them, the author's intended audience, and the context in which they were written. Indeed, Christians who simply blend the entire bible together can do more damage in teaching the written Word than those without any knowledge at all. This, unfortunately, was the type of teaching I had received my entire life. I now understood why I never felt comfortable or grounded in the written Word, for my understanding of the bible was not only incomplete; it was incorrect.

With everything now in place, the Holy Spirit began pushing me to share what I had learned. But I resisted, as I had no desire to tell anyone anything concerning the bible. Growing up, I remember seeing what I used to call "bible thumpers," who presented the Word of God to people on the street or in their homes. I had always hated feeling pressured into going to church or any other religious event. I believed I was already a good person and just wanted to live life my way, as heard in the song "**My Life**"¹³³ by

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Billy Joel. Thus, I avoided people like this at all costs. As such, I tried to ignore the Holy Spirit and return to medicine, but He kept all doors in this direction closed and locked. To my dismay, the Father kept telling me through the Holy Spirit **“You're the one that I want”**¹³⁴ so you better shape up, as John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John sing in the 1978 musical film Grease. After two years of trying to fight this ocean current, I realized I could not overcome the Holy Spirit’s riptide any longer.

I then began writing this book back in late 2016, but stopped just short of publishing as I realized there were lingering conflicts over the bible that still vexed me. This pushed me to aggressively study the bible over the next few years in an effort to reconcile these conflicts, which allowed the Holy Spirit to unveil a much deeper understanding of the entire written Word of God. Many times I can remember intently pondering how to reconcile and connect certain biblical points, when, all of a sudden, I had reasoned out the obvious answer through the very scripture I was studying.

It was then I realized the Holy Spirit had used my lack of understanding in order to reveal a deeper insight of the written Word to be shared with everyone. This also led me to see why having a solid biblical foundation was necessary, so the Holy Spirit could then take me past drinking only milk of the written Word, to consuming its solid food as Paul puts it in *1 Corinthians 3:1-2* and *Hebrews 5:11-14*; hence, my years with Dr. McGee and Les Feldick. As such, I want to be very clear this means I have spent countless hours with the Holy Spirit discerning the contents of this book as *Proverbs 18:15*, *1 Corinthians 12:7-11*, *Ephesians 1:16-18*, *Philippians 1:9-10*, *2 Timothy 2:6-7*, and *2 Peter 1:20-21* all intimate. And to think, this all began with my despondency over a woman. Which is something I can relate to the song **“Vacation”**¹³⁵ by the rock band the Go-

Go's; but on top of that, I had always hated writing in school, especially anything to do with a book report...Boring!

As the bible is already complete, this book merely provides greater insight into what has already been written through the algorithm: who authored each book of the bible, the author's intended audience, and the context in which each book is written. While I am not a degreed theologian/bible scholar, I do possess a bachelor's degree and two doctorates in the healthcare sciences as academic credentials of critical thinking. Thus, I am not confined to the religious paradigms taught at seminaries and universities, allowing me to see and think outside the box through the Holy Spirit. So, just as we hear the family band The Jets sing, it is my hope to stimulate your "**Curiosity**"¹³⁶ in further study of the bible using this algorithm. That said, I am not here to convince anyone concerning the validity and importance of Paul's gospel; I merely cast and water the seeds of *faith* so that God may grow them as He sees fit, which I liken to lyrics in the song "**You Are**"¹³⁷ by Lionel Richie per *1 Corinthians 3:6-9*. For I am quite confident this time of the Father's grace is nearly complete, leaving this book as a possible last call for all to hear Paul's message of life eternal before His judgments begin.

This brings to light how the Father is not just a God of love and mercy, but also one of wrath and judgment to those who do not fear Him as seen in the **2016 film Noah, depicting the great flood of Genesis**.¹³⁸ This film does an excellent job representing the biblical account of the Lord sending a great flood upon the earth to cleanse it of man's evil, save Noah, his family, and tens of thousands of animals within an ark he is instructed to build per *Genesis 6:5* through *Genesis 8:19*. As the bible doesn't give a detailed account how so many animals were lodged in the ark, we must take it on *faith* the Father did indeed enable all of this to happen as written. Jesus also

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mentions the flood in *Matthew 24:37-39* and *Luke 17:26-30*, as do the apostles Paul and Peter in *Hebrews 11:6-7*, *1 Peter 3:18-20*, and *2 Peter 3:3-6*.

We then see how biblical creation, or intelligent design, took only six days per the narrative in Genesis, which would make our earth and universe somewhere between 6,000 to 10,000 years old. But science would deny the Genesis account in favor of the big bang theory and evolution as the reason for creation, taking place over billions of years. This means the unbelieving world considers the wisdom of humanity far greater than any *faith* in the Word of God per *1 Corinthians 1:18-29* and *1 Corinthians 3:18-21*. This is very tragic, because I truly like science, but not at the expense of denying even an ounce of *faith* in the written Word of God as *Hebrews 11:1-3* delineates. As an example, we can see how scientists put their own *faith* in carbon dating to disprove a young earth, but as **Dr. Young Snelling**¹³⁹ and **Calvin Smith**¹⁴⁰ explain, there are many flaws with carbon dating. For there is an abundance of scientific evidence to show the continents of earth were separated from each other as a result of Noah's flood, which also killed the dinosaurs, as explained in the Sevenfold Film **Noah's Flood and Catastrophic Plate Tectonics**¹⁴¹ (from Pangea to Today). I also think it quite probable the biblical flood destroyed the legendary city of Atlantis, but that is neither here nor there concerning the biblical Word.

It's very clear that everything within creation lives and dies, whether it be stars, planets, oceans, trees, plants, animals, insects, microscopic life, and of course, humans; for everything possesses some energy of the Father's Word from creation. Again, if this were not so, then creation itself could not groan for renewal as Paul declares in *Roman 8:18-23*. Even the more recent scientific theories of dark matter and dark energy thought to comprise and hold the universe together, clearly speak to Jesus Christ and

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creation as described in *Colossians 1:15-17*. We then have to understand there is no possible way for humanity to comprehend creation and eternity, as our ways and thoughts are not God's ways and thoughts per *Isaiah 55:6-11* and *Ecclesiastes 8:14-17*. This means the Father's ways and thoughts are beyond the understanding of the finite human mind, just as Jesus had told Nicodemus concerning the wind in *John 3:4-12*. But this very thing is what the unbelieving world continues to ignore, for we cannot apply scientific theory and human perspective to the Father. Thus, creation and eternity are currently known only to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, leaving *faith* as the only means to believe in origin of these two realities per the written Word of God. By then using the ark of Noah as a metaphor, we can think of Paul's gospel as a lifesaving ark to ferry us safely past the Lake of Fire on into eternity with the Father and Christ, but not without *faith* in ***Romans 10:9*** as our ticket.

I also know there are many who believe God is all love and wouldn't punish good people, but that idea is another gospel based on zero biblical truth and authority. If good people automatically went to heaven without any spiritual qualification, then why did the Father give humanity His written Word as the only blue print to life eternal through *faith*? We have already seen the Father's wrath and judgments towards humanity and Israel within the Old and New Testaments, but His judgments to come will be like nothing ever before seen, especially for those who have rejected His Son. The Father's unconditional love for humanity was made complete through the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ per *John 3:16*, leaving only His wrath and judgment for those who reject His love. Just as Huey Lewis sings about the "**Power of Love**,"¹⁴² the Father's love for humanity is only equaled by His anger against those who reject the blood sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ. This means the Father is also a God of

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wrath versus being only God of love and “Silly Love Songs”¹⁴³ as Paul McCartney and Wings sing.

Again, this is why the biblical Word always builds on itself, so that what was written before will always give further authority and support to what is written after. This is why we cannot simply pick and choose what to believe from the bible as its authority rests on the entire written Word of God. This is also why Paul teaches the Body of Christ to consume the solid food of the written Word versus only drinking its milk in *1 Corinthians 3:1-2* and *Hebrews 5:12-14*. For example, why would anyone believe through *faith* the promise of **Romans 10:9**, but then deny creation through *faith* as described in *Genesis 1:1* through *Genesis 2:25*? This would cause the authority of the entire bible to come crashing down on itself, for Jesus Himself said a house divided against itself cannot stand in *Mark 3:23-26*. Again, Paul states quite clearly in *2 Timothy 3:12-17* that all scripture is God-breathed, and, if this were not so, than we are false witnesses about God to be pitied more than all men per *1 Corinthians 15:12-19*. This means we either believe in the entire written Word of God through *faith* concerning creation and eternity, or we believe in human science and philosophy...**It's all or nothing!**

This further leads us to understand why the bible cannot be combined with any other religious or spiritual resource, for the inspired Word of God was revealed to the Jewish prophets of Israel only per *Psalms 147:18-20*, *Romans 3:1-2*, and *Romans 9:1-5*! Thus, if any person were to add, remove, or combine anything from or with the written Word of God, it would create a false gospel, and such a person is to be cursed, and not worthy of life eternal as *Galatians 1:6-9* and *Revelation 22:18-19* delineate. This includes any traditions other than those taught by Paul per *1 Corinthians 11:1-2*, *Colossians 2:8-9*, and *2 Thessalonians 2:13-15*. Of course, anyone is

welcome to disagree with these biblical truths per free will choice; for we must remember the words of Jesus in *Matthew 22:14* concerning the parable of the banquet, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” This is why I always say, no problem, take what you believe on into eternity and see what it does for you. Let me say that again: **take what you believe on into eternity and see what it does for you!** The Lake of Fire welcomes all unbelievers with open arms, so please enjoy eternity permanently separated from the Father and Christ if that is what you seek. As we can now see, *faith* is the key to the entire bible, not accepted theory. This brings us to the next and most important point of this book.

Faith versus Accepted Theory

Just as the above header intimates, the bible was never meant to be debated or proven like a theory. *Faith* is the sole basis for its truth and authority, just as it is the basis for the existence of God the Father Himself. The best example of *faith* versus accepted theory can be seen in the scientific method, where a plausible hypothesis is created through observation and/or evidence leading to a predicted outcome, which is then tested and retested until reproducible results are obtained. Once this occurs, the hypothesis then becomes an accepted theory until proven otherwise through new observations or evidence, which may revise or completely invalidate the original hypothesis.

Thus, by definition, the scientific method completely opposes the idea of believing in the written Word of God through *faith* alone. As history and science continually demonstrate, theories are constantly updated and revised. But even when new scientific and or geo-archeological evidence further substantiates truths of the bible, *faith* will always remain the gold standard by which God judges our heartfelt belief. Biblically speaking, that

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is why Jesus tells Satan in *Matthew 4:5-7*, “It is also written: do not put the Lord your God to the test.” The bible says the heart is where the Father looks to see if our *faith* is genuine per *1 Samuel 16:7*, *1 Kings 8:38-39*, *1 Chronicles 28:9*, *Proverbs 3:5*, *Acts 15:7-9*, *Romans 8:27*, and *1 Thessalonians 2:1-4*.

Remember, biblical *faith* is belief in the entire written word of God without having seen any of its events or persons that constitute all books and letters of the bible. That is why most unbelievers will always dismiss the bible as fallacy and instead put their *faith* in science and philosophy, which they consider wiser, nobler, and superior to the Word of God per *1 Corinthians 1:18-29*. But John states that even if we accept human testimony, the testimony of God is greater in *1 John 5:9-12*.

Paul speaks quite clearly about these things in *1 Corinthians 2:1-6*, *2 Corinthians 3:1-6*, and *2 Corinthians 6:3-13* emphasizing it is not by flattery or spoken words of wisdom the we carry out our ministry, but through the Holy Spirit as mentioned earlier. Ask yourself, why would Christ want followers who need their arms twisted through deceit, clever debate, or brute force at the expense of sincere biblical *faith*? This would neither glorify nor edify the Father and Christ. Again, it is only through the wisdom and direction of the Holy Spirit that we speak the Word in order to plant and water the seeds of *faith*, so that God may grow them as He sees fit per *1 Corinthians 3:6-9*. Despite these biblical truths, I fully expect the antichrist to either refute the bible with mistruth, or fully support it up to the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation, at which time he will destroy it. Without *faith* and the Holy Spirit, we can never keep the hope of what is not seen, for all who desire to live a Godly life will be persecuted as Paul delineates in *2 Timothy 3:10-13*.

It is also through *faith* that many of us follow our dreams despite what the facts may say, as exemplified by Loudon Swain reaching the **top of the peg board**¹⁴⁴ and then **defeating Shute**¹⁴⁵ in the 1985 film *Vision Quest*. This same reason is why we love to watch Pele perform his legendary bicycle kick in the 1981 film **Victory**,¹⁴⁶ Robert Redford hit his final home run in the 1984 film **The Natural**,¹⁴⁷ Kevin Costner sink his golf ball on **the final hole**¹⁴⁸ in the 1996 film *Tin Cup*, the Cutters winning the Little 500 in the 1979 film **Breaking Away**,¹⁴⁹ and the **final dance scene**¹⁵⁰ in the 1983 film *Flashdance*, as these moments inspire us to greatness. Whether in film or reality, such as the 1980 “**Miracle on Ice**,”¹⁵¹ Christian Laettner’s “**THE SHOT**”¹⁵² against Kentucky, or the more recent 2018 NFL “**Minneapolis Miracle**,”¹⁵³ these moments demonstrate tremendous **Heart, Focus, and Intensity**¹⁵⁴ ...**That’s how it’s done!** For I have never lost the athlete, marine, or physician within my heart, which the Holy Spirit has used to drive my unyielding determination in discerning the truth of the written Word. This means that after all the bullshit, the bottom line is *faith* brother, not accepted theory! To conclude this chapter on authority, I would like to convey the many moments of despair and anguish I have felt over the direction my life has gone because of this book. I’m supposed to be practicing healthcare medicine and helping people in this capacity. But recently, as of November 2022, I have heard these words from the Father and Christ through the Holy Spirit, “**You’re where you belong...Make Us proud!**”¹⁵⁵

CHAPTER 9

THE JEWISH APOSTOLIC EPISTLES

To reiterate, epistles are writings directed or sent to a person or group of people as didactic or teaching letters. These apostolic letters were all written to Jewish followers of Jesus Christ at some point after His resurrection/ascension, and with the exception of Hebrews, they all preach the Jewish gospel intended for the lost sheep of Israel. Like Paul's letters, they contain a plethora of information concerning all aspects of the Jewish gospel along with its message of life eternal. Thus, once more for the record, the Jewish gospel is a **pre-crucifixion gospel** based on believing Jesus the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh through *faith*, followed by repentance and water baptism in order to receive the Holy Spirit and life eternal. Remember, we had learned back in *Luke 18:31-34* how the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was kept hidden from the understanding of all. Also mentioned earlier, we will again see that the apostles still believed in following the works of Jewish law as a basis of their *faith* to be seen as righteous before the Father. Again, this is absolutely different from the Pauline **post-crucifixion gospel**, which is based completely on the other side of the cross in confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead through *faith* in order to be sealed in the Holy Spirit and receive life eternal. Thus, it is free of repentance, water baptism, and the works of Jewish law that were once required to be seen as righteous before the Father. But, we must also remember that Paul says the entire bible is good for our instruction, wisdom, training, reproof, and correction so that the man of God has salvation, wisdom, and hope to make us adequate and equipped for every good work per *Romans 15:4* and *2 Timothy*

3:14-17. With the Jewish and Pauline gospels again differentiated, let's begin with Hebrews and see why it is dissimilar from the rest of these apostolic letters.

Hebrews

The letter of Hebrews currently has an unknown author, but many believe (as do I) it is absolutely the work of Paul, especially as Timothy is mentioned in *Hebrews 13:22-23* being he was a companion of Paul per *Acts 16:1-3* and *Acts 18:5*. The apostle Peter further validates this idea per *2 Peter 3:14-16* in stating that “our beloved brother Paul wrote to you with the wisdom God gave him,” as Peter was addressing scattered Jewish disciples of Christ. Thus, Paul begins by stating that not only is Jesus the Son of God, but also the precise visible image of the Father through whom He created the world in *Hebrews 1:1-6*. He further instructs his brethren to give heed to what they have heard, as salvation through Jesus was confirmed by those who heard Him speak. For Jesus had come not to help the angels, but the descendants of Abraham as delineated in *Hebrews 2:14-17*. Paul then speaks of Christ as the Apostle and High Priest of their confession, whose *faith* is greater than Moses, which must be united with their *faith*, or it profits them nothing. He also tells them to obey the Sabbath day of rest, just as God rested from His work on the seventh day. Remember, Paul has told us it is through *faith* that we uphold the law, which is apart from works of the law done to be seen as righteous before the Father per *Romans 3:27-31*.

Paul next explains how Christ learned obedience from the things He suffered so that He could be made perfect and designated as high priest forever, according the order of Melchizedek per *Genesis 14:17-20*, *Psalms 110:1-7*, and *Hebrews 5:5-14*. Paul knew that most of his Jewish brethren

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consumed only milk of the written Word; not being accustomed to the world of righteousness, they still needed the elementary teachings of God's oracles as the Corinthians did in *1 Corinthians 3:1-3*. As such, he encourages them to press on toward a state of maturity in consuming the solid food of his gospel and avoid the foundation built of repentance and dead works like those who had fallen away to again crucify themselves and Christ—putting Him to open shame per *Hebrews 2:1-12*. Please take note that in *Hebrews 2:1-2* Paul speaks of avoiding repentance and dead works, as these speak to the Jewish gospel.

Paul then teaches his brethren that if perfection were indeed through the Levitical priesthood, there would be no need for another to come from the order of Melchizedek whose power is that of indestructible life. The priesthood had now changed from an old covenant of the law, which made nothing perfect, to a new one of perfection guaranteed by a risen Christ as high priest forever per *Hebrews 7:1* through *Hebrews 10:18*. These verses go on to show how the Lord Jesus went on to minister in the sanctuary of the true tabernacle within the throne room of heaven, which He Himself pitched. Thus, Paul's teachings clearly demonstrate that if the first covenant had been faultless and permanent, there would have been no need for a second. We can take this one step further in asking, if the Jewish and Pauline gospels are one in the same, then why did Jesus give Paul his new revelation? For the apostles had already been charged with making disciples of the whole world.

In *Hebrews 9:27-28* Paul further teaches that man is appointed to die once and be judged, just as Christ died only once to bear the sins of many, and bring salvation at His second coming for those who await Him. He then tells his brethren to persevere, living in a new way of helping and encouraging each other and knowing the lasting possession of Christ's

sacrifice, as opposed to those who had received the truth but kept on sinning. For Paul states that Jewish brethren such as these no longer possess a sacrifice for their sins in *Hebrews 10:19-39*. He further teaches that *faith* is the only assurance of things hoped for, providing the endurance to do the will of God and receive what has been promised. Additionally, to further encourage his brethren, he goes on to speak of men from their past who had indeed demonstrated *faith* and nothing else.

Paul then uses the example of Jesus while running the race and not to regard the Lord's discipline lightly; for it is given to those He loves. It is for this discipline they must endure as those who follow Christ will be dealt with as sons by God, and not illegitimate children like those who do not follow. We further see Paul make a strong contrast between Sinai and Zion in asking for a call of gratitude in regards to the unshakable kingdom they will receive. Paul ends *Hebrews* telling his brethren to sacrifice of themselves in doing deeds which are pleasing to Him, and not be carried away by strange things, for Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In conclusion, the strong emphasis this book places on *faith* over repentance and works is very different from the rest of these apostolic letters, leaving no doubt that Paul is the author of *Hebrews*.

James

Let's begin by recalling from chapter 3 that there were two apostles named James. One which is martyred in *Acts 12:1-2*, while the other is never again mentioned beyond being one of the original twelve apostles. Paul, however, in *Galatians 1:18-19* also names James the brother of Jesus as an apostle; for he along with Peter, were the only two apostles Paul met with during his visit to Jerusalem. This verse in *Galatians*, along with those of *Acts 12:17*, *Acts 15:12-19*, and *Acts 21:18* would seem to indicate that James,

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along with Peter, led the church in Jerusalem. Based on these verses, James the brother of Jesus is the logical author of this letter, which he begins by addressing his Jewish brethren of the twelve tribes dispersed abroad as a result of Saul's persecution per *James 1:1*. James tells them to consider it a joy when facing trials as they produce endurance through the testing of their *faith*, so they may be made perfect. He goes on to say in *James 1:12-15* that God tempts no one, but rather each person is tempted by their own lust as it is conceived, which then gives birth to sin, and, upon completion, death.

James then gives the example of being made perfect as one who looks intently and abides in the law of liberty within the sight of God the Father. This means visiting orphans and widows in their distress while remaining unstained by the world. He also instructs them to avoid the sin of partiality, reminding them to love their neighbors as themselves while keeping the whole law, lest they become transgressors of it in *James 2:8-12*. Keep in mind that James is referring to their Jewish neighbors per the Ten Commandments and not Gentiles who were to be avoided in order to stay pure. We also see James teach that a person's *faith* is justified by works, or his *faith* is dead per *James 2:14-24*; again, this is completely the opposite of Paul's gospel to the Gentiles as we saw in *Romans 3:19-28*, *Romans 4:1-12*, and *Galatians 2:16*.

The reason for this, as we've learned, was that Israel had remained steeped in Judaic law, which blinded them from the truth that Christ had come to do away with the law as the requirement to be seen as righteous before the Father per *Romans 10:1-4* and *Ephesians 3:22-26*. Remember, Paul teaches that works are testaments to our *faith*, and not the basis for it as *Ephesians 2:8-10* again confirms. James then describes the tongue as poison, for the same people who bless our Lord and Father also curse those who have been made in the likeness of God per *James 3:1-12*. He then

finishes his letter speaking of things to avoid, and most of all, to pray for each another while remaining patient for their Lord's return.

1 Peter

Peter begins his first letter writing to believing Jewish brethren who reside as aliens in foreign lands per the persecution of Saul. Now, based on what we see in *1 Peter 1:2-5* it may appear that Peter is speaking the same salvation gospel that Paul preaches, but looking closer, we can see it is the same Jewish gospel that Jesus is the Christ and son of God prophesized to come in the flesh. Peter was telling his Jewish brethren it is because Jesus is the Christ and Son of God that He could fulfill all Old Testament prophecy written about Him. It is then through Jesus that they believe in God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead as *1 Peter 1:10-12* and *1 Peter 1:15-21* delineate. Remember, Jesus had also confirmed that it was He they were waiting for after reading from the book of Isaiah in *Luke 4:16-21*.

Jesus could never have taught Paul's gospel of ***Romans 10:9***, for the truth concerning His death and resurrection had been kept hidden from the understanding of all, as I again highlight through the verses of *Mark 9:30-32* and *Luke 18:31-34*. Jesus did, however, provide Israel with the opportunity to fulfill their destiny within their generation per *Exodus 19:5-6*, *Matthew 24:33-34*, and *Luke 9:26-27*. Thus, believing Jesus the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh is the only gospel Jesus expected anyone to believe, which is then paired with repentance and water baptism to receive the Holy Spirit and life eternal. This is further evidenced through the commission He gave to the apostles in *Mark 16:14-16*.

Moving on, we now see Peter tell his brethren to be holy in all that they do as God will judge their work impartially per *1 Peter 1:14-17*. Peter

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is referring to their works of the law just as James spoke of. I keep reiterating these points to make it perfectly clear the apostles always paired the Jewish gospel with keeping the law to be seen as righteous before the Father per *Acts 3:1*. In contrast, we again see Paul delineate how the Father sent His Son as an offering to condemn sin in the flesh so that the righteous standard of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk according to the Spirit through *faith* per *Romans 3:19-30* and *Romans 8:1-4*.

Beginning in *1 Peter chapter 2*, Peter teaches that just as newborn babies seek milk, his brethren must also long for the milk of the Word in order to build themselves up as living stones and spiritual houses. Peter reminds them they are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation for God's own possession who should not become a stone of stumbling out of disobedience. As a holy priesthood, they are to offer up holy spiritual sacrifices as God did through His Son Jesus Christ; this, again, speaks to observing the law per *1 Peter 2:1-12*. He then tells them to abstain from lusts of the flesh which war against the soul and to honor human authority while suffering patiently when treated harshly for doing what is right, just as Christ had exemplified. Peter then gives instructions for Godly living while reiterating that those who suffer according to the will of God also entrust their souls to a *faithful* Creator in doing what is right. Peter ends his first letter by instructing all to follow the elders among them and to serve God willingly while enduring sufferings so that they may be strengthened and perfected through them. Again, per the example of Jesus Christ.

2 Peter

Peter begins his second letter stating that Jesus has provided everything they need for a life of godliness to escape the corruption of this world. He instructs his brethren to add *faith* to their virtue, virtue to knowledge,

knowledge to self-control, self-control to perseverance, perseverance to godliness, godliness to brotherly kindness, and brotherly kindness to love, as these will prevent an unproductive knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For me, no character demonstrates these attributes better than Forrest Gump in 1994 film **Forrest Gump**.¹⁵⁶ This is because Forrest absolutely exudes the biblical precept that while we live in the world, we are not of the world, as both Jesus and Paul tell us in *John 17:14-19* and *Romans 12:1-2*. Peter then explains how he and the apostles did not follow cleverly devised tales but were eyewitnesses to Christ's majesty; for no prophecy of scripture was ever made by an act of human will, but only men moved by the Holy Spirit per *2 Peter 1:20-21*.

Peter begins *2 Peter chapter 2* stating that false prophets and teachers have arisen from among them in denying the Master who bought them which will bring swift destruction. These false brethren follow after their own sensuality as they exploit believing brethren with false words, but just as God did not spare the ancient world or Sodom and Gomorrah, He will not spare them. He goes on to say it would have been better if they had not known the way of righteousness rather than turning away from the holy commandments passed on to them. Peter then reminds his beloved brethren to remember the words spoken by the holy prophets, their Lord and Savior, and finally the apostles themselves, for mockers will come. In these last days, mockers will ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" as they follow after their own lusts, **ignoring the truth that the earth was formed out of water by water and flooded by water**. I liken Peter's words concerning the doubt of mockers to the song "**One of These Nights**"¹⁵⁷ by the Eagles, in regards to the inevitable Second Advent of Jesus Christ.

He continues by telling them the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire on the Day of Judgment, for the Lord's slowness only demonstrates

His patience that none should perish, but come to repentance. Peter then instructs them to be spotless as the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, consuming the heavens, the elements, and the earth through intense heat and fire. Peter finishes his second letter in telling them the Lord's patience brings salvation, just as their brother Paul wrote to them with the wisdom God gave him. As parts of Paul's letters were hard to understand, meaning the Pauline Gospel, Peter says they were distorted by those who are untaught as they do to all scripture—to their own destruction. Lastly, Peter warns them to be on guard and not be carried away by unprincipled men, but rather grow in grace and knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

1 John

Before we begin, let me eliminate any confusion by again stating that the letters of John, just like the gospel of John, were all written by the apostle John, and not John the Baptist, who had already been beheaded by order of King Herod in *Matthew 14:3-11*. John begins his first letter speaking of the Word which they have all heard, touched, and felt with their own hands, for it has existed from the beginning being the Word of life. He then speaks of the fellowship they have with one another through Jesus Christ, who walks in the light cleansing their sins with His blood, while those who say they have fellowship with Him but walk in darkness lie, and do not practice the truth. But if we confess our sins, He is *faithful* to forgive them cleansing us from all unrighteousness, and anyone who says they have not sinned makes Christ a liar. By this absolute biblical truth, John tells his brethren Jesus Christ is their advocate before the Father as propitiation for their sin, as well as those of the world. Again, John speaks of confessing their sins through repentance, which is the Jewish gospel.

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John goes on to say they know Christ if they keep His commandments, but the one who claims to know Him and does not, is a liar per *1 John 2:3-11*. John then instructs his brethren not to love the world or the things in it, as these are passing away in this last hour awaiting the coming of the antichrist. This, of course, is more proof the apostles expected the return of Jesus Christ and all end of days prophecy as described in the Old Testament at some point during their generation. He goes on to say many antichrists have already appeared to deny that Jesus is the Christ, seeking to deceive, for ones such as these do not know the Father. But his brethren have the anointing of Jesus Christ to abide in, so they don't shrink away in shame at His coming. Remember, in addition to being the lawless one to come at the end of days, the word antichrist also refers to any person who denies Jesus is the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh.

John then tells them it is to destroy the works of the devil that the Son of God appeared, so they are to love one another, as no one born of God practices sin and hates his brother per *1 John 3:7-8* and *1 John 3:23-24*. He next begins *1 John chapter 4* instructing his brethren not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits of men through a confession that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Those who do not confess from the heart are not from God, but are spirits like that of the antichrist per *1 John 4: 1-5*. He then reiterates the commandment to love each other along with confessing the Jewish gospel that Jesus is the Son of God whom the Father has sent to be Savior of the world in *1 John 4:12-15*. John ends his first letter stating that whoever believes Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves those born of Him following His Commandments. For the testimony of God is greater than any human testimony.

2 John

John begins his second letter in referring to himself as an elder, Israel as a chosen lady, and her children as his Jewish brethren who keep the commandments walking in the truth of Jesus Christ. As we will see in Chapter 10, John refers to Israel and her children in this same way per *Revelation 7:3-8*, *Revelation 12:1*, and *Revelation 12:17*. He then speaks of his joy over those of Israel's children who walk in the truth and obey the commandment to love one another, as most are hypocritical doers of the law, denying Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh. John warns how these deceivers and antichrists that do not acknowledge Jesus came in the flesh and refuse his teachings, are not to be received. For the one who gives greeting also participates in their evil deeds. John ends his second letter speaking of his hope to come and see his brethren face-to-face, as the children of their chosen sister greet them. As John lived in Jerusalem, he was most likely addressing one of the seven churches in Asia which had been scattered through Saul's persecution per *Revelation 1:4*. Their chosen sister whom John refers to is clearly a reference to their sister church in Jerusalem who will become the chosen bride for Christ, as described in *Revelation 19:7-8* and *Revelation 21:1-2*.

3 John

John begins his third letter by again referring to himself as an elder writing to Gaius, his beloved brother in Christ in whom he rejoices, for he walks in the truth. He declares that Gaius did much for the brethren even as they were strangers to him, for they too went out for Christ's name's sake taking nothing from the Gentiles. John now speaks of Diotrephes who desired to be first among them, but who did not receive the brethren and instead put

them out of the church while accusing them with wicked words. In response to the actions of Diotrefes, John tells them not to imitate evil, but to do what is good as demonstrated by Demetrius, who has received good testimony from everyone, as well as the truth itself. John ends his third letter just like his second, hoping to see them face-to-face while also sending greetings from friends who are to be greeted by name.

Jude

Jude, the brother of James and Jesus, begins speaking to those called loved by the Father and kept in Jesus Christ concerning the *faith* entrusted to all the saints. He warns his fellow beloved of persons who have crept in unnoticed to deny the Lord Jesus Christ, slandering what they do not understand only to be destroyed by what they do instinctively. Jude compares their dissent to the condemnation of those who did not believe even after being delivered out of Egypt, just as angels who have abandoned their posts, now reside in darkness and eternal chains for the Day of Judgment as described in *Jude 1:4-16*. He further cites the actions of Sodom and Gomorrah, along with all cities around them, all of whom indulged in gross immorality, seeking after strange flesh, to then to be exhibited as an example through the punishment of eternal fire.

Jude further reveals these men have gone the way of Cain as they feast among them without fear, caring only for themselves while being reserved for black darkness. It is men like these, foretold of in the last days, who follow after their own lusts while causing division, being worldly minded, and devoid of Spirit as the Lord Jesus Christ had warned....Hmm, this sounds a lot like what we are witnessing today! He then encourages his beloved to build themselves up in holy *faith* praying in the Spirit, while anxiously waiting for the mercy of their Lord Jesus Christ. Jude ends his

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letter telling his beloved to have mercy on some who doubt by snatching them out of the fire through Him who keeps them from stumbling, something I metaphorically liken to the song “**Steal Away**”¹⁵⁸ by Robbie Dupree. In summary, we should now be able to see that Jude, John, Peter, and James all preach the Jewish gospel and works of the law to be seen as righteous to their Jewish brethren, while also warning them of false teachers. This leaves us with the last and most misunderstood book of the bible, the book of Revelation.

CHAPTER 10

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

As an introduction to this book, I'd like to begin with a few comments on what the bible refers to as the end of days, or the last days. We see **Jesus** speak of these in *Matthew 24:1-31*, *Mark 13:1-27*, and *Luke 21:5-28*; **Paul** in *1 Timothy 4:1-3*, *2 Timothy 3:1-9*, and *Hebrews 1:1-2*; **Peter** in *2 Peter 3:1-13*; and finally **John** in *1 John 2:18-23*. As I've already mentioned, all of the apostles expected the return of Jesus Christ at some point during their generation per the words of Jesus in *Matthew 16:27-28* and *Matthew 24:33-34*. This is why we see Paul say things like "In these last days" in *Hebrews 1:2*, "We shall not all sleep" in *1 Corinthians 15:51*, and "we who are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord" in *1 Thessalonians 4:15*. Then, just as it will be with Paul's rapture event, Jesus confirms one person will be taken and one will remain at the coming of the Son of Man in *Matthew 24:37-42* and *Luke 17:26-35*. Those who will be taken refer to Israel's remnant elect per *Isaiah 11:10-13*, *Matthew 24:30:31*, *Mark 13:26-27*, and *Romans 11:1-6*. It is they, along with Israel's righteous dead, that the Body of Christ will be grafted onto the olive vine with as *Isaiah 26:19*, *Ezekiel 37:1-14*, and *Romans 11:11-24* detail.

We already know the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, as the Father was providing Israel with a last window of opportunity to believe Jesus the Christ and Son of God who had come in the flesh. If all Israel had indeed come to believe, the Kingdom Gospel could then have been preached to the whole world and all end of days prophecy could have been fulfilled during the apostle's' generation, as

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spoken by Jesus. If that had happened, the book of Revelation would never have been needed or written, nor would Paul's new revelation of Jesus Christ. Moving forward, the Father has graciously given all humanity nearly two thousand years to hear and believe Paul's gospel, so there can be no argument there hasn't been enough time to hear and believe. But unbelief with a hardened heart is an infectious disease affecting all of humanity. As mentioned earlier, I've included two timelines on the back of this book to help illustrate what could have been for Israel right next to our current age of grace through Paul's revelation of Jesus Christ.

As we will now see, the book of Revelation is entirely Jewish, bringing all Old Testament end of days prophecy together, including the Kingdom Gospel per *Matthew 24:13-14* and *Mark 13:9-10*. Thus, everyone should now see that the seven-year tribulation and all end of days prophecy are synonymous terms; this period begins with a time of peace such as the world has never seen, which is then shattered by the antichrist and the Father's judgments upon the unbelieving world. This culminates with the return of Jesus Christ where Israel's elect will be permanently restored as His priestly nation. These elect will then fulfill the apostolic commission in leading all Gentiles who survive the Father's judgments to plead before Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. The book of *Revelation* also details Satan's final attempt at scorning God the Most High in marshalling both his angelic and human forces for the end of days terror to come.

In *Luke 21:7-8* Jesus warns His followers not to follow any antichrists, stating that many will come in His name claiming they are Him; others will simply denounce the divinity of Jesus as the Christ and Son of God who came in the flesh. To these antichrists I echo the words "**there can be only one**"¹⁵⁹ concerning our Lord Jesus Christ; words that are also heard in the 1986 film *Highlander*. As we know per *Revelation 1:9*, the book of

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Revelation was written by the apostle John while in exile on the Island of Patmos due to his testimony of Jesus. He writes to the seven scattered Jewish churches in Asia who were followers of Christ, as the word synagogue confirms in *Revelation 2:8-9* and *Revelation 3:8-9*. And, of course, we already know from the verses of *Acts 8:1-4* and *Acts 11:19-20* that these Jewish followers were scattered because of Saul's persecution. Just as Paul wrote only to his believing Gentile churches, John writes to a specific audience of seven Jewish churches concerning things to come. Unlike the prophet Daniel seen in *Daniel 8:26-27* and *Daniel 12:4*, both Paul and John were preparing their churches to persevere the Day of the Lord as prophesized in *Isaiah 26:20-21* and *Zephaniah 2:1-3*. The difference being, John knew only the Jewish gospel that he and the other apostles had been taught by Jesus Christ.

For just as we saw with Luke, John had not been privy to Paul's new revelation of Jesus Christ which took place away from the sight of all. Again, this means John has no understading of Paul's gospel nor his rapture event, which is why neither are seen in John's book of Revelation. John writes this book at some point on or after Rome destroys the temple and Jerusalem as evidenced by his writing only to the seven scattered churches in Asia. These biblical truths further solidify the point made earlier that Paul's rapture and John's book of Revelation are olive vine companions concerning end of days prophecy. Understaing this, we should now be able to see that both go hand in hand with each other. With the final pieces falling into place, let's continue with Revelation and see how they complete this biblical puzzle.

The book of Daniel will also be required to fill in specifics missing within Revelation, as Daniel provides more detail concerning end of days events and timelines. Remember also, the other major and minor prophetic

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books of the Old Testament also speak of these things as part of the Kingdom Gospel to be preached at the end of days. By now carefully dissecting the book of Revelation and filling in the missing details with the book of Daniel, we can at last complete the big picture we're looking for. This is the only way to properly fill in the holes missing from the book of Revelation to achieve an error-free preview of what's to come, as *Romans 15:3-4*, *2 Timothy 3:14-17*, and *2 Peter 1:19-21* all confirm. **No Templar secrets, bible codes, or Nostradamus predictions necessary!**

We begin with *Revelation chapters 1-5* where John is reading the riot act to each of the seven churches in regards to their poor conduct. Again, as John writes nothing to the church in Jerusalem, we can assume he writes the book of *Revelation* right around or shortly after the Romans have destroyed the temple and the city. He then speaks of his heavenly vision where he learns that only the Lamb or Christ is counted as worthy to break open seven seals concealing a mysterious scroll beneath them. For it is only Christ that could shed His blood on the cross as payment for the sins of all being that only He is without sin in the flesh. As Christ begins to break open these seals, each one releases a specific judgment of the Father upon the earth against all who refused to give Him glory and believe that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God who came in the flesh. As all unbelievers have refused the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ, the Father now demands their blood as payment for sin per terms written inside the scroll, which unfortunately contains no forgiveness or mercy before the Father as the blood of Jesus Christ does. This scroll is humanity's mortgage note of sin, first signed by Adam and held by the banker Satan, which has now been paid through the shed blood of Jesus Christ for all who believe through *faith*.

Six of the Seven Seals are Opened

Revelation chapters 6-11 are a synopsis of events encompassing John's vision, after which he provides more specifics detailing the great conflict brought on by Satan and his herald the antichrist. Beginning with *Revelation chapter 6*, we see that six of the seven seals which Christ will open release the judgments of **the antichrist, war, famine, death, martyrs, and terror** upon the earth. We next see the souls of Jewish martyrs that were killed for their testimony of the Word of God cry out to be avenged, but they are told to wait, as more of their brothers must be killed in a like manner per *Revelation 6:9-11*; Jesus also speaks of this in *Luke 18:6-8*. These verses further imply that souls in heaven have some awareness of how and why they were killed along with the justice they are to receive for their *faith!*

Revelation chapter 7 now speaks of an angel carrying the seal of God telling four angels who hold back the four winds not to harm the earth, the sea, or the trees until the foreheads of God's servants are sealed. John reveals these Jewish servants consist of 12,000 men from each of Israel's twelve tribes, totaling the 144,000 seen in *Revelation 7:1-8* and *Revelation 14:1-5*. Per *Genesis 4:13-15*, *Ezekiel 9:3-6*, *2 Corinthians 1:21-22*, and *Galatians 6:17-18*, we can see there is nothing new about God marking people for His identification and purpose.

Continuing with *Revelation 7:9-12*, we now see a multitude of people from every tribe, people, and tongue dressed in white standing before the Lamb holding palm branches as *Leviticus 23:40-41* and *John 12:12-16* also speak of. Remember, there were people of Jewish descent living in every country of the world per *Acts 2:4-6*. John then explains to a heavenly elder that these are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation having washed their robes white with the blood of the Lamb, for they will serve the

Father day and night with Christ as their Shepherd per *Revelation 7:13-17* and *Revelation 22:3-5*. It is this multitude of *Revelation 7:9* who are the 144,000 sealed servants reserved by God detailed in *Revelation 7:1-8*. Just as the Father had reserved 7,000 Israelites who did not bow to the idol Baal back in *1 Kings 19:18*, Paul tells us there will be a remnant chosen by grace so that all Israel will be saved back in *Romans 11:1-10* and *Romans 11:25-32*. Again, it is this dispersed remnant elect that will be gathered back and restored to Christ after all end of days prophecy is complete per *Isaiah 27:12-13* and *Zechariah 10:6-12*.

By now looking back at *Matthew 24:21-22*, *Matthew 24:30-31*, and *Mark 13:26-27*, we again see that Jesus also spoke of Israel's remnant elect that will be gathered back to the Son of Man at His coming. The verse of *Matthew 24:22* further confirms it will be for their sake that the last days are cut short, lest no one would be saved. Again, Paul also speaks of Israel's remnant elect, stating they are chosen by grace and not works per *Romans 11:5-6*, and it is these Jews who will be marked to survive the seven-year tribulation, so that all Israel may be saved as prophesized in *Isaiah 45:17*, *Joel 2:32*, and *Zechariah 13:7-9*. Israel's remnant elect will then fulfill the priestly role in making disciples of all nations to complete the commission originally given to the apostles. This prophecy is given further authority through the verses of *Isaiah 60:1-22* and *Zechariah 8:20-23*, which confirm Gentiles will ask to go with Israel's elect to plead before the Lord and learn His ways, as they have heard God is with them.

Sounding the Seven Trumpets

In *Revelation chapter 8*, we see the seventh and last seal broken, as four of seven angels now sound four of seven trumpets, causing terrible things to fall from the sky and terrorize the earth. This also causes the sun and one

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third of stars not to shine as fire kills one-third of all sea creatures, trees, and sea going ships. In *Revelation chapter 9* we see the fifth angel sound the fifth trumpet, as John describes a star which had fallen from heaven. This fallen star is given a key to the abyss. As the abyss is opened, it releases locust-like creatures to torture all of mankind who do not possess the Father's seal for five months. They are further told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, for their torment is like the sting of a scorpion. This completes the first of three woes, and the star which falls from heaven, is a clear reference to Satan's fall from heavenly grace, as confirmed by Jesus in *Luke 10:17-18*.

Revelation 9:13-21 now speaks of the sixth angel sounding the sixth trumpet. This releases four angels who had been restrained by the Euphrates River to now kill a third of mankind, for they had been prepared for this hour. John also speaks of 200 million mounted horsemen whose horses have the heads of lions with breast plates the colors of fire, sapphire, and sulfur. From the mouths of their horses come three plagues of fire, smoke, and brimstone that do indeed kill a third of mankind. Their power resides in their mouths and tails, which are like snakes having heads to inflict harm. Could this be a metaphor for some grade of modern military missiles, or a biblical supernatural event just as it reads? We then read how those not killed do not repent of the works of their hands, but continue to worship demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood as previously seen in *Jeremiah 10:14-15* and *Habakkuk 2:18-19*. They also do not repent of their murder, sorcery, sexual immorality, and theft. Per this prophesized horror and evil, an excellent song echoing these apocalyptic events to come is "Apocalypse,"¹⁶⁰ from the Battlestar Galactica Blood & Chrome soundtrack. *Revelation chapter 10* nows peaks of an angel holding a small scroll who is similar in appearance to that of God the Father

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described in *Ezekiel 1:26-28*. This angel tells John he must eat the scroll and prophesy about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings similar to the instructions given to Ezekiel in *Ezekiel 2:8* through *Ezekiel 3:3*. It is also very likely that this is the same scroll spoken of in *Revelation 5:1*, which is why he is told it will taste like honey but feel bitter in his stomach, meaning the mortgage note is paid, but the judgments released demand the blood of all who refused the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ.

In preparation for what comes next, we need to begin looking at the companion book of Daniel, and specifically, Gabriel's prophecy of the seventy weeks spoken of in *Daniel 9:24-27*. *Daniel 9:27* reveals the Old Testament end of days is represented by one week, with each day representing one year, totaling the seven years needed to complete the event Christians know as the seven-year tribulation. The single day representing one year, along with the other sixty-nine weeks totaling 490 years, will be further explained later in this chapter. For now, the thing we need to know is that the first three and one half days of tribulation week will be a time of peace like never before seen. This is when the antichrist rises to power using intrigue through a covenant he makes with many for one week. Halfway into this week, the antichrist breaks his promise, which begins the second three and one half days of the tribulation week per *Daniel 11:21-24*.

Moving on, John is told to measure the temple of God and count the number of worshipers present. He is further told not to measure the courtyard outside, as the holy city will be given over and trampled by the nations for forty-two months, which is the second half of tribulation week. It begins with the antichrist breaking the covenant he made with many as detailed in *Revelation 11:1-2*, *Daniel 8:9-14*, and *2 Thessalonians 2:1-4*. Once the second half of tribulation week is finished, the seven-year tribulation will be complete, along with all prophecy encompassing the Day

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of the Lord and the Kingdom Gospel. Of course, many other events will take place during this week, so let's continue with Revelation and see what further unfolds.

The verses of *Revelation 11:3-7* now speak of two witnesses who make their testimony for God, with *Zechariah 4:11-14* referring to them as two olive trees. Revelation describes these two witnesses as being clothed in sackcloth, having authority to prophesy for 1,260-days, or three and one half years, and possessing the power to defend themselves. Their bestowed power also allows them to shut up the sky and prevent rain, turn water into blood, and plague the earth as often as they please. The book of Revelation doesn't give specific details on the message of God they prophesy, but it must be the Gospel of the Kingdom, based on what Jesus said in *Matthew 24:13-14*. After their 1,260-day run is complete, we see the antichrist kills them and leaves their bodies on the street for all to see.

All those who dwell on the earth will celebrate and rejoice, for these two witnesses had tortured them, but God revives them after three and one half days, causing great fear in all present. Those watching then hear a loud voice from heaven say, "Come up here," as the two witnesses go up in a cloud while their enemies watch. Within that same hour, a great earthquake engulfs the city of Babylon killing seven thousand and leaving the rest of the city terrified with no further choice but to give glory to God, as the second woe has now passed. The third woe quickly follows as the seventh angel sounds the seventh trumpet signaling the return of Jesus Christ who will now and forever rule His earthly kingdom per *Revelation 11:14-15* and *Revelation 19:11-16*. We can see that Jesus also confirms these events in *Mark 13:24-26* and *Luke 21:25-27*.

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It is here where the Lord will extend His hand a second time to gather Israel's remnant elect from the ends of the earth, including Israel's righteous dead, to forever be His chosen priestly nation as *Isaiah 11:10-13*, *Isaiah 26:19*, *Ezekiel 37:1-14*, *Daniel 12:1-3*, *Matthew 24:33-31*, and *Mark 13:26-27* all confirm. As the Body of Christ and the elect of Israel are olive vine companions, it is also here where the Pauline post-tribulation rapture will take place as mentioned earlier per *1 Corinthians 15:51-52* and *1 Thessalonians 4:16*. This will also be the time when the body of Christ appears before the judgement seat of Christ to receive any due reward as *Romans 14:9-12*, *1 Corinthians 3:11-15*, and *2 Corinthians 5:9-10* detail. These events now complete the Day of the Lord and Kingdom Gospel where Christ will now and forever rule as King over all the earth. The unbelieving dead are now judged, while His Jewish servants, prophets, and saints are rewarded as the Father destroys those who destroy the earth per *Revelation 11:15-18*. Thus, as we will now and forever be working for Jesus Christ, no one will have need to utter the words I'm "**Working for the Weekend**,"¹⁶¹ as we hear the rock band Loverboy sing.

Before moving on, I need to qualify a couple of points, beginning with the Father's judgments that will come from Christ breaking the seven seals concealing the scroll. These judgments, as detailed by John, are never given any specific time reference as to when they begin, other than delineating they will all take place during the seven-year tribulation. Another point is that in Christ's day no one knew much about the rest of the world; meaning across the Atlantic ocean. This raises the possibility that the three and one half years of peace seen at the beginning of tribulation week, may simply speak to a Middle East peace like never before seen? It is also likely that the covenant the antichrist makes with many for one week per *Daniel 9:27*, is veiled by God so that the world cannot see what is truly happening as part

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of His great delusion. We do know from reading *Daniel 8:22-23* and *Daniel 11:20-21* that the antichrist will quietly rise to power through deceit and intrigue before he makes his covenant with many. Thus, absolute confirmation concerning his presence may not be seen until the mid-point of tribulation week when he breaks his covenant promise. It is here when he will desecrate the holy temple and declare himself god, as confirmed by Jesus in *Matthew 24:14-15* and Paul in *2 Thessalonians 2:1-4*.

We can say something similar concerning the two witnesses of God, as John doesn't tell us at which point during the seven-year tribulation their 1,260-day run will take place, but we can make a couple of assumptions. We do know that right after they are brought back to life and taken into heaven, the last of God's judgments quickly follow, so we can speculate they are killed at some point toward the very end of the seven-year tribulation. We also don't know if they have any part in God's judgments of wrath as they will have the power to torture all humanity per *Revelation 11:6*. Many also regard the identity of these two witnesses as two prophets from the Old Testament, such as Elijah and Moses. The return of Moses, however, is not likely as the Father has appointed man to die only once per *Hebrews 9:27-28*. For we know that Moses died before entering the Promised Land per *Deuteronomy 34:4-6*, leaving Enoch and Elijah as the only two Old Testament men to be taken up into heaven before death as seen in *Genesis 5:23-24*, *Hebrews 11:5*, and *2 Kings 2:1-11*. *Malachi 4:5-6* definitely confirms the Father will again send Elijah to Israel right before the Day of the Lord. Thus, Enoch and Elijah are the only men of the Old Testament who could return and testify for God, as both will be killed by the antichrist. Of course, these two witnesses could also be of contemporary origin, so we will have to wait and see. The bible only gives broad sketches concerning tribulation events, which gives Pauline Christians the opportunity to believe

through *faith* in what's to come per the written Word. For just as the song "Heaven Knows"¹⁶² by Donna Summer implies, only the Father knows the exact hour as stated in *Matthew 24:35-37*, *Mark 13:31-33*, and *Acts 1:6-7*.

Moving on, let's take a closer look at the great conflict brought on by Satan and his herald the antichrist, which again culminates with completion of the Kingdom Gospel.

Observing the great conflict

In *Revelation chapter 12* we now see more detail concerning the great conflict, beginning with the description of a woman representing Israel, and her crown with twelve stars representing Israel's twelve tribes. John then speaks of a Red Dragon, representing Satan, and a male Child, representing Jesus Christ. We next see the dragon's tail pull one-third of the stars from the sky, representing the sons of God or heavenly host per *Job 1:6* and *Revelation 1:20*. We then see *Revelation 12:5-6* (echoing *Psalms 2:6-9*) tell us that Israel has given birth to a Child (Christ) who will rule all nations with an iron scepter at His return per *Revelation 2:26-27*. We then see the Child is caught up to God's throne as the woman flees into the wilderness to a place God has prepared for her. This veiled language represents Christ's ascension into heaven after His death and resurrection followed by Israel's prophesized haste into the wilderness as she flees the antichrist who desecrates the temple in Jerusalem. Remember, this all had the potential to become fulfilled during the apostles generation per *John 12:27-33*, as Nero, or someone similar, could easily have become the antichrist.

Continuing with *Revelation 12:7-9*, we next read of a war in heaven yet to come, where Satan and his angels are defeated by Michael and his angels, giving rise to a time of distress like never before seen as *Daniel 12:1*

describes. I reference this heavenly war as yet to come because John's book of Revelation is all about prophetic events which take place during the seven-year tribulation. This means that before Satan is completely banished from heaven, he still has access to it, having only been removed from His heavenly post due to his fall from grace. This is further confirmed by again looking at *Job 1:6-7*, where Satan is acknowledged by the Lord amongst his angelic brethren, the Sons of God, in addition to being mentioned in *Zechariah 3:1-4*.

The Fall of Satan

By looking back at the books of *Isaiah* and *Ezekiel*, we can see they use the kings of Babylon and Tyre as metaphors for the actions of Satan. Beginning with *Isaiah 14:12-14*, we can surmise that Satan's fall from grace was a singular event as he alone had desired to be like God the Most High. These verses make no mention of any other angelic brethren supporting him, and, in fact, Christ Himself refers to Satan's fall as a singular event in *Luke 10:17-18*. We can further see, per *Genesis 3:1-6*, that Satan's corruption of Eve was also a singular effort as no other angelic support is mentioned. *Ezekiel 28:11-19* next describes Satan as the seal of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty, and adorned in every precious stone set in gold. He had been anointed a guardian cherub having walked in Eden and amongst the fiery stones on God's holy mountain. Satan's anointed status and perfect beauty then filled his heart with pride, replacing his great wisdom with an insatiable vanity, and thus, the desire to be worshiped like God the Most High. Remember, we have also seen his cherubim brethren described in *Ezekiel 1:5-12* and *Ezekiel 10:6-22*. Adding to that, as the commander of heavens guard, Satan almost certainly viewed himself as second in command behind the Father.

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But, despite this beautiful description of Satan, isn't it fascinating how most of humanity always seems to picture him as some kind of red devil or monster. This is just what the song "**Diablo Rojo**"¹⁶³ performed by Rodrigo y Gabriela means! Paul in *2 Corinthians 11:12-15* further describes Satan as a masquerading angel of light, just as his boastful servants, the false apostles, and deceitful workers, also masquerade as servants of righteousness. This means his corrupted soul and spirit did not change his physical appearance in any way, and why Paul refers to him as a masquerading angel of light. Using this disguise, Satan continues to corrupt his heavenly brethren and humanity away from the light and glory he had once served before his failed attempt at being like God the Most High. *John 12:28-31* and *2 Corinthians 4:1-4* then confirm that he is the prince and god of this age, which again is why he could offer all the kingdoms of the earth to Jesus in exchange for His worship, as these were his to give. In any case, these verses clearly indicate that Satan's fall from heavenly grace was a singular event as there is no mention of any other angelic host falling with him at that time. The Father had only removed Satan from his place of honor within the heavenly hierarchy, but had not yet banished him from heaven itself.

As we know, Satan's singular coup doesn't work out, and instead of asking the Father for forgiveness, Satan becomes filled with resentment and decides to further scorn the Father by corrupting His creation of humanity. As such, we know his corruption continues to this very day, not only in terms of humanity, but also his angelic brethren in order to prepare for the heavenly war of *Revelation 12:7-9*. This means Satan must conscript as many of his angelic brethren as possible away from their commitment to the Father and Christ, with *Daniel 10:19-21* confirming he is definitely succeeding, for there are few who wish to fight against him. As further

confirmation, we can see Jesus and Paul substantiate the lethality of his prevaricating ways in *John 8:42-45* and *2 Corinthians 11:1-4*. Thus, Satan knows he's only "**Playing for Time**"¹⁶⁴ until his final demise is at hand per *Revelation 12:12*, to quote a great song by the smooth jazz band Acoustic Alchemy.

Per Paul's revelation of Jesus Christ, the Father has now put the Body of Christ under His grace. This means, as joint heirs with Jesus Christ, we too will judge angels along with the world as we've seen in *1 Corinthians 1:2-4*, *1 Corinthians 6:1-3*, and *2 Timothy 2:11-13*. Satan can then use these biblical truths to promote rebellion amongst his brethren and conscript them over to his ranks with promise of position and power. We can see something similar in the 1995 film *The Prophecy*, where the angel Gabriel tries to convince his angelic brother Simon to fight for their cause against the talking monkeys of man, or **endure pain and suffering forever**.¹⁶⁵ The bible has at least three examples of angels leaving their heavenly posts for self-serving reasons in *Genesis 6:1-4*, *Jude 1:4-6*, and *Revelation 12:7-9*. Angelic rebellion and disobedience further demonstrates that free will isn't limited to humanity, but in fact extends into the heavenly realm!

Satan and the Antichrist

In the same way Satan had attempted to magnify himself before God the Most High, the antichrist will mirror these same actions when he defiles the temple in Jerusalem and declares himself god per *Daniel 8:9-12*, *Matthew 24:14-15*, *Mark 13:13-14*, and *2 Thessalonians 2:1-4*. As mentioned earlier, the prophesized events of *Daniel 8:9-12* and *Daniel 9:27* will signal the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation. The dragon, or Satan, spoken of in *Revelation 12:3-4*, is metaphorically described as having seven heads, seven

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royal crowns on his seven heads, and ten horns; this is nearly identical to the metaphorical description of the antichrist or beast from the sea described in *Revelation 13:1* and *Revelation 17:3*. As the power of the antichrist will come directly from Satan himself, it only makes sense that his metaphoric description mirrors that of his benefactor. This, of course, is part of Satan's deception in portraying the antichrist as Jesus Christ through his endowed supernatural powers.

I realize this may all sound like a lot of fantasy to unbelievers, but the antichrist will come, along with all that follows to fulfill the final act of biblical prophecy. Just as Israel had remained blinded to the identity and purpose of Jesus Christ, so too will the unbelieving world remain blinded to the identity and purpose of the antichrist per the great delusion the Father sends, as Paul confirms in *2 Thessalonians 2:9-12*. The reason for this never changes, as it has always been only a remnant of humanity to remain *faithful* and obedient to the Word of God. As we pair this biblical truth with the Father's great delusion, it's easy to see why millions of unbelievers will not be saved during the seven-year tribulation, in contrast to what many Christians believe. This is especially true per the verses of *Daniel 11:30-35* and *Revelation 13:7-10*, which describe how the remaining *faithful* will either be killed or imprisoned. As mentioned earlier, considering the growing godlessness and deceit manifesting around the world, I'm not sure the Father's great delusion hasn't already begun.

Moving forward, as Satan will lose the heavenly war of *Revelation 12:7-9*, he knows he has but a short time left to pursue the woman, or Israel, who will escape to a place in the wilderness prepared for her by God for a time, and times, and half a time. This equates to three and one half years, or the second half of the tribulation week, which begins immediately after the antichrist defiles the temple in Jerusalem. *Revelation 12:13-17* further

explains that Israel will be given the wings of an eagle to make her escape, just as they had during their escape from Egypt per *Exodus 19:3-4*. Jesus also speaks of this moment in *Matthew 24:15-22* and *Mark 13:14-20*, where He states that Israel must take nothing with them while making their escape to avoid being caught by the dragon that pursues them. But this only enrages the dragon as he quickly changes direction to pursue the rest of her children scattered throughout the world per *Acts 2:4-11* and *Revelation 7:9*.

As mentioned earlier, *Revelation chapter 13* further describes the antichrist as a beast rising out of the sea possessing ten horns adorned with ten royal crowns and seven heads with blasphemous names written on them. This description goes on to say he also has the appearance of a leopard with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. To understand what these animal descriptions represent along with the beast itself, we again look to the book of *Daniel chapters 2, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12*.

Daniel Speaks of Beasts, Animals, and a Statue

Beginning with *Daniel 7:1-8* we see these beasts are described in human terms. Per *Daniel 7:4* the lion is further described as having eagle's wings which are torn off, as it is made to stand like a man on two feet and given the mind of a man. In *Daniel 7:5* we next see the bear is raised up on one of its sides while having three ribs in its mouth and being told to get up and gorge itself on flesh. *Daniel 7:6* then describes the leopard as having four wings on its back and four heads which are given authority to rule. *Daniel 7:7-8* lastly describes the fourth beast as terrifying and dreadfully strong, possessing iron teeth with ten horns that will crush all underfoot, unlike the previous beasts. As we will now see, this fourth beast is a metaphor for ancient Rome, and its ten horns are ten kings that reign in other regions

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alongside this beast of Rome. A little horn then arises amongst the others and quickly uproots three of these ten kings. The little horn is further described as having eyes like a man and a mouth that speaks words of arrogance, all of which is a metaphorical representation of the antichrist. Again, the reason ancient Rome and the antichrist run together is that Israel had the potential to fulfill all end of days prophecy during the apostles' generation.

Daniel's vision continues with a heavenly synopsis of prophesized events in *Daniel 7:9-14*, where the Ancient of Days or God the Father, now gives His Son dominion over all the earth to last forever, which speaks to fulfillment of the Kingdom Gospel. *Daniel 7:15-18* now reveals these four beasts are metaphors for four kings who will arise from the earth, but the saints of the Most High will ultimately receive the Kingdom and possess it forever. Per *Daniel 7:19-22* we now see Daniel ask for a specific meaning concerning the fourth beast whose appearance was more imposing than the others and who wages war against the saints, that is, until the Ancient of Days arrives and pronounces judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High. Daniel is told the fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will be different from all the others as it will devour the whole earth in *Daniel 7:23-24*. Again, the ten horns are ten kings which already reign in different regions around this fourth kingdom as it comes to power. Three of them will be subdued by another king to arise different from the earlier ones; again, this is the antichrist, or man of lawlessness described by Paul. This also speaks to the prophecy seen *Zechariah 1:18-19*, as we will see shortly. Remember too, that all of these kings, past or future, are under the influence of earth's unseen prince, Satan, which God the Father will use to fulfill all end of days prophecy.

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This future king, or the antichrist, will speak out against the Most High and oppress His saints, to then stand as an abomination of desolation in the holy place per *Daniel 7:25*, *Daniel 9:26-27*, and *2 Thessalonians 2:1-4*. Jesus also refers to this moment in *Matthew 24:15-21* and *Mark 13:14-19* when Israel must flee with all haste to the place prepared for her as it will be a time of great tribulation like never before seen. Per the verses of *Daniel 7:25*, *Revelation 11:1-2*, and *Revelation 13:5* the antichrist is given authority to act for a time, and times, and half a time; this equates to forty-two months or three and one half years, which is the second half of tribulation week. Once complete, *Daniel 7:26-27* reveals the rule of the antichrist will forever be put to an end. Dominion of all kingdoms under heaven will then be given over to the saints of the Most High. Thus, His kingdom, through His Son Jesus Christ, will be an everlasting kingdom, as all rulers will serve and obey Him.

As such, we now know these beasts represent kings and kingdoms, but which ones? The answers come from *Daniel chapter 8* where Daniel's vision reveals a ram and a goat to further represent these kings to come. Beginning with *Daniel 8:1-4* we see that one horn of the ram is longer than the other, as no other animal is able to stand against him, allowing the ram to do as he pleases. In *Daniel 8:5-7* we next see a goat possessing a prominent horn between its eyes charge the ram and break its horns, as there were none to save him from the goat. At the height of the goat's power, his prominent horn is broken off, and four smaller horns appear in its place per *Daniel 8:8*. In the next verse of *Daniel 8:9-11* we then see a little horn emerge from one of the four smaller horns. It grows toward the beautiful land and rises as high as the host of heaven; even casting down some of the host and stars to the earth. This little horn desecrates Israel's temple and prospers in whatever it does for a period of 2300 evenings and mornings. As we saw

earlier in *Daniel 7:8* regarding the fourth beast, this little horn of the goat is also a metaphorical representation of the antichrist. Thus, in a sense, Satan and the antichrist will be one at this time per *Daniel 8:10*.

While observing this vision, one having the body of a man tells Gabriel to explain these things to Daniel concerning the appointed time of the end per *Daniel 8:15-26*. Gabriel says, "The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia," as Media was ruled by Astyages and Persia by Cyrus the Great. Persia being the stronger of the two explains why one horn of the ram was longer than the other in *Daniel 8:3*, and why one side of the bear was higher than the other in *Daniel 7:5*. The three ribs in the bear's mouth represent the kingdoms of Media, Lydia, and Babylon, each of which was conquered by Persia. Gabriel then says, "The shaggy goat represents the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the broken one represent four kingdoms that will rise from that nation, but these will not have the same power." Thus, the large horn is Alexander the Great, and the four smaller horns are his four generals who will divide Alexander's kingdom after his death. Gabriel then says, "In the latter part of their reign, when the rebellion is at its full measure, an insolent king, skilled in intrigue, will come to the throne." This insolent king is the little horn we've just seen in *Daniel 7:8* and *Daniel 8:9-11*. Gabriel further declares, "His power will be great, but it will not be his own. He will cause terrible destruction and succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy the mighty men along with the holy people. Through his craft and by his hand, he will cause deceit to prosper, and in his own mind he will make himself great. In a time of peace he will destroy many, and he will even stand against the Prince of princes. Yet, he will be broken off, but not by human hands." These events, of course, speak

to the coming of the antichrist and the evil he brings during the seven-year-tribulation.

We now move on to the verses of *Daniel 2:1-34* where Daniel interprets the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, for none of his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, or astrologers were able to do so (surprise, surprise!). These verses describe Nebuchadnezzar's dream as that of a mighty statue possessing a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet made of iron and fired clay. We then see a stone that has not been cut by human hands fall and crush the feet of the statue, as the rest of its body becomes like chaff and is carried away by the wind, leaving no trace. The stone that strikes the feet of the statue represents Jesus Christ at His second coming per *Daniel 2:34-35* and *Zechariah 3:8-9*, at which time Israel's enemies will be crushed and He will become a great mountain to fill the whole earth forever.

Per *Daniel 2:36-40* we now see Daniel begin to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream. He declares, "You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven have given sovereignty, power, strength, and glory. Wherever the sons of men or beasts of the field or birds of the air dwell, He has given them into your hand and has made you ruler over them all. You are the head of gold," in addition to being the lion or the first beast from *Daniel 7:4*. Daniel then tells him, "But after you, there will arise another kingdom, inferior to yours," which is the Medo-Persian Empire also represented by the bear of *Daniel 7:5* and the ram of *Daniel 8:20*. After this Daniel says, "Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze will rule the whole earth," this is the Grecian empire of Alexander and his four generals, also represented by the leopard of *Daniel 7:6* and the goat of *Daniel 8:21-22*. Daniel lastly says, "Finally there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; for iron shatters and crushes all things, and like iron that crushes all things,

it will shatter and crush all others.” This is ancient Rome, also represented by the fourth beast of *Daniel 7:7-8*. We have already seen the antichrist will arise from this fourth kingdom represented by the little horn of *Daniel 7:8* and *Daniel 8:9-12*. Thus, we now know the four horns which scatter Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem per *Zechariah 1:18-19* are the Assyrian-Babylon empires, the Medo-Persian empires, the Grecian empire, and the Roman empire. The four craftsmen who then come to destroy these four horns per *Zechariah 1:20-21* are the Persians, the Grecians, the Romans, and Jesus Christ, who is the stone not cut by human hands as seen in *Daniel 2:34*.

In *Daniel 2:41-43* Daniel further explains to Nebuchadnezzar that because the feet and toes are made of both iron and fired clay, this will be strong yet brittle kingdom where the people will mix together, but not hold together. We can then pair the statue’s ten toes with the ten horns and ten crowns of the beast in *Revelation 13:1*. Again, these represent ten kings and kingdoms which reign in other regions as the antichrist comes to power. Thus, the antichrist will quickly conquer many of these kingdoms as he will no doubt use any division amongst them to his advantage. For he will encourage selfish ambition and greed as subterfuge in order to manipulate and control them. This is exactly what senators and emperors of ancient Rome did to amass and keep power. As such, these prophesized strong yet brittle kingdoms appear to be taking shape in our present age, as it is difficult at best to hold people together.

Daniel Speaks Further of Kings and the Antichrist

We now need to address *Daniel chapters 10, 11, and 12*, where Daniel has a vision of Jesus Christ that leaves him terrified per *Daniel 10:1-9*. The verses of *Daniel 10:10-21* then describe a heavenly messenger with the

likeness of a man who comforts Daniel, telling him, “Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you were purposed to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.” He tells Daniel that he has come to explain what will happen to his people in the latter days as inscribed in the Book of Truth, for his vision concerns those days. These verses also tell us this heavenly messenger was opposed by the king of Persia for twenty-one days as none had the courage to help him, save Michael, the prince of Israel. He further tells Daniel the prince of Greece is also coming, but he must return to fight against the prince of Persia, with only Michael having the courage to help him. As mentioned earlier, Satan is the unseen prince of Persia and Greece spoken of here, who has seemingly frightened or conscripted most of his angelic brethren through his power of deception and intrigue.

Per *Daniel 11:1-4* this heavenly messenger declares to Daniel, “And I, in the first year of Darius the Mede, stood up to strengthen and protect him. Now then, I will tell you the truth: three more kings will arise in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others. By the power of his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. Then, a mighty king will arise, who will rule with great authority and do as he pleases. But as soon as he is established, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendents, nor will it have the authority with which he ruled, because his kingdom will be uprooted and given to others.” We already know the mighty king of Greece is Alexander with his four generals being the four winds who then divide up Alexander’s kingdom after his death.

Per *Daniel 11:5-21* this heavenly messenger further reveals to Daniel that the king of the South will grow strong, but one of his commanders will grow even stronger, and rule his own kingdom with great authority. Years

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later they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North, which is likely the Roman empire, to seal the agreement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will her father's strength endure as they will be given up. One from her family line will then rise up and prevail against the king of the North, even taking their gods, metal images, gold, and silver captive back to Egypt. These kingdoms then repeatedly trade invasions as Daniel is told many will rise up against the king of the South, even some of it's own people, as they exult themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they will fail. The king of the North will then build a siege ramp to capture the fortified city and establish himself in the beautiful land, doing as he pleases with destruction in his hand. Resolving to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, he will reach an agreement with the king of the South. His plan is to give the king of the South a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the southern kingdom, but this will not succeed. The king of the North then turns his attention to the coastlands and captures many of them, but a commander turns him back to the fortress of his own land, after which he falls and is no more. Another rises in his place, sending out a tax collector for the glory of the kingdom, but he too falls. A despicable person then arises without royal honors and seizes the Northern kingdom through intrigue during a time of peace; this is the antichrist or little horn we have just seen.

Per *Daniel 11:22-35* the heavenly messenger now begins to detail the antichrist. He tells Daniel that many forces, including a prince of the covenant, are swept away before the antichrist as he makes an alliance through deceit. He then rises to power with only a few people during this time of peace. He then invades the richest provinces, doing what his forefathers never did while lavishing plunder, loot, and wealth on his followers and plotting against the strongholds. The king of the South now

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mobilizes a large army, which cannot withstand the plots against him, as both kings are bent on evil and continue to speak lies at the same table. This, however, is to no avail, for the end will come at the appointed time. Yet, as his heart is against the Holy Covenant, the king of the North (the antichrist) again invades the South, but ships from Kittim come against him and cause him to lose heart. He then rages against the Holy Covenant, showing favor to those who forsake it. His forces rise up and desecrate the temple, abolishing daily sacrifice to set up the abomination of desolation. Using flattery, he corrupts those that violate the covenant, but those who know their God resist him, instructing many even as they are captured, plundered, or killed by the sword and flame. Many will join them insincerely as some of the wise will fall to be refined, purified, and made spotless until the time of the end. This is exactly what Nero did to Christians within his Roman Empire. And again, it is for reasons like these why I believe millions will not be saved during this time of extreme trial and tribulation. For great sacrifice and difficulty will always weed out the weak and insincere in *faith* per *Psalms 31:23-24*. In addition, neither Paul nor John prophesize anything about great numbers being saved during this time, and instead, encourage their churches to persevere these last days.

Per *Daniel 11:36-45* Daniel's heavenly messenger next reveals the king of the North (the antichrist) will do as he pleases, magnifying himself above every god while speaking monstrous things against the God of gods, until the time of wrath is completed. He will then honor a god of fortresses his fathers did not know with gold, silver, precious stones, and riches while attacking strong fortresses with the help of a foreign god. He will also honor those who acknowledge him, making them rulers over many and distributing land for a price. At the time of the end, the king of the South will engage him in battle, but the king of the North (the antichrist) will

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storm out against him, as the antichrist also invades other countries, including the Beautiful Land, sweeping through them like a flood. But news from the east and north alarms him as he goes out in a fury to destroy many, pitching his royal tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. This is where he will meet his end. At this time per *Daniel 12:1-4*, Michael, the prince of Israel, will rise up and there will be distress the likes of which has never before been seen. This is the time when Michael and his angels will defeat Satan and his angels, as they will be cast out of heaven forever. It is also here when all Israel, past and present, whose names are written in the book will be delivered, and those who have led many to righteousness will shine like stars forever. Thus, I have included an awesome representation of Michael and his angels as they prepare for battle against Satan and his angels to the music of **track 3** called "**Unbroken.**"¹⁶⁶

As promised earlier, by reading *Daniel 9:20-24* we can now finish deducing the seventy-week period of time allotted for Israel to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem, per the decree issued by King Cyrus of Persia back in *Ezra 1:1-5*. We learned in *Ezekiel 4:4-6* that each day Ezekiel was to lie on his side represents one year of transgression that both houses of Israel had committed against the Lord. By next reading *Daniel 9:25-26* we learn it will take seven weeks or forty-nine years to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem, with another sixty-two weeks or four hundred thirty-four years until the Messiah Jesus Christ comes and is crucified. We also know that after Jesus had ascended back into heaven following His death and resurrection, Israel had yet another opportunity to believe Jesus the Christ and Son of God who came in the flesh; this could then have ushered in the seven-year tribulation to complete these seventy weeks prophesized by Gabriel. But, as we saw earlier, Israel refused to believe, and remained

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blinded with hardened hearts. Thus, we now have this time of grace until the full number of the Gentiles has come in per *Romans 11:25*. Once this number is complete, these prophesized seventy weeks or four hundred ninety years will also be complete as *Daniel 9:27* confirms. This gives even more validation to a post-tribulation rapture, as there will be some (but not many) who see the truth through *faith* even up until the very end of the seven-year tribulation. We know this to be true as John says that some will refuse the mark of the antichrist, as we will see in *Revelation 20:4*.

We also know that Satan is the current prince of this world until the Day of the Lord is complete per *John 12:28-31* and *2 Corinthians 4:1-4*. We further know that Satan will endow the antichrist with his power up until the end as *Daniel 8:23-24* confirms. In addition to the Father's great delusion, deception has always been Satan's greatest weapon and a quality the antichrist will possess in spades. Just as we see the antagonists in the 1981 film *For Your Eyes Only* attempt to **thwart James Bond in discovering the truth**¹⁶⁷ of his case, Satan will always attempt to keep as many as possible from discovering the truth of a risen Jesus Christ. Even if some are able to recognize the antichrist before he desecrates Israel's temple, the world will already be dazzled by his deception per the strong delusion the Father sends. Thus, nearly all of these things will only become absolutely clear through hindsight. As we now bring the book of Daniel to a close, we can see that it is the only way to accurately interpret end of days prophecy within the book of Revelation.

Now that we have a clearer picture concerning the beasts, their kingdoms, their kings, and the antichrist, let's see what John further reveals about the antichrist and the conflict that comes with him.

Continuing with the Great Conflict

Beginning with *Revelation 13:1-10*, we now see the beast from the sea, which is the antichrist or lawless one, reveal his true nature and intention just as Paul describes in *2 Thessalonians 2:1-4*. John tells us that a fatal wound on one of the beast's seven heads is miraculously healed. This beguiles the whole world into following him, as the beast along with his benefactor, the dragon, are now worshiped by the world as we saw in *Daniel 8:23-25*. Again, the Father will send a powerful delusion so that all who delight in wickedness and refuse the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ will believe in the deception of the antichrist. The beast is then given authority to act for forty-two months and a mouth to speak blasphemous words against God and His tabernacle, as we just saw in the book of *Daniel*. The beast is also permitted to wage war against the saints and conquer them in addition to his given authority over every tribe, people, tongue, and nation. Thus, all whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will worship the beast.

Revelation 13:11-18 next reveals the beast of the earth, which is the false prophet, who exercises all the authority of the first beast the antichrist. He performs great signs while even causing fire to come down from heaven on behalf of the first beast so that all will worship him. These things further deceive those who dwell on the earth into building an image of the antichrist who had been wounded by the sword, yet lived. The false prophet then enables the image to speak and cause death for those who refuse to worship it. Then, all people whether great and small, rich and poor, free and slave are then required to receive a mark on their right hand or their forehead containing the antichrist's name or the number of his name, which is 666. Those who do not possess these marks will not be

allowed to buy or sell. Scary stuff, and the best music I've heard to represent our planet's growing godlessness enroute to this prophecy is appropriately called "**The Beast**,"¹⁶⁸ from the 2016 film Sicario!

In *Revelation 14:1-5* we see the same 144,000 sealed Jewish bond servants spoken of back in *Revelation 7:2-8*, further described as not having defiled themselves with women or lied. These verses reveal they will keep themselves chaste and blameless, which is why they will be purchased from the earth to follow Jesus Christ wherever He goes. As stated earlier, it is these divinely marked 144,000 who will fulfill the special role of attending to Jesus Christ directly, as paralleled by the special group of angelic host who specifically attend to the Father back in *Daniel 7:9-10*. How these men manage to stay chaste and free of prevarication I do not know, but the Holy Spirit can equip anyone for the Father's purpose and plan.

It seems clear that Jesus Christ is setting the stage for His return, as John details the credentials necessary to be priests in Christ's royal court, minus the grace which Paul speaks of. This remnant elect of Israel is surely part of the wise possessing insight who instruct many for a time as we saw back in *Daniel 11:32-32* and *Daniel 12:3*. Furthermore, just as the Body of Christ is instructed to remain sexually pure in *1 Corinthians 7:1* and *1 Corinthians 7:8* to better serve God, these men will also lead by example through their model of chastity and honesty. We also know they will be hunted by the dragon through his herald the antichrist per *Daniel 7:25* and *Revelation 12:12*. And, of course, we know the Gospel of the Kingdom is preached to the whole world through the Father's two witnesses, as detailed earlier.

Per *Revelation 14:6-7*, we now see an angel proclaim an eternal gospel to every tribe, tongue, and people on the earth: "Fear God and give Him

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glory, because the hour of His judgment has come. Worship the One who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and the springs of waters” as referenced in *Psalms 115:15-18* and *Psalms 146:5-6*. These verses make it perfectly clear the Father desires glorious praise from those who remain on the earth. In *Revelation 14:8* we see a second angel appear and proclaim, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, who has made all the nations drink the wine of the passion of her immorality.” Lastly, per *Revelation 14:9-11*, we see a third angel appear and proclaim in a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives its mark on his forehead or his hand, he too will drink the wine of God’s anger, poured undiluted into the cup of His wrath. And he will be tormented in fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. For the smoke of their torment rises forever and ever. Day and night there is no rest for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.” We then see a call of perseverance for the saints who keep the commandments of God and the *faith* of Jesus Christ in *Revelation 14:12*; this, again, is the Jewish gospel.

Reading on, per *Revelation 14:13* we see another voice from heaven tell Daniel to write “Blessed are the dead—those who die in the Lord from this moment on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labors, for their deeds will follow them,” just as *Revelation 6:9-11* has revealed. Both *Joel 3:12-14* and *Revelation 14:14-20* now speak of Christ possessing a sickle to harvest or judge all on the earth. We then see another angel out of the temple possessing a sharp sickle come to help Christ harvest the ripe grapes of unbelievers. These verses, along with *Isaiah 63:1-6*, all describe how these grapes are thrown into the winepress of God's wrath, which results in the blood from this harvest rising as high as the bridle of a horse to a distance of 1,600 stadia. That translates to just over one hundred and eighty

miles...Wow! This is the blood payment owed to the Father per terms written in the scroll for all unbelievers and worshipers of the beast or his image. The Body of Christ, however, need not fear the reaper, or should I say, “**(Don’t Fear) The Reaper**”¹⁶⁹ as we hear Buck Dharma and Blue Oyster Cult sing; but only if we practice a Pauline lifestyle through *faith* in ***Romans 10:9***. Thus, I liken the horrific and final cost of the Father’s blood payment to the powerful symphonic movie theme “**Anvil of Crom**,”¹⁷⁰ as heard in the 1982 film Conan the Barbarian.

Pouring Out the Seven Plagues

Revelation chapter 15 begins with a scene in heaven as seven angels are now given seven golden bowls containing God’s wrath. These bowls will release the Father’s judgments upon the world and fulfill the Day of the Lord. We also see Jewish saints who overcame the beast and his number holding harps from God and singing the song of Moses. The temple then fills with smoke from the glory of God so that no one could enter until these seven plagues were finished. I can only imagine for all who remain on the earth how these plagues will give new meaning to the words “**Stayin' Alive**”¹⁷¹ as sung by the Bee Gees.

In *Revelation chapter 16* John hears a loud voice from the temple telling these seven angels, “Go, pour out on the earth the seven bowls of God’s wrath.” We see the first causes malignant sores on all who have the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The second is poured into the sea, causing it to become like the blood of a dead man and killing everything within. The third is poured into rivers and springs, which also become like blood. We can now look back at *Exodus 7:19-21* and see how these last two bowls of wrath are similar to the first plague which God had brought against Egypt through his prophet Moses. We then see an angel of the waters

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glorify God and praise His judgments, while worshipers of the beast who had spilled the blood of His saints and prophets now receive only rancid blood to drink, just as they deserve. The fourth is poured upon the sun, giving it the power to scorch men with fire and heat, but they only blaspheme the name of God instead of repenting and giving glory to Him. The fifth is poured upon the throne of the antichrist, causing his kingdom to become darkened, as all gnaw their tongues in pain and continue to blaspheme God without repentance. The sixth is poured on the Euphrates River, which dries up its waters in preparation for the kings coming from the east per *Daniel 11:44*.

We next see three spirits having the appearance of frogs come from the mouths of Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet. These are spirits of demons who perform signs and gather the kings of the world to a place called Armageddon for the great day of God the Almighty as we saw in *Daniel 11:44-45*. The seventh bowl is lastly poured upon the air while a voice from the throne out of the temple is heard saying, "It is done," similar to the words Christ spoke just before yielding up His spirit on the cross in *John 19:30*. Then, a great earthquake like none before comes upon the earth, splitting the city of Babylon in three and collapsing the cities of the nations as God remembers Babylon with a cup of wine and the fury of His wrath. We see islands flee away and mountains that cannot be found as one-hundred-pound hailstones fall upon all men who have blasphemed God. These seven bowls of wrath are also very similar to the seven trumpets of wrath that we saw earlier. Per another analogy, I see all of these judgments of wrath as similar to the actions of my favorite Marvel character, The Hulk. For when we hear him say "**Hulk Smash**,"¹⁷² all anyone can do is hope they are not caught in the path of his unstoppable rage, which is

nothing less than a sheer force of nature and reminiscent of the song “We Will Rock You”¹⁷³ by the rock band Queen.

Seizing the Final Victory

In *Revelation chapter 17* we see one of the seven angels who had been given one of the seven bowls go to John and say, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters. The kings of the earth were immoral with her, and those who dwell on the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her immorality.” Now in the Spirit, John sees a woman sitting atop a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names having seven heads and ten horns. This picture is similar to the beast of the sea described earlier, but now, there is a woman sitting on it. We see that she is adorned in purple, scarlet, and jewels similar to the way the Father had adorned Satan before his fall from grace back in *Ezekiel 28:13-16*. Written on the woman’s forehead was a mysterious name “BABYLON THE GREAT, MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” She is drunk with the blood of the saints and witnesses for Jesus. Thus, the woman is a metaphor for Babylon and its unseen prince Satan, who continues to scorn the Father through his herald the antichrist per *Zechariah 5:5-11*.

The angel then said to John, “I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has seven heads and ten horns. The beast that you saw—it was, and now is no more, but is about to come up out of the abyss and go to its destruction. And those who dwell on the earth whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet will be. This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have

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fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. The beast that was, and now is not, is an eighth king, who belongs to the other seven and is going into destruction. The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who will receive one hour of authority as kings, along with the beast. These kings have one purpose: to yield their power and authority to the beast. They will make war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will triumph over them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and He will be accompanied by His called and chosen and faithful ones.” The angel then said to John, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute was seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. And the ten horns and the beast that you saw will hate the prostitute. They will leave her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to carry out His purpose in uniting to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

We have already seen the seventh king mentioned above along with the beast or eighth king who is the antichrist per *Daniel 11:20-21*. We can also surmise the ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom are related to the ten toes of king Nebuchadnezzar's statue that will be crushed by the great stone of Jesus Christ at His Second Coming. Remember, the antichrist will uproot three of these kings as we saw back in *Daniel 7:7-8*. And the waters where the prostitute was seated are all the unbelieving people on the earth who worship the beast and his image. Thus, it is also possible that the seven mountains represent the seven continents on the earth?

The Fall of Babylon

Beginning in *Revelation chapter 18* we see another angel possessing great authority now descend from heaven and illuminate the whole earth with his glory. This angel cries out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a lair for demons and a haunt for every unclean spirit, every unclean bird, and every detestable beast. All the nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her immorality. The kings of the earth were immoral with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown wealthy from the extravagance of her luxury.” This, of course, is because Babylon will become Satan’s temporary earthly headquarters for he and his angels, especially after they are permanently cast out of heaven down to the earth per *Revelation 12:7-9*. That is why the angel possessing great authority refers to this city as a prostitute; for it will become the home for Satan’s angels, demons, every unclean spirit, every unclean bird, and every detestable beast.

John then hears another voice from heaven say, “Come out of her, My people, so that you will not share in her sins or contract any of her plagues. For her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Give back to her as she has done to others; pay her back double for what she has done; mix her a double portion in her own cup. As much as she has glorified herself and lived in luxury, give her the same measure of torment and grief. In her heart she says, ‘I sit as a queen; I am not a widow and will never see grief.’ Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and grief and famine—and she will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord who judges her.” Per this description, I liken Babylon’s lustful appetites and arrogance to another of my favorite teenage songs called “**Everything She Wants**,”¹⁷⁴ as performed by the pop duo Wham.

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Because of the desolation and abomination done to God's temple in Jerusalem, I used to believe in the possibility that Babylon was instead a metaphor for Jerusalem. After all, what could be more infuriating to the Father than Satan ruling from His holy city of Jerusalem? However, the verses of *Genesis 10:8-10* and *Zechariah 5:7-11* clearly refute my previous hypothesis, as Babylon was a city in the land of Shinar or southern Mesopotamia. We next see that in one day God will send plagues of death, misery, and fire to judge Babylon along with the kings of the earth who had committed immoral acts while living in luxury with her. These, of course, are the seven bowls of God's wrath detailed back in *Revelation chapters 15* and *16*; which is why it is called the Day of the Lord.

All who made their living from her will now weep at the fire consuming her. They will cry out, "Woe, woe to the great city, clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in a single hour such fabulous wealth has been destroyed." Thus, the kings and merchants who had become rich from her luxury now mourn as no one will buy her cargoes anymore. This will be the time for the saints, the apostles, the prophets, and heaven to rejoice as God has pronounced judgment against Babylon per *Daniel 7:21-22* and *Revelation 18:20*. We then see a strong angel take a huge stone and throw it into the sea, saying "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be cast down, never to be seen again." For the blood of the prophets, the saints, and of all who had been slain on the earth was found in her per *Revelation 18:24*.

Rejoicing and Judgment

Revelation chapter 19 now speaks of a roar heard from a great multitude in heaven shouting "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God! For His judgments are true and just. He has judged the great

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prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality. He has avenged the blood of His servants that was poured out by her hand.” We then see the twenty-four elders and four living creatures give worship to the Father who sits on the throne. We also see the time has come for the marriage of the Lamb to His bride Jerusalem; she is dressed in fine pure white linen representing the righteous acts of her saints. The marriage of Christ to Jerusalem was something touched on earlier; the bible tells us blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper. Per *Revelation 19:11-19* we then see Christ returning on a white horse wearing a robe dipped in blood. He is followed by the armies of heaven, as the antichrist and kings of the earth are ready to make war against Him. To confirm the rider of this white horse is definitely Jesus Christ, all we need to do is refer back to verses such as *Psalms 2:6-9* and *Isaiah 11:3-5*.

We also know that Jesus had spoken of His return in *Mark 13:24-26* and *Luke 21:25-27*. And it is here, just before Christ fully descends through the clouds, where the Body of Christ will take their place with Him and the armies of heaven. I can't help but picture Christ's return as similar to Sir Oric Von Lichtenstein's triumphant return to London along with his loyal friends to the song "**The Boys Are Back in Town**"¹⁷⁵ by Thin Lizzy, as seen in the 2001 film *A Knight's Tale*. What a glorious moment when Jesus Christ returns so that we can all shout, "He's back in town"...Yah baby! Jesus then seizes the antichrist and the false prophet, as both are thrown alive into the Lake of Fire. The rest of their armies are killed with the sword of the Word of God as prophesized in *Isaiah 34:1-17*.

Following Christ's return, *Revelation 20:1-6* speaks of an angel from heaven binding Satan and throwing him into the abyss, which is then sealed for one thousand years, after which he will be released for a brief time. We next see thrones and those who sit upon them given authority to judge, as

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the souls who were killed for Christ and the Word of God, along with those who did not worship the beast and take his mark, all come to life. As priests of Christ, they too now receive new imperishable eternal bodies to rule with Christ during His thousand-year reign; the bible terms this the first resurrection. As mentioned earlier, these saints include those of the Old Testament who had been prophesized to rise in *Isaiah 26:19*, *Ezekiel 37:1-14*, and *Daniel 12:1-2*. Then, along with Israel's remnant elect, Christ will gather His Jewish saints back to Him per *Isaiah 27:12-13*, *Matthew 24:30-31*, and *Mark 13:26-27*.

These will now be the holy nation and royal priesthood of Israel spoken of in *Exodus 19:5-6*, *Isaiah 61:5-6*, *1 Peter 2:4-10*, *Revelation 1:5-6*, and *Revelation 5:9-10*; thus, fulfilling the words of *Isaiah 45:17* and *Romans 11:25-26*. *Revelation 20:4-6* also appears to be the time when, as Jesus had promised His twelve apostles, they would sit on twelve thrones judging or ruling the twelve tribes of Israel per *Matthew 19:27-29*. Again, this also appears to be the time when the Body of Christ will have our own deeds judged for reward per *Romans 14:10-12* and *2 Corinthians 5:8-10*. Also, as olive vine companions with Israel's remnant elect and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, it is here where the Body of Christ will then judge the world and angels per *1 Corinthians 6:1-3*. This will no doubt be a great time for Israel and the Body of Christ, but *Revelation 20:5-6* clearly states the unbelieving dead will not rise until after Christ's thousand-year reign is complete. Interestingly, it is only here in *Revelation 20:6-7* where John specifically delineates a thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ, something which cannot be found anywhere else in the bible. Jesus also never speaks of a specific thousand-year reign when describing His return in *Matthew 25:31-46*. However, we have seen Old Testament verses such as *Daniel 7:11-12*,

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Micah 4:1-13, *Zechariah 2:1-5*, and *Zechariah 8:20-23* refer to this period of time in a veiled fashion.

This is because a portion of unbelieving humanity will survive the seven-year tribulation, but, they will not be renewed into imperishable eternal bodies. *Isaiah 2:2-4* and *Micah 4:1-3* give further credence to this idea, as those who have been renewed into imperishable eternal bodies will not need to go plead before the Lord and learn His ways. Thus, it is these who survive that will desire to go with the priestly nation of Israel and plead before the Lord, having heard God is with them as *Isaiah 2:2-4* and *Zechariah 8:20-23* confirm. This will at last fulfill the great commission given to the apostles by Jesus Christ.

Having not been renewed into new imperishable eternal bodies, these who survive will also live and die as before. As Satan will be locked away they will repopulate the earth over the entire thousand-year reign of Christ, but, they must also be held accountable and judged for what they do in the body before the judgment seat of Christ. Thus, Satan will again be released to test their *faith* and obedience, something I liken to the song “**On the Loose**”¹⁷⁶ by the rock band Saga. We see that his deception will be as lethal as before, as he deceives the nations once again per *Revelation 20:7-9*. He will gather humanity for war to surround the camp of the saints and Jerusalem in numbers that will be like the sand of the seashore. For me, this is very similar to Anakin Skywalker's **march on the Jedi temple**¹⁷⁷ as seen in the 2005 film *Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith*. But fire will come down from heaven and kill Satan's armies, leaving Satan to at last be thrown into the Lake of Fire. He will be tortured day and night forever along with the antichrist and the false prophet.

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We then see Jesus Christ seated on His great white throne ready to judge the dead who stand before Him, as the sea, death, and Hades all give up their dead for His judgment per *John 5:21-24* and *Revelation 20:11-15*. All those who did not take part in the first resurrection now rise to be judged according to their deeds as *Job 34:10-12* and *Matthew 16:24-27* describe. If their names do not appear in the book of life per *Psalms 69:28*, *Daniel 7:10*, and *Revelation 3:4-5*, their recorded deeds will determine their punishment within the Lake of Fire. At this time all unbelievers and the disobedient will see the truth as they long for the love of Christ they had rejected, a yearning I liken to lyrics heard in the song “**The Love I Lost**”¹⁷⁸ as performed by Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes. All deeds done in the body will no longer be hidden, but will be brought into the light and exposed before the judgment seat of Christ. It won’t matter if someone was the most powerful person earth; for no one will be able to run, or hide. This will be the time when all *faithfull* saints and Christians will get the justice promised to them per *Deuteronomy 32:35* and *Romans 12:18-19*.

This is also the time when *Matthew 25:31-46* becomes fulfilled, as Christ now separates His sheep from the goats. A moment I liken to the song “**Separate Ways**”¹⁷⁹ by the rock band Journey, when He tells all who rejected His love “**Let’s Just Say Goodbye**,”¹⁸⁰ as saxed by David Sanborn. This is all very significant, because for a second time we see how the inclination of human free will is toward evil and disobedience, despite the presence of Jesus Christ for one thousand years...WOW! We can also see that a thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ is necessary so the Father can finally put all enemies under His feet, the last of which is death. Christ will then hand the kingdom back over to His Father so that God may be in all, as the Father’s dominion of eternity will now surround everything per *1 Corinthians 15:24-28*. Again, only *Revelation 20:1-7* denotes a thousand-

year separation between the return of Jesus Christ and His judgment seat with a new heaven and earth to immediately follow. The written Word up to this point indicates these events take place sequentially, one right after the other, without any thousand-year separation between His return and final judgment.

Making All Things New

In *Revelation chapter 21* we now see a new heaven and earth replace the former, as they pass away in a great fire per *2 Peter 3:7-13*. The closest thing I've ever seen to this kind of planetary and celestial destruction is at the end of the **2012 film Knowing**,¹⁸¹ where super flares from our sun completely scorch the earth and kill all life to the music of Beethoven's "Symphony No. 7." This will be the time of renewal for all of creation that Paul speaks of in *Romans 8:19-23*, when everything will live in peace with itself and humanity per *Isaiah 11:5-10* and *Isaiah 65:17-25*. The best visual example I've seen representing this kind of renewal is at the very end of the 1949 film **The Secret Garden**,¹⁸² where a once-beloved garden, a crippled child, and a broken-hearted man are renewed to new life through the dedicated love of children.

A new holy city of Jerusalem is now seen coming down out of heaven as a bride for her husband, with a voice from the throne proclaiming the tabernacle of God is now among men. They shall be his people as God Himself will be among them, meaning the new heaven and earth will be one in the same. I have to say, a New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven brings a whole new meaning to the words "**Massive Transit**,"¹⁸³ a song performed by smooth jazz trumpeter Cindy Bradley. John is now carried away in the Spirit to see the brilliance of the new city, as she is the Lamb's bride. Its description can be seen in *Revelation 21:9-25* where the city no

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longer contains a temple, as the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are now its temple, something which *Revelation 21:22* clearly delineates. We also see the city will have twelve gates, each inscribed with one of Israel's twelve tribes, along with twelve foundations bearing the names of the twelve apostles representing the Jewish gospel laid upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Remember, Jesus had told His apostles in *John 14:1-3* that He was going to prepare a place for them within His Father's house which has many rooms. And it is within His Father's house where all the righteous of Israel will dwell with Christ forever. This all lines up perfectly with *Numbers 2:1-34*, as these verses detail how the twelve tribes of Israel had camped around the Ark of the Covenant in a particular order.

Revelation 21:26-27 next reveals how the remaining nations found in the Lamb's book of life will now bring their honor and glory, meaning their worship of the Father and Son, inside the city. At this time there will be no need for a sun or moon to shine on her as the Father will illuminate the city through the Lamb, His lamp, which again means heaven and earth will be one in the same. This will be the time when Christ will shine forever as promised by His Father, along with His righteous per *Daniel 12:3*, *Matthew 13:43-46*, and *Philippians 2:5-11*. The gates of the city will never close and nothing unclean will ever enter as it will be **holy ground**,¹⁸⁴ to again quote words from the 1987 film *Highlander*. *Revelation chapter 22* then describes the river of life flowing from the throne and the tree of life on either side, bearing twelve kinds of fruit every month. Their leaves are for the healing and renewal of the nations, for there will be no more tears, death, mourning, crying, or pain as the former things have now passed away. This new heaven and earth will be the ultimate "**Xanadu**"¹⁸⁵ as we hear Olivia Newton-John sing in the 1980 film of the same name. We can now see that, while the Father absolutely deserves our complete obedience and glorious praises,

only His Son Jesus Christ has been able to flawlessly fulfill this on our behalf per *Romans 8:33-34*.

Lastly, John reveals Jesus telling him, “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to give you this testimony for the churches (the seven churches in Asia), I am the root and offspring of David, the bright Morning Star.” The Spirit and bride say, “Come!” Let the one who hears say, “Come!” And let the one who is thirsty come, and the one who desires the water of life drink freely. John ends his book of Revelation by saying, “I testify to everyone who hears the words of prophecy in this book: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of this book of prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and the holy city, which are described in this book.” Paul ascribes a similar fate to those who pervert his gospel in *Galatians 1:6-9* and *2 Corinthians 11:1-6*. With that, there is now nothing left unwritten concerning the Word of God, unlike what we hear Natasha Bedingfield sing in her song “Unwritten”¹⁸⁶ about everyday life. Thus, as we have now completed this biblical puzzle of the written Word of God, and we can be assured the Father has given us a bible which is complete and without error so that the Body of Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, may have total *faith* in our eternal destination.

To close this chapter, I'd like to leave everyone with some things to consider, beginning with the understanding there is nothing within the book of Revelation that the Body of Christ needs in order to receive life eternal. Revelation, along with the book of Daniel, merely provide the information needed to understand and persevere the Day of the Lord. It should also be clear that Revelation is entirely Jewish, containing only the Jewish and Kingdom Gospels to further enlighten and prepare believing Jew's within the seven churches in Asia concerning what's to come. With

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this information, these churches could continue to edify all within while preparing to persevere the seven-year tribulation, just as Paul was preparing his churches to do. As such, the Father has generously given all humanity this nearly two-thousand-year age of grace so that all might have the chance to hear Paul's message of life eternal before the Father's judgments begin.

Finally, I hope that no one has the arrogance to believe they will not be susceptible to the intrigue and deception of the antichrist, for Jesus declares that even the elect could be deceived in *Matthew 24:22-24*. Just as deception is a fundamental cornerstone of Sun Tzu's Art of War, it is also the cornerstone of Satan's prevarication that he uses in his continued effort to corrupt humanity and his angelic brethren. Satan will always disguise his real intentions in giving them the appearance of a tender steak, creating the illusion of a sumptuous meal to fatten us up for the slaughter as *2 Thessalonians 2:11-12* delineates. At the same time, every Pauline believer can also apply the Sun Tzu axiom of, "Every battle is won before it's ever fought," being we already know the outcome. Just as the title of the song "**Last Dance**"¹⁸⁷ by Donna Summer speaks of, I am quite confident humanity is dancing its last dance, after which the Father's judgments will begin. Now that we have a good understanding of Revelation and how to apply it, the Body of Christ can embrace it knowing full well our destiny is with Jesus Christ, and not the Lake of Fire.

CHAPTER 11

REASONS PEOPLE MAY DOUBT THE BIBLE

Romans 10:9 as the Only Path to God

Now that we've had a good review of the bible, let's take a look at some reasons why people may doubt the written Word of God. The first and most obvious, is the belief that **Romans 10:9** is the only path to life eternal with the Father and Christ. As mentioned earlier, it is not my job to convince anyone concerning the validity of Paul's gospel. I merely cast and water the seeds of *faith* so that the Father may grow them as He sees fit. It's up to each individual through free will choice whether to believe in the authority of Paul's gospel, or something else, as the way to Jesus Christ and life eternal. We live in a country where all views and beliefs concerning *faith* and religion are to be regarded with respect and tolerance. It just so happens I believe in the authority of the bible through *faith*, and thus, see Paul's gospel as the only way to life eternal with the Father and Jesus Christ per *Romans 2:16*.

By again looking to *1 Corinthians 8:6*, we see that all things came from the Father for whom we exist. If this were not so, then existence itself is without purpose and the hope of life eternal. Again, *2 Timothy 3:14-17* reminds us that all scripture is God-breathed and useful because it came from the Father whose power is the Word as *John 1:1* delineates. We then need to take scripture on *Faith* without any proof or confirmation; this, however, is all but impossible without being sealed in the Holy Spirit. Cliché's such as "I believe in God" have no power to save anyone, for *James 2:19* reveals that even the demons believe in God and shudder—so what

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power is there in saying “I believe in God” as a means to life eternal? Even the phrase “I have accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior” doesn’t discern the Jewish gospel from Paul’s gospel of life eternal. It is because of statements like these that we truly need to know what the saving words of life eternal are word for word, rather than believing clichés like these have us covered! Again, if you disagree, then take what you believe on into eternity and see what it does for you?

We then need to remember that Paul teaches life eternal is not based on works such as being a good person, doing good deeds, observing biblical law, or attending church every Sunday; for these certainly testify to our *faith*, but they are not the basis for it. We also cannot receive life eternal after death through the proxy prayers of others, for it must be a free will choice made by each individual alone. We have just seen how Paul agonized over this very thing, stating that he would suffer being cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of all Israel in *Romans 9:1-5*. Many people also say that God answers their prayers without being a Christian. While this may be true, Jesus Himself said, “No one comes to the Father except through me” in *John 14:6*. Paul further confirms there is only one mediator between God and man—Jesus Christ—and no one may confess Jesus as Lord except through the Holy Spirit per *1 Corinthians 12:1-3* and *1 Timothy 2:1-6*.

If this were not so—if life eternal were given to all without any spiritual qualification—then what need would there be for anyone to become members of the Body of Christ? I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard people say there are many paths to God and life eternal, versus the only way: **confessing Jesus as Lord and believing with your heart that He rose from the dead per *Romans 10:9***. Just because the Father answers your prayers doesn’t mean you automatically receive the free gift of life eternal. What good is a life of answered prayers if that results in eternity within the Lake

of Fire? The same can be said for anyone practicing spirituality through philosophy in order to achieve a life of peace and serenity. Again, what good is a life of peace and serenity if that results in spending eternity within the Lake of Fire. This is all critical stuff, boys and girls, so I hope everyone is listening and not just hearing.

In the end, an individual either believes through *faith* that **Romans 10:9** is the only way to life eternal with the Father and Christ—or doesn't. But this cannot happen without belief in the entire written Word of God, as there is no middle ground concerning the bible and life eternal per *2 Corinthians 13:1-6* and *2 Timothy 3:14-17*. Why would anyone believe they can be raised to life eternal through a risen Jesus Christ, but then doubt that He had created everything seen and unseen encompassing the heavens and the earth? It makes no sense in limiting *faith* only to parts of the bible we agree with; Paul in *Galatians 1:6-9* refers to that approach as another gospel for which a person is to be cursed. Again, we don't have the option to pick and choose what to believe as the bible's authority rests on the entire written Word of God. I liken this concept to the table game Jenga, where removing or repositioning the wrong piece unbalances the entire structure, causing it to come crashing down. This is why Paul encourages the Body of Christ to consume all the solid food of the written Word, versus only consuming the milk of *Romans 10:9*, for it all goes hand in hand.

Was Jesus Just a Man?

Unbelief that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God who came in the flesh is another reason for biblical doubt. This view that Christ was just a man or prophet possessing nothing more than gifted insight without any divine essence or power, is most disturbing. If that were true, then the bible itself would be worthless and possess absolutely no authority to forgive sin and

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freely offer life eternal through the grace of a risen Jesus Christ per *Acts 15:8-11* and *Ephesians 2:6-9*. In addition to this, I have also heard it is becoming a common belief that Jesus wasn't really conceived by the Holy Spirit, but merely the natural outcome of a sexual union between Joseph and Mary.

These ideas completely dismiss the truth of who the biblical Jesus Christ is because they deny His divine and holy origin per Old Testament Prophecy. Jesus absolutely came to fulfill the Father's promises made to Israel's patriarchs in addition to shedding His blood on the cross so that all may receive forgiveness of sins, as Paul teaches in *Romans 3:21-26* and *Romans 15:7-12*. I also hear many say they need proof (non-belief) of His divine status as the Son of God before they could ever believe what the written Word of God says about Him. But even with the many signs and miracles Christ performed to prove His claim of being their Messiah, Israel continued to doubt with hardened hearts (unbelief). Thus, I'd like to highlight one of the first miracles Jesus performs in *John 2:1-11* with the words; the water heard the Master's voice, and blushed, to become wine! And the best song lyrics I've heard representing this incredible miracle can be heard at the beginning of the song "**If**"¹⁸⁸ by the rock band Bread. In *Matthew 8:1-3* we can see another miracle as **Jesus heals the leper**,¹⁸⁹ which is flawlessly represented in the 2016 film *Risen*.

Proof through His signs and miracles are all over the gospels as confirmed by *John 21:24-25*, which again says, if all of the things Christ did had been written down, the entire earth would not have the space for the books that would be written. So proof through non-belief is really not the problem. And it would be no different today if Christ were among us performing signs and miracles, as most would enjoy the show, but still see Him only as a conman or Jedi knight rather than a divine Messiah. We

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need to understand this time of absolute proof is long gone, leaving *faith* in the written Word as the only means by which everyone is to believe. Thus, we are fortunate to have a complete bible which provides everything we need through *faith*, making proof through heavenly signs and miracles a thing of the past.

I also hear strange theories, like the one passed on through the Da Vinci Code, which implies that Jesus had conceived children with Mary Magdalene. If Jesus had so desired, He could have easily conceived children. But He instead chose to obey and fulfill the path the Father had purposed Him per Old Testament prophecy. I did, at the same time, really enjoy the 2006 film *The Da Vinci Code*. For I can imagine hearing the music of Hans Zimmer's "**Chevaliers de Sangreal**"¹⁹⁰ to highlight the glory of Christ's empty tomb, as opposed to kneeling before the sarcophagus of Mary Magdalene. Without Jesus truly being the Son of God and rising from the dead, there would be no hope for anyone to receive life eternal. Yet, I have also heard people say that Jesus didn't really rise from the dead, which was a problem even in Paul's day as *1 Corinthians 15:12* reveals. Paul goes on to say that if there is no resurrection, then Christ was not raised and our preaching is worthless, as is our *faith* per *1 Corinthians 15:13-19*.

It's quite clear, however, that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead, for as death came through one man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through one man as *1 Corinthians 15:20-23* delineates. Ask yourself, as Paul states in the 2018 film *Paul, Apostle of Christ*, if you really believe the apostles, or anyone else, would **die for something they doubted**.¹⁹¹ Thus, everyone within the Body of Christ possesses the innate instinct of reaching out to a risen Jesus Christ, just as Grogu, or baby Yoda, **innately reaches out to the force**¹⁹² emanating from Luke Skywalker in television series *The Mandalorian*. This leaves everyone with the free will choice to decide

whether their *faith* resides in the authority and divinity of a risen Jesus Christ, or in human authority that denies or explains away His divinity and resurrection from the dead!

What about Satan?

Another point of doubt is that many believe the devil, or Satan, is merely metaphorical, and doesn't really exist; of course, this is truly his greatest weapon. Or, as mentioned earlier, people that do admit to his existence picture him as some kind of monster or red devil with horns and a pitchfork, but as we have already seen, the bible gives an entirely different description of this fallen cherubim. Again, Satan was described by the Father Himself as the seal of perfection, being full of wisdom, perfect in beauty, and adorned in precious stones mounted in gold. Satan was anointed as a guardian cherub who walked in Eden and amongst the fiery stones on the holy mountain of God per *Ezekiel 28:12-15*. *Isaiah 14:12* also refers to Satan as “O morning star and son of the dawn,” making it easy to see why he would begin thinking, “**Baby I'm a Star**,”¹⁹³ as we hear Prince sing in the 1984 film *Purple Rain*. For even the archangel Michael would not bring a slanderous charge against Satan in *Jude 1:9*.

As a result, we've already seen *Isaiah 14:12-14* and *Ezekiel 28:15-17* reveal how Satan's heart had become filled with pride over his perfect beauty, which then corrupted his wisdom and precipitated his fall from grace, as Jesus delineates in *Luke 10:17-18*. The sin of pride over his perfect beauty had even pushed Satan's vanity to be worshiped like God the Most High, as we saw back in *Isaiah 14:13-14* and *Matthew 4:7-10*. But again, his physical appearance is never described as a monstrous-looking devil, save for humanity's imagination.

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Another common misconception is that Satan is believed to rule over the kingdom of hell while **bargaining with humans**¹⁹⁴ through the promise of money, fame, and power in exchange for their souls, as suggested in the 1995 horror fantasy film *The Prophecy*. While Satan does have the ability to grant these things, as demonstrated by his final temptation of Christ in the wilderness, he does not have the power to collect and rule over human souls for all eternity as part of the bargain. Remember, there is also a difference between Hades or Hell and the Lake of Fire, for one is only temporary while the other is eternal. From our reading in Revelation, we also know the Lake of Fire, where Satan will spend eternity, isn't yet open for business, but there will definitely be "**Smoke on the Water**"¹⁹⁵ as we hear the rock band Deep Purple sing. Some also believe that eternity in the Lake of Fire will be the ultimate party, where all will dance with "**Feet of Flames**"¹⁹⁶ as the great Michael Flatley and his Irish dance troupe flawlessly demonstrate. However, the bible reveals that our earth is the only place where Satan rules as prince and god of this age, versus ruling over the domain of hell as *John 12:28-31* and *2 Corinthians 4:3-4* confirm. Thus, it will be the Body of Christ singing "**Let's Groove**"¹⁹⁷ in eternity to the music of Earth Wind & Fire.

Satan's only real power as god of this age is to corrupt as many as possible through his deception, so that he may keep as many as possible from the light of a risen Jesus Christ per *John 8:12*, *2 Corinthians 4:1-4*, and *2 Corinthians 11:12-15*. As an example, we know that Satan has the power to answer spoken prayers while masquerading as an angel of light. This is also why John calls Satan the father of lies in *John 8:42-45*, and why even a small lie mixed with truth can sound really good, but end in eternal destruction. A good example of this premise can be seen in the 1981 film *Excalibur*, where Merlin answers King Arthur's question regarding the

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greatest quality of knighthood in telling him, **truth is the greatest quality of knighthood**,¹⁹⁸ for “when a man lies he murders some part of the world.” Satan will always use this tactic to exploit our weaknesses, which he can deduce even faster than the world’s greatest detective, Batman.

Thus, Satan will usually communicate truth tainted with slight mistruth in order to disguise the lie and falsify the result. For just as we hear in the song “**Abacab**”¹⁹⁹ by the band Genesis, there will always be a hole in there somewhere cleverly hidden to corrupt all who would listen. The best biblical example can be seen in *Revelation 12:7-9* where Satan and his angels lose the heavenly war, but in order to amass his angelic army, Satan needs to misrepresent the truth in order to lure his angelic brethren away from their heavenly posts over to his cause. I say amass because it’s clear that Satan does not have the power of pure creation through the Word as Christ does, leaving deception and corruption as his only means to gain the services of his angelic brethren.

Satan also uses deception in order to promote the persecution of traditional Jewish and Christian values once viewed as the Word of God. This can be seen through a **growing anti-religion bias**²⁰⁰ paired with a **steady increase in liberal values**²⁰¹ within all mainline Christian denominations. Thus, many universities and church denominations are moving away from the absolute values found in the written Word of God in favor of a world paradigm. These things, however, do not line up with the words of Christ seen in *Matthew 10:22-23* and *Luke 21:17-19*, “And you will be hated by everyone because of My name.” Satan’s power of deception is so complete that he has most of humanity chasing its lust for greed and power versus believing in the written Word through *faith*. *John 1:4-5* teaches us that the light of Jesus Christ shines in the darkness, which the darkness has not overcome, and like it or not, those who do not believe,

whether through choice or ignorance, are enemies of Christ and the cross, whose end is destruction per *Romans 2:1-16*, *Ephesians 4:17-19*, and *Philippians 3:17-19*.

Israel the Chosen Nation

Doubt is also manifested in the idea that Israel is no longer God's chosen nation...If even they ever were as some believe? Many in the world also exude the idea that God never actually deeded the Promised Land to Israel, as the bible delineates. While it's true Israel was dispersed from its land for a second time by the Romans in AD 70, the idea that Israel is no longer God's chosen is completely wrong from a biblical perspective per *Romans 11:1-5*. When we look back at Israel's beginning in *Genesis 12:1-3*, we see Abram is told by the Lord that He will make a great nation from his seed and bless those who bless him, but also curse those who curse him. Remember, it is because of his *faithfulness* that God makes an everlasting Covenant between Himself, Abram, and Abram's descendants in *Genesis 17:1-7*. This covenant includes land for he and his seed along with a blessing of descendants to numerous to count, for they will be numbered as the dust of the earth per *Genesis 13:14-17* and *Genesis 17:8*. Abram is also told that he will be the father of many nations, and through his offspring shall all nations of the earth be blessed per *Genesis 17:4-6* and *Genesis 22:17-18*. *Isaiah 44:1-20* then confirms that Israel is indeed the Father's chosen nation.

Because of these promises, I also hear people say this is pure prejudice, as the Father would never put one person or group of people over another; but again *Isaiah 43:20-21*, *Isaiah 44:23-26*, and *Isaiah 49:3* dispute this. For Paul has taught us the potter has the right to make from the same lump of clay one vessel for special occasions, and for common occasions in

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Romans 9:20-21. Paul further reminds us in *Romans 11:25-32* that all gifts from God are permanent and irrevocable; this absolutely confirms the Father will never forget or remove the promises He made to Abram and Israel. *Genesis 15:18-21* further explains that the Father had deeded Israel far more land than they currently occupy, having sealed His promise through the ancient ritual of animal carcasses and fire used for deeding land in *Genesis 15:8-18*. Further references concerning Israel's deeded borders can also be seen in *Numbers 34:1-15*, *Deuteronomy 11:22-25*, and *Joshua 1:1-7*.

Israel will always be the Lord's blessed and chosen nation per *Jeremiah 31:35-37*, leaving their promised and permanent restoration as the last piece of prophecy to confirm their chosen status per *Isaiah chapters 61-62* and *Jeremiah 30:1-17*. We can then apply the same **Man of Steel first flight scene**²⁰² that we saw in Chapter 6, where Jor-El (Superman's father) tells Kal-El (Superman) that humanity will stumble, and fall, but eventually will join him in the sun, just as Israel will eventually join Christ in the light.

We have also seen there is much value in being a Jew, for only they were entrusted with the very oracles of God along with His statutes and judgments per *Psalms 147:19-20* and *Romans 3:1-4*. Lastly, the book of Revelation is all about the Father fulfilling the Gospel of the Kingdom so that all Israel may at last dwell in peace as the priestly nation of their Messiah and King—Jesus Christ. Again, the nation of Israel will always be God's chosen as seen in *Isaiah 45:4*, *Matthew 24:21-22*, and *Romans 11:25-32*, in spite of the Father having to always “**Pick up the Pieces**”²⁰³ after her, a song we see everyone jamming to at Daryl's house. For just as we hear in the song by the rock band Orleans, the Father constantly tells Israel throughout the bible they're “**Still the One**,”²⁰⁴ despite their lack of *faith* and obedience. Thus, another great song which I liken to the irrevocable

love the Father has for Israel is “**Never Gonna Give You Up**.”²⁰⁵ by Rick Astley.

I realize that many out there may not like or agree with Israel’s favored status, but this is how the Father deemed things would go. People can choose to ignore this biblical truth (unbelief) through their continued attempts to destroy her and steal their deeded land, but never forget the Lord’s words to Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you” per *Genesis 12:2-3*. Thus, the Body of Christ must always respect the land of Israel, even as many in the world continue to seek after her destruction. With that, I repeat the words spoken by the mutant villain Apocalypse from the 2016 film X-men: Apocalypse: “You can fire your arrows from the tower of Babel, but **you can NEVER-STRIKE-GOD!**”²⁰⁶

Evolution versus Revolution

Evolution is defined as a gradual progressive change where as Revolution is defined as a sudden complete change. As discussed earlier, science and philosophy continue to replace the biblical story of creation (Revolution) with evolutionary theories such as Darwinism, chance evolution, crashed asteroids containing microbes, and lastly ancient aliens who seeded our planet with DNA per science fiction films such as Mission to Mars and Prometheus. In response to these evolutionary theories, I can imagine Christ shaking His head in disbelief while remarking to His Father, “and these are the ones I created in Our image” per *Genesis 1:26-27*! These verses clearly speak to humanity being the greatest and most precious of God’s creation as nothing else comes close. I believe Willy Wonka said it best when he told Veruca Salt, “**We are the music-makers...and we are the dreamers of dreams**”²⁰⁷ in the 1971 film Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. It is for these reasons that humanity is likely the only intelligent

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creation within all the cosmos, and why the 2019 science fiction film *Ad Astra* likely presents the **best example of what's really out there**.²⁰⁸ Per the Genesis timeline, it is also not likely that any would be extraterrestrial civilization could advance to interstellar travel within the six-to-ten thousand years since creation began. Currently, the scientific method cannot prove nor disprove advanced extraterrestrial intelligence beyond a mathematical probability. Thus, despite what many people may believe, it's just us for now. For those who disagree, I am still waiting to see them face to face. Or, maybe one of them is the antichrist to come!

Beyond the science, we then need to acknowledge that only the Father can give all of creation an eternal soul and spirit to groan for help and renewal, as mentioned earlier in *Romans 8:19-23*. I cannot understand how anyone could look at the **wolf Two Socks in the 1990 film Dances with Wolves**²⁰⁹ and say he isn't a creation of pure love from Jesus Christ, just as all of nature is. Another great example can be seen in the **2009 film Hachi: A Dog's Tale**²¹⁰ where Hachi, sad and broken hearted, continued to wait daily at the train station as he always had to greet his master returning from work, even though he had passed away.

From my own experience, I point to the three feral cats my special woman and I adopted from our neighborhood, all of whom give unconditional love, loyalty, and companionship just as this **homeless cat video**²¹¹ demonstrates. All of creation responds to loving human stewardship, and for anyone to ignore this God-given purpose would be a contradiction of *faith* per the Creator's declaration that "it was good" in *Genesis 1:1-27*. Beginning with Adam, the Father has made humanity the steward of creation because He knew we would need it to survive, or we will not! Something I liken to the 1966 short film *Zlatch the Goat*, in which a young boy must depend on his beloved goat to survive an unexpected snow

storm. Thus, wouldn't it be nice when we go before the judgment seat if the books containing our deeds reveal that we gave creation a loving hand, versus **ignoring and stepping over its cries for help!**²¹² This includes those things and creatures **who can't ask for help!**²¹³ Indeed, if I didn't already know creation is going to be renewed, I have told the Father many times over that I would gladly suffer the Lake of Fire for all eternity in exchange for the eternal love and comfort of all creation; Paul laments something similar concerning his Israeli brethren in *Romans 9:1-5*. Some may consider this total nonsense, but I feel the innocence of creation is more worthy of eternal love and comfort than my sinfulness, which requires forgiveness and a spiritual rebirth to receive life eternal. The grand vistas encompassing **the Lakota village**²¹⁴ and the Norwegian fjords seen in the 1990 film *Dances with Wolves* and the 1958 film **The Vikings**,²¹⁵ are further examples of such innocence and worth. Thus, I always need remind myself the Father and Christ have more than enough love to renew all of creation along with me, as echoed in the song "**Lotta Love**"²¹⁶ performed by Nicolette Larson.

Human Slavery

I have also heard many people say they cannot believe in a book that supports slavery as *Exodus 21:1-11*, *Ephesians 6:5-6 1*, and *1 Timothy 6:1-2* seem to confirm. To begin with, slavery was never part of God's plan, but it was seen almost immediately after Adam had sinned through unabated human free will. Remember, the Father has given humanity the choice to follow His instruction for governance and living, or follow its own path; which is why slavery endures to this very day. I think Joshua, in the 1956 film *The Ten Commandments*, sums up this dichotomy perfectly when he states, "**God made men, men made slaves.**"²¹⁷ As such, the Father has no problem using slavery as part of his grand plan per the Old Testament

examples of Joseph and Daniel. A point of view which Paul affirms in *Ephesians 6:5-8* and *Titus 2:9-10*. Now, is any of this fair? Of course it isn't; but again this life is not about fairness and comfort. The Body of Christ must apply this realization to our own walk of *faith*, knowing that any trial or tribulation which comes our way will create a spirit to better serve the Father while building inner strength, and keep us moving toward the glory of Christ and life eternal. This all means the Father isn't just allowing bad things happen, but is allowing humanity to reap the natural consequences that come from its own free will choices, as *Job 34:10-12* and *Romans 2:5-8* confirm. Thus, as the unbelieving world continues to follow its own path, the Father and Christ will continue to tell humanity, "You're gonna get everything you want, let's just see if you want what you're gonna get!"

Sexual Sin

This is a biblical topic which brings a passionate response from people all over the world, as sex, sexual identity, and nontraditional marriage dominate the mainstream in opposition to the Word of God. Thus, all I can do is convey what the biblical Word says regarding this topic, knowing that it comes from God, and not me, per *Psalms 119:88-89*, *Psalms 119:159-160*, *Matthew 24:35*, *2 Timothy 3:16*, and *1 Peter 1:22-25*. Along with idol worship, sexual sin, in all its forms, are the two things which have brought the Father's wrath down most on the civilizations who lived by them, as *Genesis 2:20-25*, *Leviticus 18:1-30*, *Deuteronomy 12:29-32*, *Jeremiah 3:1-10*, *Romans 1:24-27*, and *Ephesians 5:30-33* all delineate. Thus, both the Father and Paul clearly state that any physical relationship outside of a marriage between a genetically-born man and a genetically-born woman is a sin per *1 Corinthians 7:1-3* and *1 Thessalonians 4:1-5*. This

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includes any heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or transgendersexual relationship outside the parameters delineated above. Please understand, I am not a hater, a homophobe, or a xenophobe in any way, but as a believer in the authority of the bible, it is my duty to advocate for the written Word of God. This, of course, doesn't mean Pauline Christians cannot have respect and tolerance for those of the unbelieving world who practice or condone these non-biblical lifestyles, for many are wonderful loving people with whom we may have friendships or work with. But, for any in the Body of Christ to practice or condone such lifestyle choices would be a contradiction of genuine Pauline *faith*, for this would be advocating another gospel which is to be cursed and not worthy of life eternal as Paul puts in *Galatians 1:6-20*. Thus, Pauline Christians must be of one biblical mind or we will be scattered and fragmented at best during the seven-year tribulation. Of course, this is what the forces of darkness want.

Again, additional verses like *Leviticus 20:10-21*, *Mark 10:1-12*, *1 Corinthians 6:15-20*, *1 Corinthians 6:9*, *1 Timothy 1:9-10*, *Hebrews 13:4*, and *Jude 1:7-8* further confirm that sex outside the marriage of a man and woman is a sin. Jesus gives further credence to these verses in *Matthew 19:3-6*, where he tells the Pharisees, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate." These verses, along with *Genesis 2:20-25*, confirm that when a man and woman become united together, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Jesus was, of course, referring to conceiving children, but also being of one mind through the Holy Spirit per *Malachi 2:14-16*. We can see an excellent example of leaving parents to join as one flesh and conceive children

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through the wonderful puppet-skit “**The Lonely Goatherd**,”²¹⁸ in the 1965 musical film *The Sound of Music*. To engage in sex outside the marriage of a man and woman not only dishonors the Father, but our own bodies as well. Again, Paul teaches that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and he who sins sexually, sins against his own body per *1 Corinthians 6:18-20*. Paul then details principles for marriage in *1 Corinthians 7:1-16*, conceding it is better to marry than burn with lust. He also speaks to the virtues of remaining unmarried (as he is) and the widowed, both of whom are better able to serve God not being bound in marriage per *1 Corinthians 7:25-40*.

If the entire world today would follow this one biblical principle regarding sexual behavior, we would likely not see the current levels of overpopulation, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted or unplanned pregnancies, single parent households, elective abortions, birth defects, poverty, prostitution, human sex trafficking, and other related mental health issues. Thus, Pauline Christians not following biblical principles regarding sex also support these things, whether directly or indirectly as indicated in *Psalms 81:10-16* and *Romans 1:20-28*...There is no middle ground for believers of Paul’s gospel! I realize this may sting a bit for many Pauline Christians, as well as anger and outrage much of the unbelieving world—but, as I’ve said, if I were to omit or ignore this important biblical truth, I would dishonor my *faith* and duty as a member of the Body of Christ per *1 Thessalonians 4:1-5*. Remember, as Paul teaches in *Galatians 1:6-10*, we don’t get to pick and choose what we’d like to believe from the written Word in order to create a gospel that supports a desirable world paradigm.

The Body of Christ must then lead by example, as we are not to judge anyone outside the church; for God will judge the world as Paul teaches in

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1 Corinthians 5:11-13 and *1 Thessalonians 4:10-12*. This means we never push the Pauline lifestyle on any of the unbelieving world through coercion or flattery per *1 Thessalonians 2:1-7*. Just as the apostolic commission was stalled due to the unbelief of Israel, how can the Body of Christ expect to gain the interest and respect of potential new believers if we ourselves do not exude a Pauline lifestyle? Thus, we are specifically instructed to expel the immoral from within the Body of Christ who refuse gentle correction, so their spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord per *1 Corinthians 5:1-11* and *Galatians 6:1-2*. Remember also, the Pauline journey is one of progress, not perfection. This means even with an occasional stumble, we still receive life eternal—but must suffer any consequences that result from our sin, just as we saw with King David and Solomon. The goal is to move past drinking the milk of the written Word to consuming its solid food through the daily renewing of our minds as detailed in *Romans 12:1-2* and *1 Corinthians 3:1-3*. This is the only way to resist and remove the one foot **we all** keep in the world to occasionally satisfy our lustful desires.

All members of the Body of Christ must then resist acting on heterosexual urges until marriage. For those who cannot turn from homosexual lifestyle, consider a purely plutonic relationship based on friendship while abstaining from any type of sexual interaction. But the only way to achieve this type of abstinence is to put God first and never feed the beast, which means running from those thoughts and images that feed these sexual behaviors, lest we continue to fail miserably. As such, you may need to discontinue relationships with any persons who continue to perpetuate these behaviors and bring “**Pll Wind**,”²¹⁹ as Lonette McKee sings in the 1984 film *The Cotton Club*. For those in the Body of Christ who do marry, begin with pure unselfish agape love over sexual love (which fades with time) so that you do not reap the sin of divorce and break the spiritual

contract you made before the Lord per *Malachi 2:13-16* and *1 Corinthians 7:10-16*. Beginning with agape love means to love your spouse as God loves each of us per *Ephesians 5:21-33*, *Colossians 3:18-19*, and *1 Peter 3:1-7*. Thus, couples that do begin with agape love will find that even after fifteen years of marriage, their spouse still makes them feel like “**Heaven Must Be Missing An Angel**”²²⁰ and singing “**Suavecito**,”²²¹ just as we hear the Tavares and Malo sing. I know, for me, I hope to always be my special woman’s “**Funny Valentine**,”²²² for her “**Kiss (will always be) On My List**”²²³ of the best things in life, as sung by Michelle Pfeiffer and Hall & Oats. In the end, it comes down to examining whether our relationships with others are based on biblical love, commitment, and friendship, versus our own selfish desires per *2 Timothy 2:21-23* and *James 1:12-15*! As difficult as this may seem, if we prioritize the love and commitment aspects within our personal relationships, then our sexual temptations can be kept in check versus succumbing to desires of the flesh.

Along with sexual sin, Paul speaks of many other lifestyle choices that will not inherit the Kingdom of God in *Romans 1:28-32*, *1 Corinthians 6:9-10*, *Galatians 5:19-21*, and *1 Timothy 1:9-11*. To continue in any of these lifestyle choices through unabated free will while claiming to be a Pauline Christian, would be a contradiction of biblical *faith*, and not worthy of life eternal. It is for these reasons that Paul instructs the Body of Christ to police its ranks so that we do not become infected with any of these sins, and kill the church. This is why seeking to serve God is better than seeking worldly wealth and comfort, for one cannot serve both money and God as *Matthew 6:20-25* and *Matthew 19:16-24* delineate. These biblical truths, however, do not mean that we cannot have a nice home or a good income, but we must not be afraid to lose these at the expense of a visible Pauline *faith* which serves the Father through the Body of Christ. Remember, John

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taught his believing Jewish Brethren not to love the world or the things in it per *1 John 2:15-16*. The time will come when everyone must to choose to do the right thing, or the easy thing. For God's children are not for sale!

Remember, the heart is where the Father looks to see if we are truly trying to please Him, or ourselves through our thoughts and actions, something I relate to the song "**How Deep Is Your Love**"²²⁴ by the Bee Gees. This is best exemplified in *Matthew 5:27-28* where Jesus says that even by looking at another woman with lust, you have already committed adultery in your heart. Don't forget, the Body of Christ must also appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive our due (reward or not) while in the body per *Romans 14:10-12* and *2 Corinthians 5:9-10*. As such, I am most grateful my own past sins of indiscretion have been forgiven per my membership in the Body of Christ through *faith* in ***Romans 10:9***. We must then remember living a Pauline lifestyle is part of being a new creation in Christ per *2 Corinthians 5:16-17*, for we are His ambassadors to the world as stated in *2 Corinthians 5:20*. Like it or not, these are the rules set by the Father for this game of life. So why not play the game, as heard in the song "**Digital Love**"²²⁵ by Daft Punk. It has been said that free will is a bitch, but is also the only way to ensure that our eternal destination is all on us! Free will brother...Free will.

CHAPTER 12

THE FEW-THE PROUD-THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS

My goal for **THE SALVATION EQUATION** has been to teach everyone that each book and letter of the bible was written in context to a specific Jewish or Pauline audience of that time period. Also per *Psalms 147:18-20* and *Romans 3:1-2*, all books and letters were written by a Jewish author detailing creation, biblical law, biblical history, biblical poetry, biblical prophecy, the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Jewish and Pauline gospels, and lastly, the Kingdom Gospel. By using this simple algorithm we have seen how the entire bible flows in a sequential fashion, leaving no contradiction or error within its written Word. For those of us who believe Paul's gospel through *faith*, our task is to speak it to all who would listen, for the Father never meant for anyone to be "**Dust In the Wind**"²²⁶ as we hear the rock band Kansas sing. We then pray that our seeds of *faith* reach those who have a heart for belief, so that the Father may grow them as he sees fit per *1 Corinthians 3:6-9* and *Ephesians 1:16-23*.

But we have also learned that even with our best efforts, most of the world will still exude unbelief with hardened hearts and remain destined to become permanent residents in the Lake of Fire. Biblically speaking, the "**The World is a Ghetto**"²²⁷ as sung by the great George Beson. For it has always only been a remnant to believe through *faith* and keep the Word of God. This is not a prediction, but a biblical truth, as we have seen in the following biblical examples. I begin with the story of Noah per *Genesis 6:5-9*, where only Noah was found righteous and blameless out of his whole generation having come from the line of Seth. We next see Abraham

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begging the Lord to spare Sodom and Gomorrah if even ten righteous people could be found; the Lord responds by telling Abraham, “On account of the ten, I will not destroy it” in *Genesis 18:32*. Then, per *Genesis 19:24-25*, we see that ten righteous could not be found and both cities are indeed destroyed. In *1 Kings 19:18* we saw that out of the northern kingdom’s whole population, the Lord had reserved seven thousand who did not kneel before the idol Baal, and kiss its head. We saw the prophet Nahum tell Nineveh (who had previously repented because of Jonah) of coming judgment as they had fallen back into harlotry and sorcery in *Nahum 3:4-5*. Even more disturbing, is that in spite of all the signs and miracles Christ had performed, followed by His death and resurrection, the number of brothers in Jerusalem who believed Jesus the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh was about 120 per *Acts 1:14-13*. This reaffirms the words of Jesus, “For many are called, but few are chosen,” as spoken in *Matthew 22:14*. Lastly, by reading *Isaiah 10:20-22* and *Romans 9:27-29* we again see that only a remnant elect of all Israel will be saved through grace per *Romans 11:5-6*.

As biblical history has revealed, it will always only be a remnant to believe and keep the written Word of God through *faith*, so let the Father through His Holy Spirit worry about the numbers. The Godhead prefers quality to quantity, similar to the U.S. Marines who are looking for a few good men...**Oorah!** *Luke 15:4-7* affirms this motto in telling us there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (the Jewish Gospel) than over ninety-nine who are righteous and do not need to repent. Just think of the Body of Christ as comparable to the size and esprit de corps of the Spartan force seen in the 2006 film 300. It is here where we see King Leonidas ask his Spartan soldiers, “**What is your profession,**”²²⁸ in regards to their modest numbers. All of whom immediately respond with

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unbridled passion “*Ab-Ooh-Ab-Ooh-Ab-Ooh.*” Indeed, only the hard and strong in *faith* can be members of the Body of Christ, for we run a race of endurance through trial and tribulation to be perfected in weakness, so that we may receive the promised crown of righteousness per *Romans 5:1-5*, *2 Corinthians 12:6-10*, and *2 Timothy 4:6-8*.

Despite all the trial and tribulation, Pauline Christians know life without Christ would be unthinkable, something I liken to the song “**I Don't Want to Live Without You**”²²⁹ by the band Foreigner. But sadly, very few are willing to give up their worldly comforts in favor of a visible Pauline lifestyle before the unbelieving world. Again, this was something Jesus addressed when he spoke to the rich young man in *Matthew 19:16-24*, as did Paul concerning his Corinthian church in *1 Corinthians 3:1-3*. Once a decision is made to step out of your worldly bubble and become a member of the Body of Christ, that’s when life really begins, as the challenges of trial and tribulation will grow your *faith* like never before. Just as the Father had given Israel every chance to obey His Word and believe Jesus the Christ and Son of God come in the flesh, the unbelieving world will also be given every chance to believe Paul’s gospel through *faith*, before His judgments shortly begin.

Per biblical prophecy, the hour is late, and we live in a world where even the scientific doomsday clock is just seconds from the midnight hour of destruction. While diversity and human achievement may be good things, sadly, they seem to have replaced praising and giving glory to the Father for all that is good in the world. I find this quite ironic, as those within the Body of Christ will receive life eternal irrespective of its diverse membership and achievements, per *Romans 10:9*. This pattern of celebrating human tradition and achievement, however, was evident right from the beginning, for the unbelieving world has neither glorified nor

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given thanks to God for His divine qualities and workmanship per *Romans 1:20-25*. We already know *2 Timothy 4:3-4* prophesizes that people will not care to hear the truth of sound biblical doctrine, but instead have their ears tickled by teachers who suit their own desires. This is why Paul tells us to stand firm in the teachings and traditions he taught to his Gentile churches in *2 Thessalonians 2:13-15*, *2 Timothy 4:5*, *Titus 1:7-16*, and *Titus 2:1-13*.

I fear, however, it won't be long until the bible itself will be seen only as a book of intolerance and racism, leaving Christians to be labeled as subversive terrorists, just as Nero had done to Christians in ancient Rome. This will lead to the eventual demise of Christianity as a worldwide *faith*. At that time, many so-called Christians all over the world will only be able to echo the words of Mel Gibson as Benjamin Martin in the 2000 film *The Patriot* where he says, "**I've done nothing, and for that I am ashamed.**"²³⁰ You can bet our Muslim brothers and sisters will never let that happen to their religion of Islam! Remember the words of Jesus Christ in *Matthew 10:32-34*: "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men I will also confess him before My Father in heaven, but whoever denies Me before men I will also deny him before My Father in heaven." Paul makes a similar statement in *2 Timothy 2:10-13*, for we cannot serve two masters as the verses of *Matthew 6:24* and *Luke 16:13* again declare. Understanding these biblical truths, the Body of Christ must remain **unbroken through the armor of God**²³¹ per *Ephesians 6:11-17*, so that we may honor Him by completing the race.

Godlessness is quickly overtaking our planet, and, when combined with an insatiable consumption of our planet's natural resources, can only lead to greater world chaos per the second law of thermodynamics. For the unbelieving world continues to chase the rabbit deeper into the rabbit hole,

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something I liken to the Jefferson Airplane song “**White Rabbit**.”²³² It’s then easy to see why the Father would again be thinking “**I Can’t Go for That**,”²³³ as Hall and Oats sing, concerning His beloved creation now once again full of godless unbelievers, just as it was back in Noah’s day. Thus, the Body of Christ needs to stay aware of current events in order to better persevere the great evils to come, which must take place on the left side of the equation before Jesus Christ can return on the right. It then follows that Christians must stay focused on serving the Body of Christ, lest we get caught up in these worldly distractions and lose our way; something I liken to the classic Tide “**Talking Stain commercial**.”²³⁴ Per the Father’s plan, we cannot change or even slow down biblical prophecy, which is why Christians are instructed to persevere the seven-year tribulation rather than fight it. Pay no mind to those who speak of humanity creating a utopia where everyone lives in peace and prosperity, as the bible completely contradicts this fiction due to humanity’s innate disease of sin, even as the world quickly heads towards the lyrics heard in the song “**Red Barchetta**”²³⁵ by the rock band Rush. Thus, no amount of philosophy, government policy, science, money, green energy, or even Christian evangelism can overcome humanity’s lust for power and covetousness as *Jeremiah 17:9-11* confirms. The very end of the 2011 film **Margin Call**²³⁶ (about the 2007-2008 financial crises) illustrates this point to a T, which is why the second law of thermodynamics will always be applicable regarding humanity, irrespective of the policies in place. Nor will anyone be able to escape to another planet in order to avoid the Father’s wrath, something I metaphorically liken to the 2016 science fiction film **Passengers**.²³⁷ This means Paul’s gospel will be the only refuge for what’s to come; *Matthew 24:21-22* again reminds us that if those days were not cut short for the sake of the elect, none would be saved.

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We in the Body of Christ know the bible is here for our salvation and comfort, so that we may be confident through *faith* in what's to come regarding our place in eternity. Studying the bible everyday for life, however, can sometimes feel monotonous and fruitless, like waiting for an endless train to pass by at a railroad crossing per the song "**Long Train Running**"²³⁸ by the Doobie brothers. But, as former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt once said, "A thorough knowledge of the bible is worth more than a college education." Thus, I can't understand why people are so willing to take at face value what someone else says concerning the written Word of God without first comparing scripture with scripture for themselves. As an example, how you would answer Jesus Christ before His judgment seat if He asked: "Why should I let you into My Kingdom?" Biblically speaking, the only correct answer is to confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord because you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead through *faith*...End of story. There shouldn't be any hesitation or doubt with this response, which again, is exactly why we need to know precisely what we believe and why. Remember, the Father can look directly into our hearts to see the truth. But I wonder how many people who profess to believe in ***Romans 10:9*** through *faith* can actually recite these critical words from the heart.

The verses of *Romans 8:5-11* and *Galatians 5:24-26* further confirm that living and walking in step with the Spirit is also a foundational truth of the Pauline *faith*. This is precisely why having a big picture of the entire bible is necessary, so that we can properly apply what we've learned with absolute confidence through *faith*. In this age of grace, Paul's gospel is the only path to the Father through a risen Jesus Christ; all other paths will lead only to eternal doom per *Ephesians 2:14-18*, *Ephesians 3:7-12*, *Philippians 3:16-20*, and *2 Thessalonians 1:6-10*. The bible, however, is powerless to

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save anyone who doesn't believe that they are born with the innate disease of sin, and thus, require a spiritual rebirth through a risen Jesus Christ. This is also why knowing the walk is much different than walking the walk through lifelong trial and tribulation in order to be perfected in weakness. A good biblical example can be seen in *Exodus 7:1-4*, where the Pharaoh Ramses, through a hardened heart, continued to deny the truth of his own eyes regarding the plagues of misery and death happening to Egypt. Paul describes something similar concerning people who are alienated and darkened from a life in God in *Ephesians 4:17-18*.

Unlike the fictional power of the **Holy Grail**²³⁹ seen in the 1989 film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Paul's gospel of ***Romans 10:9*** is the only way to life eternal with Christ, unless you have believed in vain per *1 Corinthians 15:2*. For the bible is not here to please us, it is here to save us. Thus, the Body of Christ must possess the same esprit de corps of "**Semper Fidelis**"²⁴⁰ seen in every U.S. Marine; which means, "always *faithful*." Along those same lines, I'd like to commemorate the marines I served with on my first overseas deployment (from Marine Corps Air Station El Toro in California to Yechon Air Base in the Republic of Korea) through the "**Top Gun Anthem**"²⁴¹ as heard in the films *Top Gun* and *Top Gun: Maverick...Good times, boys!*²⁴² I'd also like to extend some love to memories of my home state of Minnesota through the song "**Hail Minnesota**"²⁴³ as sung by the University of Minnesota Marching Band, while also giving a shout-out to my adopted home of Southern California through the song "**Ventura Highway**"²⁴⁴ by the rock band America.

Finally, just as we see **Maximus go home through death**²⁴⁵ in the 2000 film *Gladiator*, we also see Paul speak of going home, having completed his race as a soldier for Christ in *2 Timothy 4:5-8*. Pauline Christians must then possess this same desire of completing the race, so that we too return

home and receive our own promised crowns of righteousness. Again, this life is just a proving ground to determine our place in eternity. So when that time comes, where do you think you will be? Whether it is with our Lord Jesus Christ or the Lake of Fire, the result will be on you through unabated free will choice, for the entire written Word of God is absolute. Of course, this begs the question this book is asking: Do you have a heart of *faith* to be a Christian soldier for Jesus Christ? “**Only Time (Eternity) Will Tell**,”²⁴⁶ as we hear the rock band Asia sing.

I would like to end this book by honoring the Father and Christ through the song “**Eternal Father**,”²⁴⁷ as inspired by verses of *Psalms 107:23-30* and performed by the U.S. Naval Academy glee club. **Strength, Honor, Praise, and Glory to the Father and Christ...Forever!**

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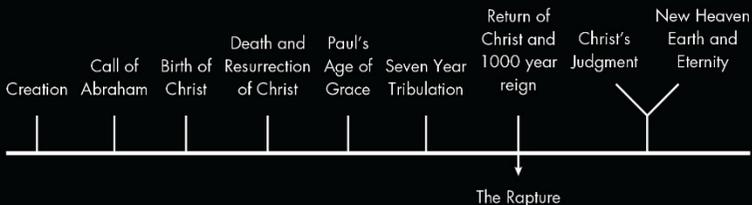
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