

Short Meditative Thoughts on the Bible and Life

Short Meditative thoughts on the Bible and Life
(From ancient near eastern, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Rabbinic
and classical sources)

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- Gary Staats

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INTRODUCTION

These are short studies or meditations on important areas of the Bible that help elucidate the Biblical text by giving attention to their meaning from the original Ancient Near Eastern, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Rabbinic and classical sources. It is hoped that this could be a help to pastors in their teaching and preaching of the Bible and in their lives as they seek to follow Christ. However, the whole of all of the study is the worship of Jesus Christ.

1 – A New Birth

In the gospel of John where Jesus Christ is speaking to Nicodemus, a rabbi of the Jews, Jesus says to Nicodemus, “except one be born again, or born from above he is not able to enter into the Kingdom of God” (Jn. 3: 5). Nicodemus inquires “How is one able to be born again? He is not able to enter his mother’s womb a second time to be born is he?” (Jn. 3: 4). Jesus says these amazing words: “Verily I say unto to you, except one is born out of water and of the spirit he is not able to enter into the Kingdom of God” (Jn. 3: 5). There has been a lot of discussion about what Jesus meant when he said “except certain one is born out of water and of spirit” (Jn. 3: 5). Some take this as meaning human birth and spiritual birth; some have taken it as referring to baptism and the Holy Spirit.

I wonder if we could not find in the book of Ezekiel an insight into what Jesus meant, especially in light of Jesus saying to Nicodemus, “are you a teacher of the Jews and do not know these things” (Jn. 3: 10). So in the book of Ezekiel 36 we have this great promise that the Lord spoke to Israel: “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart with new and right desires, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony heart of sin and give you a new, obedient heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so you will obey my laws and do whatever I command” (Ezek. 36:25-27). It is striking that we have

these two themes of water and spirit brought together here in Ezekiel. I believe Jesus has this text possibly in mind. Water becomes a symbol of cleansing and the impurities of Israel's sins are to be cleansed picturing a spiritual cleansing. Then, there will be a new heart and this speaks of a new birth. The heart will be given a new spirit that the Lord will put into His people. He will take away the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh. The beautiful truth here is that Ezekiel is speaking of the Holy Spirit who will come and cause a new birth to occur by giving a new heart, not only to Israel, but to anyone who is willing to believe the gospel, and put their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The good news is that men can be born again by water, symbolizing spiritual cleansing and by the Holy Spirit who comes into the heart when one believes in Jesus Christ. Again, Jesus says to Nicodemus "are you a teacher of Israel and do not understand *these* things? What a glorious anticipation and prophetic word the book of Ezekiel gives that looks forward to the new birth of which Jesus Christ was speaking.

In the Septuagint (LXX – The Greek Translation of the Hebrew Scripture). The book of Ecclesiasticus, an apocryphal book, speaks of a true scholar. This book is so called from a Greek word that signifies a preacher; because like an excellent preacher, it gives admirable lessons of all virtues. The author was Jesus the son of Sirach of Jerusalem, who flourished about two hundred years before Christ. It is not in the Jewish canon, but it is received as canonical by the Roman Catholic Church but not by the Protestant church. It was first written in the Hebrew, but afterwards translated into Greek.

2 - A True Scholar

The book speaks of getting wisdom to give wisdom, and one of the most important things is to have leisure. Ecclesiasticus 38:24 says: “the wisdom of a learned man comes by opportunity of σχολῆς, leisure. He that has little business shall become wise.” The word is σχολῆς where we get our word scholar and it means “leisure.” So a scholar is the one who has time and the leisure to meditate and grow.

The writer of Ecclesiasticus goes on to say “how can he get wisdom that holds the plow, that glories in the goad that drives oxen... and talks of bullocks. He gives his mind to the furrows and is diligent to give the kine fodder (38: 26).” The writer next talks about the carpenter and his workmanship. He labors day and night to cut out seals, and finish his work (38: 27). He talks about the smith sitting by the anvil and considering the ironwork and how he devotes his time to that (38: 28). He talks about the potter sitting at his work turning the wheel about his feet so that he can be the best potter who can fashion the clay in a beautiful way (38: 29-30). Then He then comes to the scholar who “gives his mind to the law of the most

high, and is occupied in its meditation” (39: 1). He will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients and he will be occupied in prophecies and he will keep the sayings of renowned men and give time to their parables. He will seek out the secrets of grave sentences and be conversant in dark parables” (39: 1-3). The writer of Ecclesiasticus continues: “when the great Lord wills he shall be filled with the spirit of understanding. He will pour out sentences and give thanks to the Lord in prayer. He will direct his counsel and knowledge and on his secrets he will meditate. He will show forth that which he has learned and he will glory in the covenant of the Lord” (39: 6-8).

What is wonderful in application about this text is that one needs leisure as a pastor/teacher to meditate on the word of God. This fits well with Psalm 1, “Happy is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the mockers, but his delight shall be in the Torah of the Lord, and in His Torah he shall constantly meditate day and night. Literally, the Hebrew **וְלַיְלָה יוֹמָם יְהַגֵּה** means he mutters under the breath (God’s Law) day and night. Rashi, a medieval Jewish commentator, had a twist on that particular verse said by meditating on **תּוֹרָתוֹ** His Torah, day and night, it will become **תּוֹרָתִי** my Torah¹. I am reminded of the apostle Paul who spoke of the gospel as “my gospel” (God’s teachings become one’s own). So, it is very

¹ The Miqraot gedolot - The Book of Psalms Vol I, p.4.

important that a pastor/teacher is not so occupied in the business of the things that do not relate to his calling, but devotes his time to the Word of God and meditating in it. That is what a real scholar should be about. It is really about one who takes the leisure to get to know the Lord in a deeper way through meditating on His Holy Scripture. Let us always beware of the barrenness of a busy life.

3 – Ancient Near East and the Biblical Flood

An ancient Near-Eastern text and its importance to understanding the Bible is Gilgamesh Epic. Gilgamesh Epic is the Babylonian flood account and it is sharply contrasted in many ways, especially theologically, with the Biblical account. In Gilgamesh Epic, there is a hero called Utnapishtim and one of the characters in the story, named Enkidu, who is seeking immortality. Enkidu finally discovers Utnapishtim, the hero of the Babylonian account of the flood. Utnapishtim describes to him how the gods were angry and they decided, for no moral reason that they would destroy mankind.

Outside of his hut, Utnapistim heard these words, “reed hut, reed hut, go build a boat.” It appears that one of the gods had squealed and had brought that word to Utnapishtim, because the gods had decided, arbitrarily, to destroy the whole human race. So, because of that, he was saved, he built a boat and took his family, and those who had helped him built into the boat. He was in it and the storm came, and the rains destroyed everybody and everything in a week. The gods had been terrified by the storm they had created because it developed beyond their control. They finally came down after the flood like hungry flies upon a sacrifice that was made because they were so hungry. In a week’s time, they needed to be fed.

What a contrast between the Biblical account and Gilgamesh Epic. God did not decide to arbitrarily destroy the earth, but He, because of the violence that was going on, had to bring judgment. Yet, He would go to all the trouble to reveal to a righteous Noah and his family, the judgment coming because of His goodness and grace. He would do all of this for one man. This flood lasted, not for a week, but for a little over a year and when Noah came out, the Lord did not have to descend upon the sacrifice as a fly, but He accepted it as a beautiful act of worship to Him. It is striking that when we compare the Ancient Near East with the Biblical account of the flood, that we see the mercy of God over against the arbitrariness of the gods. We see how God did not need a sacrifice but accepted worship as a result of the deliverance that He had given to Noah. That is true in our lives. We have One who rescues us from all of the judgments of God; that is Jesus Christ. As a result, we owe Him our adoration and our praise.

4 - Biblical Pastor/Teacher

What should a pastor/teacher do and look like according to the Bible, and what should be a pastor's goal in ministry? I believe that Jesus provided the perfect example of a shepherd and a teacher. He taught and he shepherded not only the twelve but he cared for people and he had time for people. Jesus always had time for everyone. Later John Wesley said, "Do all the good you can to all the people you can as long as you ever can." In our day and time we live in such haste and flurry of activity that people will feel that they have more important things to do than spend time with individuals, shepherding and teaching them. But Jesus had time with Nicodemus, He had time with the woman at the well, He had time with many other people, and even the disciples could not understand Him. If we are going to be like Jesus, we need to have time for the individual needs of people and take time with others to teach and to build up the body of Christ.

John 21: 15-19

Further, it is significant that three times Jesus said to Peter: "feed my sheep" (John 21: 15-19). I believe that the primary goal of a pastor therefore is to feed sheep, and to give them proper nourishment by feeding them from the Word of God. In order to obey their Lord and to be effective feeders of God's people the apostles clarified their role in Acts 6: 1-7, when they appointed twelve to take over the waiting on tables. They said that it was not right for them to leave the Word of

God and to minister in serving tables. It is significant that they wanted to spend time in the Word of God, so they could share the Word faithfully with others and the deacons then were appointed to take care of the widows. The basic task of a pastor is not to leave the Word of God for a flurry of activity in other things, but to spend time in God's holy and precious Word to be able to teach others. In Acts 6, after they looked for these men to be appointed it is again repeated in verse 4 that the apostles must give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word, and to continually be at these things. So the prayer life of the pastor and the constant reading and meditating in the Word, and ministering the Word to others is the example that the apostles set forth, following our Lord as to what the true pastor/teacher should look like.

Ephesians 4: 11-16

In the book of Ephesians chapter 4, Paul continues the same theme in verse 11, when he talks about how the Lord gave some to be apostles and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors and teachers. It is significant that these two nouns pastors and teachers in the Greek are connected with one definite article, meaning that this gift is one and the same. Thus pastor/teacher should be what we speak of in terms of this gift. The Lord has given shepherds and teachers for the purpose of equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry and for our ultimate building up of the body of Christ so that the body can be mature and grow (Eph. 4: 12). The

role of a pastor/teacher is an equipping role to equip the saints so that they then can do ministry, so that ultimately the Body of Christ can be mature and that all believers “grow up into the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God unto a mature person unto the measure of stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4: 13). The ultimate goal is the maturity in believers so that they would no longer be blown around by every wind of theology and doctrine, but that they speak the truth in love. Then the body would be building up itself as individual members would become links to each other supplying the necessary spiritual energy for ongoing spiritual growth. So according to Ephesians the role of a pastor/teacher is an equipping role to equip others to be effective in the ministry of the Word of God.

I Timothy 4: 6-16

Also in I Timothy 4, Paul defines what a good minister of Jesus Christ should look like. In chapter 4 he defines the type of ministry of a good minister of Jesus Christ. They should follow words of faith, good doctrine, and teaching that would not lead people astray (II Tim. 4: 6-9). They are to exercise themselves unto godliness knowing that bodily exercise has a little profit but godliness is profitable for all things (4: 8). The pastor is to be toiling and working in a way that he is exercising his spiritual body as it were and he is to be an example of the believers in word, in love, in faith, and in purity (4: 12). The godly pastor should have good

speech and a proper life, and should be a person of love, vitality, and purity to the Lord. Paul further says to Timothy “until I come give attention to the reading (4: 13).” The minister should be reading the Word on his own and in the congregation in a public way. The Pastor should not neglect the gift given to him, but needs to give attention to the reading of the Word publicly, to exhortation, to teaching, and be constantly at these things (4: 13-15). They are to be constantly growing in their walk with the Lord, Paul says, so that their advancement as a minister might be manifest to all (4: 15). Paul says to Timothy in verse 16: “give attention to yourself and to the teaching abide continually in them.” So a faithful pastor/teacher is to be in the Word personally for his spiritual growth and to abide in it and by doing these things a pastor will save himself and those who hear him (4: 16).

I Timothy 6: 11-12

In I Timothy 6: 11-12, Paul encourages Timothy, as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, to be faithful to pursue righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, patience, gentleness and to fight the good fight of faith, and in so doing, lay hold of eternal life (6: 11-12). Again it is the character of the pastor that one is to be constantly developing as a person, continuing to watch over one’s own life in ministry to others. Further, one must be content with the simple things of life such as food and shelter (I Tim. 6: 8).

II Timothy 2: 1-2

Along with all of the life, work and character of a ministry there is to be multiplication in discipleship. As Paul had taught Timothy, Timothy was to do the same by committing to faithful people who would teach others also. Paul says to Timothy: “you therefore my child be strong in the grace in which is in Christ Jesus and that which you have learned from me through many witnesses these things commit to faithful people who will be able to teach others also” (II Tim. 2: 1-2). Jesus took twelve and poured his life into twelve people. So a faithful pastor/teacher is to take a core group of people, I believe, and spend time with them to commit to them faithfully the things he is taught, so they in turn can teach others also. Timothy in order than to be a faithful minister, and all ministers following this exhortation, should hear Paul’s charge to Timothy.

II Timothy 3: 14-4: 8

In Paul’s last charge to Timothy, he says: “abide in the things which you have learned and have been instructed knowing from whom you have learned them and that from a little child you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise into salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ” (II Tim. 3: 14-15). To be a faithful pastor is to abide continually in the Word of God and to meditate on the Scriptures which are able to make the minister wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ. All scriptures which he meditates upon is

“God breathed and profitable for teaching, reproof, restoration, and for instruction which is in righteousness that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Tim. 3: 16-17). In the teaching of Scripture the pastor is to expound the Word faithfully, to reprove through the Word, that is to turn the light of Scripture where it needs to be turned on, and then to restore the brokenness of all, and to teach the truth which gives instruction which is in righteousness.

The pastor is to be then constantly preaching the Word “in season and out of season” as Paul goes on to charge Timothy with this imperative: “preach the Word in season and out of season, reproof, rebuke with all long suffering and doctrine” (II Timothy 4: 2). The faithful pastor is to herald the Word of God having meditated on it and to constantly do so “in season and out of season reproving, and exhorting with all long suffering and teaching.” The shepherd/teacher is to be long suffering with faithful teaching of God’s Word knowing that the time will come when many will not endure healthy doctrine, but will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears and will turn their hearing from the truth (II Tim. 4: 3-4). But as a faithful minister Paul says to Timothy: “be sober in all things, endure all things, do the work of an evangelist, and make full proof of your ministry” (II Tim. 4: 5). So as a pastor teacher one is to be faithful to do the work of an evangelist and in the teaching ministry that God has called a pastor to do, and so to make full proof of one’s ministry (II Tim. 4: 6-8). Paul concludes by exhorting Timothy and

all faithful pastors to follow his example. He writes: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, and I have kept the faith” (II Tim. 3: 7). A minister will follow that example knowing that someday there is a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will give in that day, not to Paul only, but to all those who have loved and ministered in light of the Lord’s appearing. A faithful minister is to love the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and so be faithful in obedience to the call to teach the Word and to disciple others. I think the emphasis on faithfulness is key. A minister is not called to be successful in the world’s eyes or the church’s, but to be a faithful minister and steward of the Word of God. Paul talks about this in I Corinthians 4: 2 when he speaks the need of faithfulness in one who is a minister of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is required of stewards that they be found faithful (I Cor. 4: 2).

I Peter 5: 1-5

Finally, as pastors we have to be an example of the flock, taking the oversight, Peter says not as being lords over the Lord’s flock, but being examples of the believers. Certainly a pastor/ teacher needs to set an example for the flock and “when the Chief Shepherd then appears one will receive the unfading crown of glory” (I Pet. 5: 4). Rather than being a dictator or an authoritative person over other people, one is to lead by way of example. When we think of a pastor/teacher, I believe Jesus Christ is our perfect model. He taught, shepherded and loved

people; we as pastors /teachers are to give ourselves to the Word of God so that we can mature in Christ and then to the teaching of that Word to others coupled with prayer and love for people. In summary, we are to spend our days in the Word, and encourage others to share in other aspects of the ministry, such as waiting on the tables, so that we can give ourselves and our time to the Word and to the prayer (Acts 6: 4). The apostle Paul said that the goal of a pastor/ teacher should be to build up oneself in the Word of God and in the teaching of that Word around Jesus Christ, so that the body of Christ can mature and can begin to reflect a maturity in life and practice of living the truth in love (Eph. 4: 11-16).

John 13: 2

Above all, along with all that has been said pastors/teachers must love people and walk along side of them as a friend and shepherd caring about each and every person. Our Lord Jesus Christ loved His disciples to the end and served them as the Faithful Shepherd (John 13: 2, 3-17). May we as faithful pastors/teachers so imitate our Lord as the master shepherd/teacher in our love for people.

5 – Christ Fulfills the Jewish Feasts

One of the great themes of the book of Leviticus in chapter 23 is the festivals and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. We begin with Passover which looks at the sacrifice of Christ. The blood of an innocent lamb was shed and his blood was applied and not a bone was broken. We see this in Jesus' life as the Lamb of God in John 1:29. We also see fulfillment of Scripture in John 19:36 with the words "not a bone was broken" on the cross. These things happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures. It was through His blood that He became the Passover lamb on our behalf. This is what Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians 5:7 when he says, "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us."

There is then the Feast of Unleavened bread that was kept for a period of seven days in which no leaven was to be eaten. This to Paul becomes the depiction of the life of the believer that is to be lived in holiness. He says in 1 Corinthians 5:8 "So let us celebrate the festival, not by eating the old bread of wickedness and evil, but by eating the new bread of purity and truth." Then on the very day after Sabbath we see the feast of first fruits when the first fruits of harvest were waived before the Lord. This is a beautiful picture of the resurrection of Christ which took place the day after the Sabbath. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:20 that "Christ has become the first fruits of those who sleep."

We then have fifty days leading up to Pentecost. Pentecost was a festival of sacrifice of the spring harvest time where the Israelites thanked God for harvest. Later it became a time in Judaism when they thanked the Lord for the receiving of the Torah. It is noteworthy that 50 days after the resurrection, a great spiritual harvest opened up with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost they baked two loaves of bread, depicting the Jew and the Gentile who have been brought together through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Also the final Torah was given in the good news of the Gospel and the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the great things of God were proclaimed which concerned the resurrection of our Lord.

Following Pentecost there was a long period of time until the fall festival where there is the blowing of trumpets. This is significant in that it would call people together for the great Day of Atonement. Some day the trumpet will sound and there will be a great resurrection of believers to meet the Lord. There is a great day of atonement that some apply to Israel in Romans 11: 26 speaking about how all of Israel will be saved some day. It is only by the atoning work of Christ that makes all of this possible. We can look at what happened at Calvary seen through the lenses of Hebrews 8 through 10. We have already entered into the affects of Calvary and some day the Jewish people, we are told in Romans 11: 26 will enter into the great Day of Atonement also and there will be a spiritual

fountain open. Zachariah 13 speaks of that great fountain that we understand to be the sacrifice of Christ and the salvation that comes from that sacrifice.

The last feast is the Feast of Tabernacles which takes place right after the Day of Atonement. It is also a fall festival where the children of Israel live in temporary dwellings, looking forward to their permanent dwelling in the land. What a beautiful picture of how we in this world look forward to that eternal dwelling with the Lord when He will tabernacle with us and we will be in the presence of the Lamb forever. So, as we think of the Feast of Tabernacles we look forward to that eternal feast that will be celebrated with Jesus Christ.

6 – Christ is the Final David in Matthew

In the book of Matthew, especially in the genealogy in chapter one, the name David occurs over and over in the number 14. When you take the name David in Hebrew you have a dalet, a wav, and a dalet; the dalet = 4, the wav = 6, and the dalet = 4, and when we add these up we have the number 14. It is significant that even as Matthew presents the genealogy he says there are 14 generations from Abraham to David 14 generations, from David to the Babylonian captivity, and from the Babylonian captivity to Christ are 14 generation (Matt. 1: 17). David is constantly seen in what is called gematria, that is the use of numbers, in this great genealogy of Matthew Chapter 1, with the number fourteen being reiterated pointing to none other than Jesus Christ as the final David.

In the book of Ezekiel, it talks about how David would become the great shepherd of God's people. For example, in Ezekiel 34:23 it reads: "then I will appoint a single shepherd to attend them, my servant David, He will shepherd them. I the Lord will be their God and my servant David will be ruler among them. I the Lord have spoken." I believe David in Ezekiel becomes a type of Jesus Christ who fulfills this great prophetic word and is the final David. We see this in the number fourteen which is what the name of David equals in Hebrew.

So, there are 3 sets of fourteen generations from Abraham to Christ fulfilling the Davidic covenant is pointing to none other than Jesus Christ who carries the

number fourteen in what He accomplishes as the final David. In this great text in the number 14 Matthew looks at seven doubled; seven is the number of perfection and the doubled seven looks at perfection doubled. We also have three witnesses bearing witness to Jesus as the final David in the threefold use of the fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the Babylonian captivity, and fourteen generations from the Babylonian captivity to Jesus Christ. The final David is here; the prophetic word of Ezekiel 34 is fulfilled in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

7 – Christ is the Mighty God

In the book of Isaiah 9: 5-6, there is this great promise from the text, “For a child has been born to us, a Son has been given to us, and the government will be upon his shoulder. His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. And of the increase of His government and His peace there is no end. He will sit upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with righteousness both now and forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will do this”. I believe this is the clear and basic translation of this text from the Hebrew. It is significant that this great text, I believe, looks forward to the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. It is very striking when you think of the names that are given to our Lord Jesus Christ. His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor. We come to the word אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר (el gibbor), Mighty God. It is significant that this word אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר (mighty God) occurs in chapter 10 verse 21. Clearly, it is Yahweh Himself. It reads as follows, “A remnant shall return; even a remnant of Jacob unto אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר unto the Mighty God.” I have to comment on those two words. One place it used of Yahweh, God the Father, in chapter 10 of Isaiah. Here in chapter 9, it is referring to Jesus Christ, because a child has been born to us, and we see the implications here of his dual

nature: He is born of a woman and yet, at the same time, he is אֱלֹהִים גְּבוּרַת the Mighty God.

He also has a kingdom that shall have no end. That is why He is also called Eternal Father. He is going to establish this eternal kingdom and uphold it with righteousness and justice from now and forever more. It is significant that in the Gospel of Luke concerning the announcement of the birth of our Lord, by Gabriel to Mary it reads: “This One shall be great. He shall be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God shall give to Him the throne of David His father and He shall reign over the House of Jacob forever and of His kingdom there shall be no end” (Lk. 1: 32-33). I believe there is a wonderful connection with the teaching of Gabriel and the eternality of Jesus Christ who would have an eternal kingdom and who would reign over the house of Jacob forever. This is possible because he is also אֱלֹהִים גְּבוּרַת the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father. Here in Isaiah we see a beautiful statement of both the Father and the Son as God.

8 - Gleaned Wisdom from David's Failure

Another interesting topic is found in II Samuel 11 and 12 and a phrase that is repeated in the narrative of David and Bathsheba is the phrase wayishlach “and he sent.” In this narrative, I believe the author builds an argument to teach wisdom around the verb wayishlach “and he sent.” It starts out with David wayishlah, sending for Bathsheba (11: 3-4). She comes to David and he commits adultery with Bathsheba and then “sends her back.” He finds out that she is pregnant so wayishlach “he sends for her husband to come home (11: 6). Instead of going to be with his wife, Uriah shows his loyalty to David by staying in the guardhouse. David wayishlach sent Uriah back to Joab, and David tells Joab to put Uriah in a place where he will die (11: 14). Joab follows David's instruction and wayishlach and he sent word back concerning Uriah's death.

When you see this repetition of wayishlach (and he sent) all the way through the text, one begins to wonder, where is God in all of this? It appears that powerful humans are able to send little people around like pawns and get by with it. With this repetitious phrase with no intervening from the Lord you wonder, how can this be, where is the Lord in all of this? This is what often seems to happen in life; the powerful will often send smaller people to do their will and abuse their power and there is no one to plead the case of the weak. What is interesting about this great text though is that the final wayishlach comes from the Lord Himself. We are told

that the Lord wayishlach, (and he sent) Nathan to David to tell him that he is the man who has sinned and God is going to bring judgment (12: 1). When we look at this, it seems like there is a lot of wayishlach going on but the final wayishlach (and he sent) will come from God Himself. In this life God will have the final word, the final sending as it were of judgment. It's almost like saying, its payday, someday. People may seem to get by with their actions as if God is absent. The text teaches the He will have the final sending and final judgment.

We see the same use of the word of shalah in Hebrew (to send) in the book of Exodus chapters 5 – 15 where the verb shalah is used throughout that text. Moses comes to Pharaoh and says shelah my people (Exod. 5: 1). Pharaoh says “who is God?” I am the god in these parts and I will not shalah your people. There is a debate back and forth; shalah the people, I will not shalah the people (Exod. 5: 2). This verb is repeated throughout the text. However, in Exodus 15 after the Lord takes the Israelites through the plagues and delivers His people through the Red Sea, the text has the song of Miriam where God shalah sends His people out of Egypt (Exod. 15: 8). Again the final sending belongs to God; the final judgment belongs to God. It may appear that human power reigns in this world. These texts teach us that the Lord will have the final word and the final judgment.

9 –Cyclical Approach to the Book of Revelation

One of the interesting ways that some have looked at the book of Revelation is through a cyclical approach. Some look at this book as linear, others as cyclical. But what is the cyclical approach? The cyclical approach deduces that there are 7 cycles each concluding with the second coming of Jesus Christ. To expound on this a bit, in the first three chapters of Revelation we have the appearance and return of Jesus Christ (chapter 1) followed by the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor. At the end of chapter three we have the words: “behold! I stand at the door and knock, if anyone will hear my voice and open the door I will come to him and I will have supper with him and he with me. The one who conquers I will give to him to sit with me in my throne even as I have conquered and I have set with my father in his throne” (Rev. 3: 20-21). Some believe this refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ. He speaks of the door being opened and inviting those who are ready for supper, a familiar imagery in the Gospels of the kingdom to come. There is the promise of sitting with Him on His throne and being a victor with Him just as He now is sitting with the Father on his throne.

This cycle is followed by the picture of heavenly worship in chapters four and five of the Father and of the Lamb, followed in chapter six by the seven seals. At the end of the sixth seal in chapter 6:12 and following it reads, “I saw that He opened the seal and there was a great earthquake and sun became as black as

sackcloth of hair and the moon became blood, and the stars of heaven fell upon the earth as a fig tree cast her figs as she is being blown by a great wind. The heaven was split as a book rolled up. Every mountain and island was moved out of their places. The kings of the earth, and the magistrates, the wealthy, the strong and every slave, and free, hid themselves in the rocks of the cave and say to the rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of the One who sits upon the throne and the wrath of the Lamb because that great day of their wrath has come and who is able to stand” (Rev. 6: 12-17). Some would see this as the second cycle concluded by the return of Christ accompanied with the judgment when he comes back as the final judge; the Lamb is going to judge the world after the sixth seal and its events.

This is followed then by the third cycle as is thought by some. In chapter seven we have the sealing of the 144,000 and a great multitude coming out of the tribulation, anticipating that God is going to wipe away all tears from their eyes. This is followed by the seven trumpets. Chapters eight and nine very closely parallel the plagues of Egypt. In chapter 10 after the angel commands John to prophesy again, in chapter 11 we have the seventh trumpet which seems to be clearly looking at the second advent of Christ. It says in verse 15, “and the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of Christ and He will reign forever and forever.” So we find ourselves at the end again. The 24 elders which are before God, sitting upon their thrones fell upon their faces and they worship

God saying: “we give thanks to you O Lord God almighty the One who is, the One who was because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign” (Rev. 11: 18). Not only have you started to reign but, “the gentiles were angry and your wrath has come for it’s time for the dead to be judged and to give reward to your servants the prophets, to the saints, and to those who fear your name both the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth (Rev. 11: 18).” Some see the final judgment here connected to the return of Christ where the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We then move to the next cycle beginning in chapter 12 where we have the depiction of the woman and the dragon. Satan is pursuing and persecuting the people of God since he cannot attack Christ who has ascended into heaven. Then the two beasts appear in chapter 13. This is followed by the song of the 144,000 in their deliverance (Rev. 14: 1-5). Coming to the end of that cycle, some see the final judgment again in Revelation 14: 14-15 as it reads: “and behold I saw a great white cloud and one sitting like to the Son of Man having upon his head a crown of gold and in his hand a sharp sickle. Another angel came out of the temple, crying in a great voice to the one who sits upon the cloud, send forth your sickle and reap because the hour has come because the harvest of the earth is prepared” (Rev. 14: 14-16). And the one who is sitting upon the cloud casts his sickle upon the earth, and it was harvested. We find here, the same conclusion in the scene, not only of

the wheat harvest, but also the harvest of grapes. In Revelation 14: 17 and following another angel came out of the temple in heaven having also a sharp sickle. Another angel came out of the altar, having authority over the fire and cries out to the one who has the sharp sickle saying, “send your sharp sickle and reap the grapes of the vineyard of the earth because the grapes are ripe.” The angel casts his sickle into the earth and reaped the vineyard of the earth and cast it into the winepress of the great God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city and blood came out of the winepress and an immense judgment follows (Rev. 14: 17-20). These two harvest scenes, the wheat and grape harvest, depicting this next cycle seem to conclude in the final judgment. Jesus spoke of the wheat harvest in Matthew 13 as the final judgment when the angels would separate the wheat from the tares.

In chapters 15 and 16 we move into the judgment of the bowls of God’s wrath. Those who take this position see these different judgments as repetition except with growing intensity. The final judgment is that of a great earthquake depicting the return of Christ and His judgment. Revelation 16:19 reads: “and the great city fell into three parts and the cities of the Gentiles fell and Babylon the great was remembered before God to give to her the cup of the wine of the wrath of His anger. Every island fled away and the mountains were not seen.” It goes on to explain that great hail came down and how men blasphemed God and the

judgments that came with this final worldwide earthquake. Many see this as the final judgment.

We then see the next cycle with the great harlot and the beast followed by the fall of Babylon in Revelation 17-19 with the return of Christ on the White horse (Rev. 19). After the announcement of the arrival of the marriage of the lamb anticipating the coming the kingdom of Christ, we now see the rider on the white horse (Christ) with a sword coming out of His mouth and with it He will smite the nations and He will shepherd them with an iron scepter and tread the winepress of the wrath of the Almighty God (Rev. 19: 11-16). As we see His return we see the beasts and the kings of the earth gathered together against the Lord, and the sharp two edged sword speaking of God's Word, which judges the world as Christ returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Some then see the final cycle in chapter 20 with the thousand years being to some, such as Augustine, as the reign of Christ and the martyrs reigning with Christ from the resurrection to the second coming. Satan is bound as such he is not able to thwart the preaching of the gospel that would go to all nations. This is followed by the great judgment of Gog and Magog, and then the great white throne judgment. People will stand before the Lord. The books are opened. Everyone is judged according to what is written in the books. If their name is not written in the book of life they are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20: 13).

The seventh cycle is a repeat of the sixth with Armageddon and Gog and Magog being a parallel of the same final judgment at Christ's return. Satan is alive and well but bound in this age because of Christ's victory over him on the cross and in the resurrection leading up to the second coming, so that cannot stop the spread of the Gospel to all nations he is bound in that way and can no longer deceive the nations from the Gospel's exposure and effect (Matt. 24: 14).

The martyrs now reign with Christ in this point of view from the resurrection to the second coming which is symbolically seen in the 1000 year reign. They are given white robes in Revelation 6, "and ἔζησαν (they lived) in eternal life with Christ and have thus escaped the coming second death which will come up on the rest of the dead of non believers who ἔζησαν (who arose) only to face the judgment of the second death. This double use of ἔζησαν seems to fit John 11: 25-26 and John 5: 24-25.

This is followed by a new heaven and a new earth and the conclusion that every tear is wiped away and there is no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain (Rev. 21: 4). In that New Jerusalem there is the Lamb and the Father and God's people will live with them forever. The cyclical approach sees the book of Revelation in cycles. The prologue in Revelation 1 is followed by the seven cycles each one culminating with the return of Christ and the final judgment, and then we see in the epilogue a final new heaven and new earth where Christ and the Father will dwell

forever. John says “even so, come Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22: 20). We as believers need to look forward to the return of Jesus Christ. Whether our position of Revelation is linear or cyclical, the important thing is that Christ is coming back.

10 – Examples of Literary Assonance in the Hebrew Bible

Another area of beauty in the Hebrew Bible is that of assonance where the same sound is given to drive home a great truth. In Genesis 2: 25 we are told that Adam and Eve were עֲרוּמִים (*arummim*, naked) and unashamed. However, the עָרוֹם (*arum*), crafty serpent was shrewder than any other wild animal of the field. The word עָרוֹם (*arum*), crafty and the plural עֲרוּמִים (*arummim*, naked) come from different words but actually sound the same in the Hebrew. The word for naked is עָרוֹם (*arom*, crafty) in the singular form rather than עָרוֹם (*arum*, crafty) but when you put it in the plural it becomes עֲרוּמִים (*arummim*, naked), and עָרוֹם (*arum*, crafty) means that which is shrewd. There is a beautiful alliteration here, it is almost though the text is saying be careful that the עָרוֹם (*arum*, crafty) serpent does not take away your עֲרוּמִים (*arummim*, naked), your nakedness or innocence.

Also in Genesis 3 we can hear the hissing of the serpent in Hebrew. When the Lord comes to bring judgment on Adam and Eve, Eve makes an interesting reply. First God addressed Adam with “What have you done”. Adam answered with “the woman that you gave me gave it to me and I ate. Then God asked the woman “What have you done?” The woman said the serpent הִשְׁיָאֲנִי (*hishiani*),

deceived me and I ate.” In those words you can almost hear the hissing of the serpent as he whispers to the woman the evil intention he had in causing her to disobey God’s Word.

We can also hear in Psalm 23:4 a beautiful example of alliteration in (*lo’ ira ra’*) I will not fear evil. When I walk in the valley of deep darkness, I will not fear evil for you are with me. We cannot translate that alliteration by saying I will not fear but in the Hebrew the words take the same sound and drive home alliteration and assonance that can never be forgotten.

In Isaiah 5: 7, where the Lord is condemning his people for their sins, We again see alliteration by hearing that God had looked for *mishpat* judgment, but behold *mispah* in (violence). Instead of righteous judgment He heard the opposite. Then He looked for *şedaqah* righteousness, but instead of it he only heard *şeaqah*, a cry.

Amos gives us alliteration when in Amos 9, the prophet speaks of the summer fruit. The word *qayiş* meaning summer fruit is looking at over-ripe fruit depicting God’s people being ripe for judgment. The end has come and the word for end is *qeş*. There is a play on the words *qayiş* summer fruit ripe for judgment and the word end or *qeş*.

John 1 is another place where we see significance in a word that throws light on the whole idea of the glory of God as seen in Jesus Christ. In John 1:14 it says

“And the Word became flesh and *eskēnosen* pitched His tent and dwelt among us.

This goes back to the Hebrew *shakan* in Exodus 40 where the glory of God *shakan* dwelt among the people. Now in a transliterated Greek we have the same root consonants *skn* dwelt or pitch one’s tent where we can see the relationship with *shakan* in Exodus. In other words, Jesus Christ is the final shekinah, the final glory of God. No longer seen in a cloud but now seen in the humanity of Jesus Christ as the God-man who pitched His tent among us.

In Isaiah 53, Isaiah talks about the suffering servant, our Lord Jesus, how He will die and become a sacrifice for sin. After describing His death, Isaiah says in verse 11, “My righteous Servant shall justify the many and He shall bear away their iniquity.” The word justify *yašdiq* in the Septuagint is the verb *δικαίω* (*dikaioo*, justify) and it is significant that this same word is used by Paul in Roman 3, when speaking of the work of Jesus Christ in His justifying work on our behalf. The apostle Paul says concerning justification that we are “*δικαιοῦμενοι* (*dikaioumenoi*, justified) being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ.” In Isaiah 53: 11 in the word *yašdiq* (*δικαίω*, *dikaioo* in the LXX) there is a fulfillment in Roman 3:24 where Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is the One who freely justifies us by His grace, using the very same word.

Paul goes on to say in Romans 3: 25 that God has set forth Christ as a hilasterion. The Greek word hilasterion is the same word that is used in the

Septuagint for the lid of the mercy seat which in Hebrew is kepharet but is Greek is hilasterion. Jesus Christ has become that lid. What did that lid represent? When the high priest went in and sprinkled the blood it satisfied God's judgment. He no longer would judge the people when He saw the sprinkled blood. It also looked at the removal of sin because sin was covered by the sprinkling of the blood. This word hilasterion then looks at God's propitiation, that is his satisfaction that His wrath against sin has been dealt with through the blood of Christ, and if we receive that by faith, our sins have been removed by His great sacrifice.

Finally, in the book of Acts chapter 17, we have an interesting passage where Paul is preaching on Mars hill. He uses a phrase and word that those listening would all be very familiar with. He talks to them as though they are feeling for the Lord; He is near to them but they have not quite touched Him. This same word is used in Homer when the Cyclops had Odysseus in a cave and he was ($\psi\eta\lambda\alpha\phi\acute{\alpha}\omega$, *pselaphao*) feeling after them but was not able to find them. Paul uses the same Greek word and Luke records it, when he says "you seek God that you might feel after Him and might find Him and He is not far from each one of you." That verse in Acts 17:27 is interesting when we look at Homer where the same verb ($\psi\eta\lambda\alpha\phi\acute{\alpha}\omega$, *pselaphao*) is used when the Cyclops who had been blinded in his eye by Odysseus was trying to feel to find Odysseus as he was trying to escape from the cave. Homer says, "he was feeling for Odysseus and the others

that he might find Odysseus,” but Odysseus was not far from him but was hiding under the belly of sheep that was to be led out of the cave and bring him into freedom from the Cyclops (Homer’s Odysseus) ². So, Paul’s use of this word would strike a connection with this Greek audience who was feeling after God but like the blind Cyclops was not able to find Him even though He is not far from each of them.

² Homer’s Odyssey, Book 9: 415-417

11 - Genesis 1 – 3 in the Ancient Near East

One of the great areas of interest when interpreting the book of Genesis is the Ancient Near East and the great account of the Babylonian story of creation called *Enuma Elish*. When we look at Genesis 1 we see a very sharp contrast between *Enuma Elish* and what the Holy Spirit revealed to Moses in Genesis chapter one. *Enuma Elish* pictures two waters coming together and gods being born. Apsu and Tiamat bring their waters together and after that process gods are born. What a difference between Genesis chapter one and *Enuma Elish* which speaks of a birthing or theogony of the Babylonian gods. The *Enuma Elish* poem reads:

- | | | |
|--------|---|--|
| Line 1 | - | <i>enûma eliš lā nabû šamamū</i>
“when above not named were the heavens” |
| Line 2 | - | <i>šapliš ammatum šuma la zakrat</i>
“below the earth by name was not called” |
| Line 3 | - | <i>apsuma reštû zarušun</i>
“only apsu the primeval their begetter” |
| Line 4 | - | <i>mummu tiamat muallidat gimrišun</i>
“and mother Tiamat the begetter of them all” |
| Line 5 | - | <i>mêšunu isteniš iḫiqûma</i> |

- “their waters together compressed”
- Line 6 - *gipara la kis[s[ura s[us[a la še’ u*
 “groves were not densely grown, cane bricks were
 not seen”
- Line 7 - *enuma ilū la šupû manama*
 “before any of the gods had come forth shining”
- Line 8 - *šuma la zukkuru šimatu la šīmu*
 “by name they were not called, not fixed their
 task”
- Line 9 - *ibbanuma ilū qiribšun*
 “then the gods were created in their midst”³

In Genesis 1 in contrast on the first day God as a sovereign King speaks and all things appear. There is no theogony or birthing of gods. Genesis 1 is a great statement of monotheism. When we read of day two and four, we have the Lord speaking to the waters and He says “let there be an expanse (רָקִיעַ, *raqi*) in the midst of the waters, and let there be a division between the waters to the waters. So the Lord God made the expanse and divided between the water which were from under it and between the waters which were above. And God called the expanse heaven and there was morning and there was evening day two.

³ Robert William Rogers Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament, p.3

On day 2, again we see the sharp contrast between Genesis and *Enuma Elish*. In *Enuma Elish*, after the gods were born, they became noisy. Then Apsu, the male father deity, was not able to get any rest during the day so he decided he would destroy the gods that he'd given birth to, but instead they actually destroyed him. His wife Tiamat became a raging deity. Marduk was chosen to struggle with Tiamat and actually this particular poem was recited as a celebration of Marduk's kingship on a yearly basis.

In tablet 4 line 102 it recounts how Marduk blows a wind into Tiamat and then released an arrow against her.

- Line 102 - *kirbiša ubattiqa ušallit[libba*
 “her insides it cut through, it split her heart”
- Line 137 - *iḥpišima kima nunu mašdie ana šinašu*
 “he split her as a shellfish into two parts”
- Line 138 - *mišlušša iškunamma šamama ušallil*
 “half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky” The text goes on to say he made her waters so they would not overflow and then set up anu, enlil, ea, nannaru (moon god) šamsû (sun god) in their stations and places.”⁴

In Genesis in days 2 and 4 of creation, the Lord creates the waters and tells them where to go. He doesn't have to struggle with them as in the Babylonian account.

Enuma Elish, is so much different from the Biblical account. Marduk has to

⁴ Rogers pp. 29-32

struggle and divide Tiamat in half and with half of her to make heaven and half of her to set up the moon and the sun god. In comparing these accounts we see that the beauty of the Genesis account of creation far exceeds that of the *Enuma Elish* account showing God as a king commanding the waters where to go and allowing the light holders (sun and moon) to lead the children of Israel to worship Him.

On day three, we are told in the Genesis account of creation, “Let the waters go to one place and let the land appear.” It is significant that the Lord causes dry land *yabashah* to appear and the same word is used in Exodus 14 when God brings Israel through the sea on dry land.

Going back to the Ancient Near East, in the Ugaritic poem of Baal text 4, note the difference in the Biblical account where God speaks and the waters obey Him. In the Ugaritic poem of Baal, Baal must constantly struggle with *yamm*, the Sea. For example it reads:

Line 19 - *šumka atta ayamur ayamur marā yamma marā yamma*
“your name you are driver, driver expel *yamm* expel the
sea *yamm*, the sea.”

Line 20 - *lakussihu nahar lakahti darkatihu*
“from his throne, *nahar* from the chair of his dominion”⁵

⁵ James B. Pritchard, The ancient near east, p. 96.

In Genesis Elohim alone is King over the Sea, not Baal. We are told that this struggle with Baal and the sea never ceases. When we look at the Hebrew bible we see that the Lord does not have to struggle with the sea. He just tells it where to go and it goes to the place where the seas belong. He is the king of the seas. In the beautiful New Testament record, we see Jesus speak to the sea and it obeys Him (Mk. 4: 35-41). Also Yahweh's power is seen in the storm (Ps 29) rather than Baal as in Ugaritic Literature. Yahweh alone is heard in the thunder and storm and all honor and praise is due Him.

On day four we have the creation of the sun and the moon or light holders which hold the light to lead to worship of the Lord. When we look at the Ancient Near East especially in the hymn to Šamaš in an Akkadian text it reads:

- Line 33 - *re ' u šaplāti naqīdu elāti*
 “shepherd of that beneath, keeper of that above”
- Line 34 - *muštešer nur kiššati samaš attama*
 “you direct šamaš, you are the light of everything”
- Line 4 - *mušahli ekliti*
 “who enlightens the darkness”
- Line 17 - *mušnamir pitû ekliti širrit šamami*
 “illuminator, dispeller of darkness of the vault of heaven”⁶

⁶ W. G. Lambert, Babylonian Wisdom Literature, pg. 128

In Genesis it is Elohim who allows the sun to expel darkness and become a sign for Israel's festive days of the year since the sun and moon are for seasons (מעדים) which is the same word for the yearly festivals of Leviticus 23. The sun and moon are Israel's servants showing the people the times for the worship of the Lord.

Further, in the Egyptian book of the dead we can read about the adoration of the sun:

Book of the Dead – Plate 1

deiva	Ra '	hefet	weben.f	em
“adoration	of ra ‘	when	he rises	in”
het	ebtet	ent	pet	
“(the)	eastern	of	heaven” ⁷	

In the book of the dead we have the same kind of worship of ra' as with the Babylonian shamshu (sun god) where in the book of Genesis, the sun is not to be worshipped; it is only a servant to lead the worshipper to the worship of the true and living Lord. It is exciting that in the New Jerusalem there will be not even be a need for the sun because the Lamb is there that provides the light for the New Jerusalem as seen in Revelation 20-21.

On day five we are told that God creates the different sea animals and the large sea creature; He provides a place for it to swim. It says, for example, “the Lord said, let the waters swarm with swarming creatures. Birds flying above the

⁷ Wallis Budge's The Book of the Dead, p. 1.

earth, upon the face of the expanse of the heavens. And then God created the great (tananim) the great sea monsters and every living soul that creeps according to their kind. And every bird according to their kind, and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1: 21). What a contrast between this and what we find in the Ancient Near East. If we go back to the Ugratic literature, the sea monster was constantly in conflict with Baal: Baal struggles with the sea dragon; Yahweh creates it and controls it.

a) *ktmḥs. lwytn btn brḥ*

kitimhas liwyātān baṭnu bāriaḥ

“(like) you smote the sea –dragon, the snake fleeing swift”

b) *tkly. bḥtn. qltn*

tikalliy. baṭna ‘aqallāton

“you destroy the snake crooked”

c) *šlyt. d. šb t. ra’ šm*

šallitu dā šab ‘at ra’ šim

“the powerful tyrant of seven heads”⁸

Also One sees God’s victory over the monster of many heads picturing Egypt in psalm 74: 13-14) and God’s victory as the Red sea. We see that the Lord does not struggle, but puts the sea monster, the large fish, in its proper place where it swims

⁸ Stanislav Segert, a Basic Grammar of the Ugaritic Language, p. 162

and is kept by His authority. Also, the Egyptian bull god apis was a reincarnation of Ptah; in Genesis God created all the domesticated animals such as the cow and bull – they are not to be worshipped as in Egyptian religion.

The last part of creation is the creation of man. Mankind is the epitome of God's creation and again what a contrast between the biblical account and the Ancient Near East. The Ancient Near East says that from the blood of kingu, the one who assisted Tiamat in her struggle with Marduk, that humankind was created. The Enuma Elish text is rendered: "blood I will amass and bones cause to be. I will establish a savage, man shall be his name. Savage man I will create that he shall be charged with the service of the gods that we might be at ease." The minor gods in the Babylonian account did not want to do unpleasant work, so mankind was created to do that work.

In Genesis, we are the epitome of God's creation; we are created to reflect the Creator and to subjugate the earth. We are under God as his viceroy. What a contrast between the Ancient Near East where we are an afterthought to do the work that the gods do not want to do. In the Biblical account, we are God's representatives, we are God's demutu or statue, in which we represent Him in this world. The Hebrew word demut is related to the Akkadian word demutu, a statue that was placed to represent a king. We are God's representatives; we are his demut (statues). In Genesis 1: 26 God says, "let us make man בְּדְמוּתֵנוּ (according

to our demutenū or according to our image). Another Ancient Near Eastern text that is interesting is in relationship to Genesis 3. It's called Adapa. In Adapa:

Ea Lies and tells Adapa not to eat or accept what the gods offer him. He obeys the god Ea and the gods laugh because he just lost immortality in obeying Ea's lie

The text reads:

Come now adapa! Why did you not eat and drink; you shall not have it (immortality)

Ah (perverse, mankind)

Ea, my master

Commanded me "you shall not eat and drink"

Take him away and return him to earth.⁹

Adapa is called before the gods and told not to eat or drink anything if it is offered. He obeys the god Ea when he rejects the food the gods offer him; they laugh at him and tell him that he is just lost immortality. It reads: "Come now Adapa, why did you not eat or drink? You shall not have eternal life. Take him away and return him to the earth."

In the Biblical account it is very different where Adam listened to the serpent rather than listening to the Lord when the Lord had said if you eat of the

⁹ Rogers, p. 76

tree of the knowledge of good and evil you will surely die. And that is exactly what happened. In the Adapa account, it is just the opposite; the god lied and said don't eat, but life would have been given had he eaten. We see in the Adapa account, mankind is basically manipulated by the gods so that man cannot obtain immortality. In the Biblical account we are made to be immortal and it was man's falling away from God's word that caused him to lose immortality. But, praise the Lord, in the second Adam, we were restored to an eternal relationship to God in Jesus Christ.

12 – Great Hymns of Jesus Christ in Revelation

The hymns of the book of Revelation are full of worship around Jesus Christ. The book of Revelation is often seen as a book about the anti-Christ and the number of the beast. Something that is often missed are the great hymns we can find in Revelation. The first hymn in Revelation 4 is a beautiful vision of God sitting on His throne surrounded by the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures crying out day and night, “holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, the One who was, the One who is, and the One who is to come (Rev. 4: 8). God’s name is praised in this hymn because He is holy, and because He is all powerful and eternal. These are the attributes that spark this praise.

Then in verse 11, the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the One who is sitting on the throne, casting their crowns down with the singing of a second hymn. “Worthy are you Lord our God to receive glory and honor and power because you have created all things, and on account of your will they have been created” (Rev. 4: 11). Here the focus is on the worship of God because He is the Creator.

In chapter five, the next hymn is sung as John sees a scroll and none are found worthy to open the scroll except One, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 5: 1-4). This is a fulfillment of Genesis 49: 9-10 where it says that Judah is a lion's whelp, and the scepter will not depart from Judah until Shiloh comes. Shiloh is pointing to Jesus meaning "whose right it is (to rule)." In Revelation 5:9, the elders and the four living creatures fall down before Christ and sing a new song. They say, "Worthy are you to receive the book and to open the seals of it because you were slain. You have redeemed to God out of your blood out of every tribe, and tongue and nation and you have made them to our God a kingdom of priests and they shall reign upon the earth (Rev. 5: 9-10)." So, in the third hymn they are singing to Jesus Christ because He is worthy to open the book of judgment because He was slain and now stands having conquered death.

Moving to the next hymn in Revelation 5:11-12 we see a great company of angels joining the twenty-four elders and the living creatures. Revelation 5:11-12 says, "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! (Rev. 5: 11)." Notice again, the Lamb that was slain,

which is Jesus, is worthy to receive all the power, glory, wealth, wisdom and blessing.

Finally, all creation joins in and they sing to the Father and to the Son. We read in Revelation 5:13: “then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!”

These great hymns as in Revelation 4 and 5 continue throughout the book of Revelation. For example in Revelation chapter 7:10-12, they who come out of great tribulation cried in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: “Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!” (Rev. 7: 12).

In Revelation 7: 14-17 the question is asked about those who stand before the throne in white robes “and it is said: “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again

will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Notice that this hymn anticipates Revelation 21: 4 where there will be no more tears or crying. The Lamb of God, Jesus Christ will become our eternal Shepherd leading, protecting and feeding us, wiping away all tears from our eyes.

As we conclude the seventh trumpet there are further hymns in Revelation 11:15 where we are told that “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11: 15) And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great — and for destroying those who destroy the earth” (Rev. 11: 17-18). Notice in this hymn we are looking at the end where people are brought before the Lord, it is time to raise the dead, and give judgment to His servants, prophets, saints and those who

fear God both great and small. Then it is also a time to judge and destroy those who destroy the earth.

These hymns continue throughout the book of Revelation until we come to Revelation 19 where we see the great hymn of the people of God worshiping in Heaven. In Revelation 19:1-3 it reads: “After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.” And again they shouted: “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever. Amen, Hallelujah!” There is singing because God will finally bring judgment on the world.

In Revelation 19:4-8 the hymns of praise continue: “Then a voice came from the throne, saying: ‘Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!’” Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: “Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. The linen represents the righteousness of the saints.” This hymn praises the Lord because He has now come to reign and

will be given glory and the marriage of the Lamb has come and the bride, the church, has prepared herself.

These are some of the great hymns that run through the book of Revelation. Having heard these hymns we can certainly join John in saying “Come” let everyone who hears, come. “Everyone who is thirsty, the one who wills let him take of the water of life freely.” John can only say, come Lord Jesus and invite all who will to receive Him.

I believe as we look at these great hymns that should be our cry as we worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the blessed triune God.

In the Jewish hermeneutical rules and especially the rules of the Rabbi Hillel, there were a number of rules that he set forth in interpreting a biblical passage or a series of biblical passages. One of the things he applied is called pearl stringing which can be illustrated as we think about stringing pearls to make a statement.¹⁰ We can see this if we look at what the apostle Paul does in Romans 3. After describing the sin of Jew and Gentile he then goes on in Romans 3:9 and following and brings to his audience a number of Scriptures of pearl stringing, as it were, to show the universality of sin according to the law. He says in Romans 3:9-18: “What therefore, are we better than them? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin.” Then he brings a pearl stringing of Scriptures by saying, “No one is good — not even one. No one has real understanding; no one is seeking God. All have turned away from God; all have gone wrong. No one does good, not even one. Their throats is an open tomb, with their lips they use deception. The poison of venomous serpents is under their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. They are quick to commit murder. Wherever they go, destruction and misery follow them. They do not know what true peace is. They have no fear of God to restrain them.”

Notice how Paul strings together a number of Scriptures to drive home the point of the universality of sin. He quotes from Psalm 14:1-3, 53: 1-3,

¹⁰ Richard N Longenecker, Studies in Hermeneutics: Christology and Discipleship, p. 58.

Ecclesiastics 7:20, Psalm 5:9, Psalm 140:3, Psalm 10:7, Isaiah 59:7-8, Proverbs 1:16, and Psalm 36:1. Here is a clear example of pearl stringing to drive home the fact from Scripture of the universal need of humankind for salvation.

Another rule of Hillel is that if you have the same word used in two different texts, you can bring them together to drive home a point.¹¹ Paul uses this in Romans 4: 3, around the word (logidsomai, to reckon). We see in verse 3, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned (logidsomai) to him for righteousness.” This quote in verse three is from Genesis 15:16. Then he quotes from David is Psalm 32:1-2 “Blessed are those whose iniquities have been forgiven, whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whom the Lord does not (logidsomai) does not reckon sin.” Here we have two passages using the word (logidsomai) and the apostle Paul drives home the argument that Abraham’s faith was reckoned for righteousness by his faith just like David after his sin with Bathsheba was reckoned righteous by the Lord in a way that he did not have the guilt of his sin to bare but that it had been forgiven. In this one word, Paul pulls together by Hillel’s rule the argument of how both Abraham and David by faith alone were accounted righteous by God’s grace.

¹¹ Herbert Bateman IV, Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1: 5-13, chapter 1.

Another rule of Hillel is called the light-heavy, qal vehomer, qal meaning light and homer meaning heavy.¹² We can see this in chapter 5 of Romans where Paul talks about how Jesus Christ has already done the harder work for us. How much more will God now keep us having done the harder work? Notice in Romans 5: 8, “But God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died on our behalf. Therefore, how much more having been justified now by his grace shall we be saved through Him from the wrath? Here in the rendering “How much more” is the the light-heavy. Furthermore in verse 10 Paul continues: “for if being enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son how much more (πολλῶ μᾶλλον) now having been reconciled shall we be saved in His life. In this text we see a hermeneutical methodology in which Paul following or applying such rules is doing a light-heavy, teaching us that the Lord Jesus Christ has already done the heavier work by justifying us by His blood and saving us from God’s wrath. If He did this while we were sinners, how much more, having been justified, will He save us now that we are in right relationship with Him. Paul repeats himself to drive home the truth that if “while we were enemies we were justified by the death of His Son, how much more now that we have been brought into a friendship with Him again, shall we be saved by His life” (Rom. 5: 10).

¹² Ibid.

The Lord Jesus also used this way of reasoning when He said, “If God so takes care of the lilies that are here today and tomorrow are cast into the oven, will He not much more (οὐ πολλοῦ μᾶλλον) take care of you, O you of little faith” (Matt. 6: 30). The light/heavy reasoning was a part of the hermeneutical rules of Rabbi Hillel that the Holy Spirit, through divine inspiration, allowed Paul to use to teach the glories of the righteous work of Jesus Christ on our behalf and our Lord to teach the significance that we have over lilies and how the Lord takes care of our every need.

14. Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd Predicted in Ezekiel 34

In the book of Ezekiel chapter 34, Ezekiel has the Lord speak against the false shepherds, the leaders who were to feed the sheep. He said “should not the shepherd feed the sheep” (Ezek. 34: 2)? He continues by talking about how these leaders had not fed the sheep and they have not cared for the sheep so they were driven and scattered and became food for the beasts of the field because there was no shepherd. The sheep became prey to the nations around them, spoken of as wild beasts. They did not search for the sheep but simply fed themselves (Ezek. 34: 5-6). Our Lord Jesus also speaks of this in John 10. He taught against the leaders of His day, who were hirelings and basically did not care for the sheep but fed themselves with what they could get out of the people.

Ezekiel continues in 34:11-12, “For thus says the Lord, behold here am I, I will search for my sheep and I will seek them out as a shepherd seeks out his flock separated in the day, so will I seek my sheep and I will deliver them wherever they have been scattered (Ezek. 34: 11-12). A beautiful application is made by our Lord Jesus Christ who seeks the lost sheep to bring them back to the fold.

Ezekiel goes on to say in Ezekiel 34:12-16: “And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.” This very language is used by our Lord in John 10: 9 when he promises to feed His sheep, when He says: “through me if anyone enter, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture.”

Ezekiel goes on to say, “The Lord God says, I will judge between the fat cattle and the lean cattle because you thrust and push all weak with your horns therefore will I save the flock and they shall no more be a prey, and I will set up one Shepherd over them” (Ezek. 34: 23). These words I believe look predictably at our Lord Jesus and understand that this was in the mind of our Lord in John 10 is this great passage, that He is the One Shepherd over the flock. We see David as a type of Christ. “He shall feed them and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God and my servant David, will be prince among them. I the

Lord have spoken. I will make a covenant of peace and place round about them a blessing and I will cause the showers to come down in season, and there shall be showers of blessing” (Ezek. 34: 23-26). This reference to David is a type of Christ and points to Jesus Christ as the final David. In John 10, He is the One who has blessed the people as the great shepherd and gave His own life for the sheep. Ezekiel goes on to say, “You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture and I am your God” (Ezek. 34: 31), again fulfilled ultimately in Christ.

One of the beautiful things in Ezekiel 34 is that we have a depiction of the Good Shepherd in our Lord Jesus Christ in John 10 who seeks His sheep wherever they are and even gives His life for the sheep, unlike the hirelings who seek to save their life at the expense of the sheep. Jesus takes the sheep, calling each of them by name and takes them out to the pasture (Jn. 10: 1-17).

There is also an allusion in Ezekiel 34 between the sheep and the goats. Ezekiel writes: “as for you oh my flock behold I will judge between the cattle and cattle, even among the rams and the he goats. Does it seem a small thing to you that you feed upon the good pasture but that you trod down with your feet the rest of your pasture and drink the settled waters, but you must foul the rest with your feet” (Ezek. 34: 17-20). It appears there is a reference here of God’s judgment between the rams and the goats. Jesus makes a reference to this in Matthew 25: 31-46 when He says, “I was hungry and you did not feed me and I was thirsty and

you did not give me drink” (Matt. 25: 42). He likens the sheep with the ones who feed and care for God’s messengers and the goats being those who will not care for the messengers of God. At the final judgment there will be that final separation of the sheep and goats, non-believers from believers.

So this great text of Ezekiel 34 finds it’s fulfillment in John 10 in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, as well as in the judgment scene described in Matthew 25 when there will be a distinction made between those who treated His messengers well and those who abused and rejected their message.

15 – Jesus was cut off from the Land of the Living

In Isaiah 53: 8 it reads: “He was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the blow was due.” I believe this text speaks of Jesus Christ the suffering servant seen through the lenses of Acts 8: 26-35 and I Peter 2: 18-26. The verb נִגְזַר (nigzar) “He was cut off” comes from the root גָּזַר (gazar) to cut off. The same root is used in Leviticus 16: 22 on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16 is clearly applied to Jesus Christ by the writer of Hebrew in chapters 9 and 10.

In Leviticus 16, on the Day of atonement there are two goats. The first goat was killed and its blood was sprinkled in the Holy of Holies representing atonement of satisfaction or propitiation for the sins of the people. The second goat had the hands of the priest laid on it and it was led out to a גֵּזֵרָה (gezerah) place, or cut off place. Here we find the same root גָּזַר (gazar) used as an adjective in Leviticus 16: 27 representing the place where the second goat was taken.

I believe Isaiah's writing of the suffering of Jesus Christ sees the two goats of the Day of Atonement in Isaiah 53. The first goat is put to death as Isaiah writes: "All of us goes astray, each to his own way and the Lord caused to land upon Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53: 5-6). He was pierced for our transgression He was crushed for our iniquities. This is a picture of the first goat becoming our propitiation or our satisfaction. The second goat is represented by the verb נִגְזַר (nigzar) in Isaiah 53: 8 paralleling גְזֵרָה (gezerah) in Leviticus 16: 22 meaning "a cut of land." Jesus was crucified outside of the camp and like the second goat after accomplishing our propitiation, He then carried our sins away becoming our expiation or the one who carried our sins away forever. It is significant that the root גִזַר is closely tied together in these two texts showing the removal of our sins illustrated by the second goat and applied by Isaiah in Isaiah 53: 8 after he speaks of the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ as a propitiation seen in the first goat of the Day of Atonement. In Isaiah 53 Jesus Christ fulfills the type of both goats in propitiation and expiation concerning sin.

16 - Jew and Gentile in Christ – The Same Body

One of the great texts of the New Testament is the book of Ephesians chapter 3. In it, Paul is showing the unity between Jew and Gentile, now that we have become one through faith in Christ. There is an interesting word that Paul uses in Ephesians 3:6 to describe the oneness. He talks about how in the Old Testament there had not been a revelation that has now been revealed, that is, the mystery that the Gentiles in the Body of Christ would be one with the Jewish believers in Christ. That is because of Christ. He writes in this way, saying in verse 5; “Which in other generations was not revealed to the sons of men as now it has been revealed to His holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs and of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel” (Eph. 3: 5-6). One of the unique words used here is *σύσσωμα* (sussoma) and it literally means, “of the same body.” What was amazing to me is that this is the only place, to my knowledge, that this word occurs in the New Testament. It is as if Paul has used or created a unique word. I do not

believe he uses it anywhere else to describe the unity of Jew and Gentile. When you think of the word, “being of the same body”, what a revolutionary statement Paul is making. Not only are we fellow heirs, not only are we partakers together, we are *σύσσωμα* (sussoma), we are of the same body together with Jewish believers who put their faith in Jesus Christ. There is no longer any one greater than the other, or a barrier of separation, but we are one body together, Jew and Gentile who are part of the body of Christ, through faith in Jesus Christ who has broken down the middle wall of partition.

17- King of All Kings

As one reads in some of the ancient Sumerian Babylonian cuneiform texts, we find great boasts of kings. In two texts, Hammurabi boasts about his greatness.

In a Sumerian text it reads as follows:

Line 1 *ka²-dingir-ra (ki) mu-bi hu-mu-ni-mah*

Babylon its name, I have exalted.

Line 2 *an-ub-da-limmu-ba he-ne-diri (g)*

The four regions I have magnified.

Line 3 *ni²-me-lam²-nam-lugal-la-mu*

The fear of the splendor of my royalty.

Line 4 *zag-an-ki-ge he-en-dul*

The confines of heaven and earth has covered.

Line 5 *hur-šu²-am²dingir-gal-gal-e-ne sig⁴-ga-ne-ne-a-hu-mu-ši-in-
bar-ri-eš*

Upon this the great gods with their favor have looked.¹³

(Delitzsch, *Beitrage zur assyriologie*, Vol 1, pp. 305, 307).

The boast that Hammurabi makes about the fear of his splendor covering the confines of heaven and earth is also in the epilogue also Hammurabi's code.

šarrum ša in šarrī šuturu anaku

The king who is among kings is great I am

awatūya nasqā leūtī šaninam ul išu

My words are choice, my ability has no rival.¹⁴

Hammurabi's Code Epilogue 79-83

One of the things that impresses me is the boastfulness of these kings. Hammurabi later says that he is "like a real father to the people." He speaks as a father to his people.

With this great boasting of worldwide dominion and power, my mind goes to the Psalmist in Psalm chapter 2. The Psalm says that the kingdom of Messiah would be an eternal kingdom and one that will be worldwide. The king of Israel in quoting Yahweh says: "ask of me and I will give the nations for your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possessions" (Ps. 2: 8). No Israel king ever fully fulfilled that except the Lord Jesus Christ. We are told that the Lord will have a kingdom that will know no end and it will be worldwide. In Revelation chapter 11, we read that "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Christ and He shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 11: 15)."

¹³ L. W. King, *Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi*, Vol. 2, pp. 207ff

¹⁴ Ibid

He is the true father, found in Isaiah 9: 5 as אֱבִי־עַד ; He is the eternal father. He is also the one who brings council and justice (line 77). Hammurabi also boasts that he is the one who brings about the ideal justice. It is Jesus Christ who is the wonderful counselor the eternal God and everlasting Father. He brings perfect justice as the final reigning Messiah and provides a way for our acquittal through our faith in Him before the heavenly Father, bringing peace to our hearts and becoming our eternal king.

Hammurabi boasted that he was king of kings among whom there is no equal, but I think about Revelation 19: 16 that tells us that when Jesus Christ returns he is called “the King of Kings and Lord of all Lords.” May we bow before our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ as the King whose kingdom will cover the world. May we worship Him as our ultimate sovereign King among all Kings in whom there is no equal for He is the highest of all the kings of the earth. Isaiah 52: 15 tells us that “all the kings of the earth will shut their mouths at Him for that which will be declared to them, they will see.” We are also told in Philippians 2 that, “every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2: 10-11).” May we worship Him as our Savior and King and final judge and know that He is the King of all Kings.

18. Man the Image of a Speaking Being

In the book of Genesis 2:7 it reads and the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath life and man became נִפְשׁ הַיָּה, “a living soul.” Here we see the breath of God breathed uniquely into man and for that reason man became “a living soul.” In Targum Onkelos, which is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible, the translation of the Hebrew is rendered “and man became a רִיחַ מְלָא “a speaking spirit.”¹⁵ This is significant in its interpretation because animals are not able to speak to God but man is able to speak to God in worship, praise and adoration. One of the great texts here in the Aramaic Targum teaches us that at creation God created us as a speaking being that is able to communicate with Him. Let us spend our days in worship and adoration, speaking in prayer and praise to the Lord who has created us as a living and hence a speaking being.

¹⁵ Moses aberbach, Targum Onkelos to Genesis, p. 29.

19 – N. T. Application of 18 Benedictions

The eighteen benedictions or the shemoneh esrei was a prayer that was prayed in BC times in Judaism. According to Alfred Edersheim the first 3 and the last 3 benedictions were prayed in the 1st century (Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, pp. 265-280). There is some debate about what happened in between. There were 18 benedictions in which God's name was being blessed. If Jesus prayed the first 3 and the last 3 which according to Edersheim can be fairly well established, it is significant that this points to Him as the fulfillment of these benedictions.

In the first prayer of benediction we find the Lord being the shield of Abraham who would bring a redeemer.¹⁶ He is the Lord God who brings a redeemer, a **לְיָגֵל**, to the sons of their sons in love. When I read the New Testament we can see that Jesus Christ is the redeemer who has come. In Ephesians we are told that we have redemption in His blood (Eph. 1: 7).

In the second prayer of blessing, God is being blessed because He is the One who remembers and raises the dead. We are told in the last portion of the prayer blessed are you who gives life to the dead.¹⁷ In John 5, we read that Jesus could say that all that are in the tombs will hear the voice of the son of God, and will live. All of those who have done good unto a resurrection of life and those who have

¹⁶ Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 273.

¹⁷ Ibid.

done evil to a resurrection judgment (Jn. 5: 25-29).” Those who are saved by faith in Christ will evidence proper good works testifying to the validity of saving faith in Christ. Jesus also said: “I am the resurrection and the life, the one who believes in Me though he die yet shall he live” (Jn. 11: 25). Those who believe in Jesus shall never die (vs. 26). Jesus claimed to be the resurrection and the life as the One who would remember the dead and those who had faith in him would be raised in the final day.

In the third blessing “Blessed are you oh God the holy God.”¹⁸ We see in the New Testament where Jesus is called the holy One of God. We can see how these three prayers prayed in BC times, have their fulfillment in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the last three, we can again see a great fulfillment in Jesus Christ. For example there is a prayer for the restoration of the temple and the temple sacrifices in the seventeenth benediction and for His presence in Zion. “Blessed are you Oh Lord God who restores His presence to Zion.”¹⁹ In John 1:14 we are told that the Word became flesh and had his dwelling among us. In Revelation 21 and 22 we are told that the Lamb will dwell in the midst of his people in that eternal Zion that is to come.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 273

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 274

In the last benediction He blesses His people with peace.²⁰ It is interesting that Jesus Christ came and brought peace, as in Ephesians 2, bringing Jew and Gentile together and making them one and through His sacrifice He brings eternal peace.

We can see that Jesus would have prayed some of these great blessings and He brought about their fulfillment in Himself. He has fulfilled them in His coming, His ministry and in His second coming when He will raise the dead and remember those who have died and bring peace to those who have faith in Him.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 275

20 – No Time to Retire

One of the most important things the believer needs to realize is that there is never a time to retire from the Lord's work. In II Corinthians 4: 16, Paul says "although our outer man is perishing, our inner man is being renewed day by day". Paul could say that his desire as he continued advancing in age was to know the Lord and the power of His resurrection (Phil. 3: 10). In 11 Timothy 4: 7 Paul could say, I have finished the course; all of his life he had pressed on. I think of Anna and Simeon who waited for the appearance of Jesus Christ, prophesying and ministering even though they were up in years (Lk. 2: 25-38). Since the soul never grows old it is the soul that is being continually renewed.

As we think about this there are some classic sources that reiterate this to encourage us. A passage in Pirke Abot a tractate from the Mishnah in chapter 5:26 quoting Ben Bag Bag says, "delve into it, turn it over, turn it over. Continue to delve into the Torah for everything is in it. Look deeply into it, grow old and grey over it and do not stir from it for you have no better portion than it."²¹ I believe that one of the most important things is that we as believers in Christ continue in the Word of God learning and growing in Jesus Christ the whole of our lives, no matter what age we might be.

²¹ Mishnah, Pirke abot 5. 26

In Cicero's work de senectute, Cicero speaks on the subject of old age. He has some wonderful things to say that we Christians can read for encouragement. He writes that, "the old age of a life spent peacefully and in chastity and in refinement is calm and quiet. We have heard of Plato who died writing in his 81st year. Also Isocratis who says that he wrote the book Panathenaicus in his 94th year and lived for an additional five years. His master, George of Leontinus completed 107 years and never ceased in his pursuits and work."²² (de senectute V, 13). For example in another quote, "rashness belongs to the flower of life but wisdom to old age (VI, 20)."²³ We can also look again at Sophocles who was taken to court on grounds that he was senile, and he had a copy of a play which he had written and recited to the court Aedipum Coloneum and then asked if the poem seemed to be the work of an imbecile, which brought his acquittal from the court (VII, 22). "Did old age compel him or Homer, Hesiodum, Simonidem, Stesichorum, Isocratem, Gorgiam, or the chief philosophers Pythagoram, Democritum, or Plato, or Xenocratem, etc. to be dumb in their pursuits (VII, 23)."²⁴ Cicero continues driving home the great reality that there is never a time to stop. He talks about Salome as boasting in verse, saying in verse that he becomes old learning something additional

²² Cicero, de senectute 5. 13

²³ Ibid, 6. 20

²⁴ Ibid, 7.22-23

every day (VIII, 26).²⁵ Even Cicero says “and I did also who learned Greek in my old age which indeed I took up as eagerly as if wishing to slake a long continued thirst so that those very points might be known by me which you now see me using as examples.” (VIII, 26).²⁶

I believe as we look at a person like Cicero or in quoting the Pirke Abot that there is never a time to retire from serving the Lord. It should be one of the passions in life to continue throughout life, in the work of Christ. Cicero also says “nor indeed must we aid our body alone but our mind and spirit far more for these also become extinguished by old age unless you pour oil, as it were into the lamp” (XI, 36).²⁷ We pour oil by meditating, studying, and growing continually in the things of the Lord. Finally, Cicero concludes, he grows old adding many things to his knowledge every day (XIV, 49).²⁸ And this pleasure of mind, there can surely be none greater. I can say that as a believer in Jesus Christ that there is no greater pleasure than to continue to add to our knowledge from Scripture concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul said “even though the outward man may grow old, the inner man is being renewed day by day” (II Cor. 4: 16). As he said to Timothy keep on in the word of God Timothy, and pursue it as I have done and finish the course as I have finished the course (II Tim. 3: 14- 4: 6). Hence, let us follow the

²⁵ Ibid, 7. 26

²⁶ Ibid, 7. 26

²⁷ Ibid, 11. 36

²⁸ Ibid, 14. 49

example of these and especially those in Scripture who have pursued Jesus Christ, and to them there was absolutely no thought of retiring.

21 – Paradise in Rabbinic Interpretation

A use of Jewish Hermeneutic, found in the New Testament can be explained by the acronym paradise. The P standing for Peshat, the R stands for Remes the D stands for Darash and the S for Sod. When all of these are working together the Rabbis said we have a garden, which is the meaning of the word for paradise. Peshat means a blow. It is the normal literal interpretation of Scripture. An example can be found in Matthew 22, where the Lord said, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” The Peshat would simply mean that when God spoke these words to Moses, He was simply saying I am the same God that ministered in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, our Lord, I believe gives it the meaning of Remes or a hint. The Rabbi said that if the scripture hints at something you can make an application. I believe that this is what the Lord is doing in Matthew 22: 29 ff when He tells the Sadducees that they err in not knowing the scriptures. How do they err? The text says in Exodus 3: 6 I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; it does not say I was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Thus the remes or hint implies that they are still somewhere around awaiting a resurrection.

Another example could be in the word seed, *σπέρμα*. In Galatians 3: 16 Paul makes the statement, “not to seeds (plural) as in many, but to your seed (singular), which is one seed in whom God would bless all people. That singularity points to Jesus Christ. This is another example of remes because the word seed in Hebrew is always in the singular. But Paul draws a hint from that the singularity of that word, and points to the One who is going to bless all nations and that is Jesus Christ.

Then there is the word darash which means commentary. The Rabbi beautifully applied this in Pirke Abot or in the sayings of the fathers. They said “you are to always keep in the Torah. “When you walk on the way; when you lay down, and when you arise.” Now historically this is from the shema in Deuteronomy 6. It is telling parents to teach the Torah when they are walking along the road, or sitting or lying down in the house or when they arise the next day, they are to continually teach their children by rehearsing it into their hearing.

This idea is now applied by the Rabbis to the Torah in this sense; you are to constantly be in the Torah “when you walk,” that is, through life because the Torah will accompany you. When you “lay down” in the grave the Torah will be with you and speak to you in the grave. And “when you arise” in the resurrection, the

Torah will still be communing with you. This is why you must to be constantly studying the Torah. ²⁹

Paul uses darash or commentary when he speaks of Christ and says that Moses is writing about the righteousness which is of the law and that Jesus Christ completes the law resulting in righteousness for all who believe in Romans 10:4. He goes on to say that Moses is talking about a law kind of righteousness when he says that “the one who does these things shall live in them” (Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10: 5). This speaks to the fact that the law has to do more with deeds than anything else. He goes on to say “but the righteousness of faith thus says, do not say in your heart who will ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down, or who will descend into the abyss, that is to bring Christ up from the dead, but what does it say: The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (Rom. 10: 6-8). Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 30:12-14 here. This passage historically has to do with the words of Moses after he had spoken the law to that younger generation about to enter the promised land. He was saying that you no longer had to cross the sea to get the Torah, you don’t have to go to heaven to get it, I’ve just given it to you. It’s in your mouth, heart, on the tip of your tongue, so just do it now.

Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30: 12-14 but now applies it to the final fulfillment of the law in Jesus Christ. Paul says, “you do not have to go to heaven”

²⁹ Mishnah, Pirke abot, 6. 9

to bring Christ down, that is the commentary, because He has already come from heaven in the incarnation. He also says “you do not need to descend into the abyss (this is probably a reference to Targum Neofeti an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew of Deuteronomy, applied to a descent into the abyss that Paul applies to the descent of Christ into the grave). We don’t have to say, who will descend into the abyss that is to bring Christ up from the dead, and Paul applies these words to the resurrection.

But Paul continues: “What does the scripture say? The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart.” Now the darash or commentary is that the word that is near you is the word of faith which we are preaching, the message that brings salvation but is received through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He goes on to say that “if you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead you shall be saved. With the heart one believes in righteousness and with the mouth one confesses unto salvation” (Rom. 10: 9-10). Notice the commentary, the word of faith is now the gospel that the apostles are preaching, not the words of Moses. The mouth and heart applied here has to do with what one should confess and that is that one would confess the Lordship or divinity of Jesus. The commentary of the heart is applied to one who believes that God has raised Christ from the dead and that will bring salvation, for with the heart one believes resulting in righteousness, and with

the mouth confession is made to salvation. So, in darash or commentary one is not trying to take a literal or peshat interpretation but rather draw an analogy and like nails try to nail down an argument. The Apostle Paul, through divine inspiration is using commentary here to show the fulfillment of the law in Jesus Christ and the necessity of believing and confessing Him for salvation.

We see this commentary usage in the book of Galatians chapter 3 and in the book of Hebrews. In Galatians Paul is setting forth the distinction of the law against faith in Jesus Christ. After telling us that God promised that He would bless all nations in Abraham, we pick up the argument in Galatians 3: 9- 10 that “they out of faith are being blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are out of the works of the law, these are under the curse as it is written.” Notice Paul quotes in verse 10 from the Torah concerning the shame and the curse of being hung on a tree. One would be hung on a tree as symbol of shame; so cursed is not only everyone who would hang upon a tree but cursed is everyone who does not abide in the book of the law to do it all? We see these quotes from the Torah, one in Deuteronomy in 27: 26 saying you are cursed if you do not keep all of the law. And then in Deuteronomy 21: 23, we read that one is cursed who is hung on a tree as a symbol of one under a dire curse. Then Paul says the law is not able to justify anyone because it says “that the just shall live by faith in Habakkuk 2: 4 and further, “law is not of faith but the one who does these things shall live in them,”

(Gal. 3) Paul writes quoting from Leviticus 18: 5, Galatians 4: 11-12. So the way the commentary is developed is by taking these texts about being cursed, and Paul then applies these words to Jesus Christ. In other words, the law only brings a curse if one does not do everything in the law. One is not able to find life in the law because the law has to do with deeds and the law brings a curse for all who disobey it. The good news is that the curse of the law was born for us when Jesus hung upon a tree and bore that curse in order that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles by faith in Jesus Christ. Also the promise of the Spirit would come by faith, not works. So here again is an example of Jewish darash or commentary, blending texts together to show how Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law which was based on deeds over against faith which is based on the One who bore the curse for us in Jesus Christ.

Another example of darash, or commentary can be found in Hebrews 10: 5-10. After describing how the blood of bull and goats can never take away sin, the writer of Hebrew quotes from Psalm 40: 6-8 and he says, “Wherefore you take no delight in sacrifices or offerings. But a body you have prepared for me; whole burnt offerings and offerings concerning sin you have not desired. Then I said, behold I have come in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me to do your will oh God” (Heb. 10: 5-7). The writer of Hebrews continues: sacrifices and offerings are according to the law, then he said, behold I have come to do your

will. He is taking away the first that he might establish the second by which will we have been sanctified in the offering of the body of Christ, once for all (Heb. 10: 8-10).

This text in Psalm 40 and in its context is referring to a deliverance that has been given to the Psalmist. The Psalmist is saying to the Lord, You don't want mere sacrifice, you want me. In the Hebrew it reads, "my ears you have pierced." You have opened my hearing and I want to respond so I am going to give myself to you. I have come to do your will oh God, so it's not religious ritual the Lord wants, but a dedicated heart and soul. That's the peshat or the literal meaning of Psalm 40. The writer of Hebrew applies this by way of darash commentary to what now has become a religious ritual that has no meaning, that is the temple sacrificial system because Jesus Christ has replaced it by His final sacrifice. He quotes this text and says, that Jesus by coming into the world has said, you don't want mere sacrifice and offerings, but a body you have prepared for me. The writer of Hebrew then quotes from the Septuagint which is a translation of the Hebrew, "my ears you have pierced." The Septuagint translators rendered these words as "a body you have prepared for me" and the writer of Hebrews applies it to Jesus Christ as the prepared body in the incarnation. The sacrificial system has been replaced by the new covenant. Jesus Christ comes into the world to do the will of the Father and take away the first, that is the sacrificial system, and establish the second this is the

new covenant the writer of Hebrews speaks about of Jeremiah 31. By the will of Christ coming into the world we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all. This text is a beautiful use of darash or commentary applied to the incarnation and sacrificial work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The prior sacrificial system was always just a shadow pointing to the reality of Christ who has beautifully fulfilled that shadow. Going back to the sacrificial system in the temple is returning to a religious ritual that is without meaning and not something that God wants to be done, but to go forward with the final sacrifice that Jesus Christ accomplished and who has become our living high priest having offered one sacrifice forever, and is seated at the right hand of God.

The final point of hermeneutical use seen in the acronym paradise is the word sod which is the word for mystery. I believe Paul makes use of sod in Ephesians 5: 21-33, when speaking of Christ and the church in the marriage illustration. He first talks about husbands and wives and how a husband is to love his wife as he loves his own body. “On this account a man shall leave his father and mother and joined with his wife and they two shall become one flesh” (Eph. 5: 31). Here Paul is showing the oneness of marriage where a husband is to nourish his wife and care for her. Paul concludes after quoting from Genesis 2: 24 here that this is a great mystery. He says that I am speaking concerning Christ and the church. He uses the word **μυστήριον** in Greek which I believe goes back to the

Hebrew idea of sod meaning that there is mystery and shows is a deeper meaning more than just husbands and wives; the deeper meaning points to Christ and the church. As a godly marriage is lived it becomes a way of testifying to the relationship of Jesus Christ and the church.

Paul also makes a similar use of sod in 1 Corinthians 10, I believe, when he talks about Jesus Christ as the rock that followed the children of Israel in the desert. It was a spiritual rock that followed them giving them spiritual drink and in fact it was Jesus Christ (I Cor. 10: 4). Paul sees more than just water given to the children of Israel by God. He saw Jesus Christ as the final and ultimate rock and the one who provided the water to the children of Israel and who provides the water of life and as John says that “out of one’s belly will flow a river of water” because Christ is the One who gives eternal life, and out of His work the Holy Spirit creates these rivers of water in the soul of a believer depicting life everlasting.

It is significant when we put the word paradise together we have an acronym where we see the literal meaning of a text in the Peshat with Remes as the hint, the Darash, as commentary, and the Sod as the mystical. We thus end up with a beautiful interpretive garden. So it is as we look at the New Testament writings, the apostle Paul and our Lord used all of these methods in order to show us the

beautiful garden of understanding that points to Jesus Christ who brings his fruit and fragrances into our hearts as we meditate on the Word of God.

22 – Putting on the Eye Glasses of the Scriptures

When we compare natural revelation and special revelation Natural Revelation is like being near-sighted, looking at something in the distance and not seeing it clearly. By putting on spectacles, or glasses, one is able to see clearly. It was this illustration that Calvin beautifully used in speaking of Scripture bringing to us a very clear revelation of what nature shows us in more of a blurred way but not with the clarity that Scripture brings. He wrote these words in his *Institutes*, in the first book in chapter 6, in paragraph 1:

*Nempe sicuti senes, vel lippi, et quicumque oculis caligant, si vel pulcherrimum volumen illis objicias, quamvis agnoscant esse aliquid scriptum, vix tamen duas voces contexere poterunt, specillis autem interpositis adjuti distincte legere incipient: ita scriptura confusam alioqui Dei notitiam in mentibus nostris colligens, discussa caligine liquido nobis verum Deum ostendit.*³⁰

“For as persons who are older, and whose eyes have become dim, even if you show them the most beautiful book, though they perceive something written, they can scarcely read two words together. Yet, by the help of spectacles, they will begin to read clearly. So, the Scriptures collecting in our minds, the otherwise very confused ideas of God dispel the darkness and give us a clear view of the true God.”

Scripture opens up to us things that natural revelation cannot reveal. In nature, we see the power of God. We can see He is omnipotence. However, what we cannot

³⁰ Joannis Calvini, *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, Book chapter 6. 1

see in nature is the Trinity or the plan of salvation, or the great work that Christ accomplishes for us as believers. That is why the Scripture is God-breathed. It is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly equipped for every good work (II Tim. 3: 16-17). It is absolutely essential that we have Scripture as the glasses, so to speak, that take our near-sightedness that give us 20/20 vision in terms of the Lord's great program of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ.

23 – Regaining Our Soul

As we look at Genesis 1: 1 to 2: 4, the end of creation week, it is the Sabbath. It is on that day that the Lord rested from all of his work. This is like a climax, encouraging the Israelites to rest on that seventh day, recognizing Elohim, as their Creator. It is significant that in the New Testament, we keep the first day after Sabbath, as Christians, because we believe a new creation was brought into being in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Acts 20: 7, for example, they met and broke bread on the first day of the week. That becomes the new day of celebration of the new creation in the resurrection. I do believe, however, in the seven day cycle that one day in seven ought to be a day of rest. It does not, necessarily, have to be the sixth day, it could be on a Monday or Wednesday, but there should be a day when we simply rest.

The word Shabbat שַׁבָּת means to cease and it had to do with the Lord ceasing His work of creation. Likewise, we are to cease for one day, our ordinary work, in order to recapture our strength again. I believe it is built into the cycle of life, the cycle of every week. It is interesting in Exodus chapter 31 that in speaking of the Sabbath in verse 17 it reads: “That it shall be a sign between me and the children of Israel forever. For in six days, the Lord made the heaven and the earth and on the seventh day He rested.” The Hebrew word he rested reads וַיִּנְפֹשׁ, literally, “and He was re-souled” from the word נֶפֶשׁ meaning “soul” and the verb

meaning “to regain one’s soul.” We might even say that God got his soul back or got His breath back, idiomatically speaking. It is significant because many have said, including the Rabbis, that if God metaphorically speaking had to get his soul back on the Sabbath, how much more do we need to have one day in seven. I believe the idea of a sabbath can be like an oasis in time. The business of this world can make one feel like being in a desert and one needs an oasis, where one can go and rest for one day.

As we look at this great truth, we then see a further explication of the Sabbath in Hebrews chapter four in which the writer applies it spiritually to the finished work of Christ and is encouraging his readers to enter into that Sabbath, ceasing from one’s own works and resting in His finished work. We are to rest in Christ and what He has accomplished for us. The writer of Hebrews says this in verse 9 and following, “Therefore, there remains a Sabbath for the people of God and the one that has entered into his rest, even as he has ceased from his works, we must cease from our works. Therefore, let us be diligent to enter into that rest.” The writer of Hebrews is encouraging his readers to enter into the finished work of Christ and not return to any legalistic type of works but rest in His completed sacrifice and work. I believe today that we need to enter into that spiritual rest as well, as regaining our souls weekly. One day in seven we need to be re-souled, so –

to-speak, and go on in serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ resting also in His finished work for our salvation.

24 – Septuagint and its Importance in Understanding the New Testament

A great source in understanding New Testament is the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures around 200 BC. It is important to read the Septuagint along with the Hebrew Bible because it opens up many avenues of deeper understanding. A few examples can be seen in Psalm 40 where the Psalmist speaks about a great deliverance that happened in his life. In the Psalm he tells the Lord that what He really wants in His heart is not simply religious worship. He says, “sacrifice and offerings you have not desired but my ears you have pierced, whole burnt offerings and offerings for sin you have not asked for. Then I said I have come, in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me to do Your will Oh God is my delight and Your Torah is in the midst of my inner being” (Ps. 40: 7-9). What this is saying is that you have opened my ears to hearing your word and I have come to do what the Torah says and that is to love the Lord with all my heart, soul and mind and to fulfill it.

Another possibility from the Hebrew is that of a slave in Exodus 21: 6 who would have an awl pierce his ear, making himself a perpetual slave to his master. We can have either thought here, but we are looking at God wanting the Psalmist to serve Him as Master and to open his ears to love and obey Him and the Psalmist says that he has come to do that.

The Septuagint is interesting here because it is quoted in Hebrews 10:5. It is in the context where the writer of Hebrews is setting forth the coming of Jesus Christ to do away with the sacrificial system, once for all. “Wherefore, coming into the world he (that is Christ) said, “You did not want animal sacrifices and grain offerings. But you have given me a body so that I may obey you.” The Septuagint took the phrase “my ears you have pierced” and rendered it as “a body you have prepared for me.” My understanding of the Septuagint here is that it is probably giving a translation more in a dynamic sense that if your ears are open, you will give your body to serve the Lord. The writer of Hebrews applies this translation to the body of Christ who has come to replace all the bodies of animals that were being offered in a sacrificial way because now, He, by bringing His body has done away once for all with the sacrificial system. The writer develops this understanding when he quotes, “sacrifice and offerings you have not desired but a body you have prepared for me, whole burnt offering and offerings concerning sin you have not desired, which are offered according to the Law. Then I said behold I have come in the scroll of the book it is written concerning Me to do your will Oh God. When he says above sacrifice and offering concerning sin you have not asked for which are being offered according to the law is now done away with because of the sacrifice of Christ. He continues, “behold I have come to do Your will,” speaking of Christ’s coming in His incarnation to carry out the will of the

Father. The writer of Hebrews interprets this in that Christ is taking away the first system that He might establish the second. Or, He is taking away the sacrificial system which is the first so He might establish the second which is His own sacrifice that He has offered, whereby He takes away permanently the sacrificial system. The writer of Hebrews goes onto say: “by which will, we have been set apart through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.” This is a beautiful text translated from Hebrew showing the body of Christ sacrificing Himself for sin, once for all. We can see how the Septuagint is so important in understanding this interpretation by its use of “body” in the translation.

Another example is found in John. When we look at Isaiah 52:13 it reads: “behold my servant shall prosper, He shall be raised, he shall be lifted up and he shall be exceedingly high.” There are three verbs in Hebrew that I believe look at the resurrection of Christ, His ascension, and His sitting at the right hand of the Father. Or, it could be a cluster of verbs simply looking at His glorification. In the Septuagint, there are two verbs used to describe the three verbs in Hebrew. They are: ὑψωθήσεται He shall be raised, and δοξασθήσεται, He shall be glorified. In John’s gospel, Jesus is recorded as saying, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man ὑψωθῆσαι (Jn. 3: 14) be raised. The word ὑψώω is the same word used in Isaiah 52: 13 in the Septuagint. It is my understanding the Christ having used the same verb and the writer of John who

also used this verb is pointing back to the suffering servant who is to be raised up in the resurrection and in glorification as well as on the cross. There is a double meaning. The cross becomes the route to glory. We are also told that Jesus Christ says, “If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me” (Jn. 12: 32). Jesus Christ is speaking about His crucifixion and ascension and the fact that when that happened, all people, Jew and Gentile will be drawn to Him. The use of the verb ὑψόω seen in John 12: 32 describes the cross and ascension of Jesus Christ.

The word δοξάζω, to glory is also very significant and is closely tied with what happened in the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 12:28 Jesus says, Father, glorify Your name and then a voice came from heaven and said, I have glorified it and again I will glorify it (Jn. 12: 28). Here we have the word δοξάζω which continues to be used in the betrayal Jesus. After Judas leaves, Jesus says these words “now is the Son of Man glorified (ἐδοξάσθη), and God is glorified (ἐδοξάσθη) in Him, and if God is glorified in Him, then God will (δοξάσει) glorify Him in Himself and immediately will glorify Him” (Jn. 13: 31-32). We see this verb used in repetition looking at the passion that is about to occur that will lead to the ultimate glorification. I cannot help but believe that John is seeing these two verbs from the Septuagint that point to the cross and the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

Finally, in the high priestly prayer of Christ (Jn. 17) the same word (δοξάζω) is used repetitiously throughout the prayer where Jesus says, “Father, the hour is come. (δόξασον) glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you. Restore to Me the glory that I had with You from the foundation of the world” (Jn. 17: 1, 5).

This verb δοξάζω, to glorify along with the verb ὑψόω, I believe is uniquely used in the Gospel of John looking at the glorification and exaltation of the suffering servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. The cross then became the route to glory, and it was the Septuagint that provided a basis for this understanding with its use of these two verbs in Isaiah 52: 13.

25. Taking Time to See the Glory of God in Nature

I was reading one of the great works of English literature by Henry David Thoreau called Walden or Life in the Woods. On page 19 of this particular book he says these words, “to anticipate, not the sunrise and the dawn merely but nature herself. How many mornings, summer and winter before any neighbor was stirring about his business have I been about mine. No doubt many of my townsmen have met me returning from this enterprise, farmers starting for Boston in the twilight, or woodchoppers going to their work. It is true, I never assisted the sun materially in its rising, but it was of the last importance only to be present at it. So many autumns aye and winter days spent outside the town trying to hear what was in the wind, to hear and to carry it express.” As I read this statement I am reminded of the Bible and its emphasis on nature. One cannot read the book of Job without seeing that Job had a deep love for nature. One cannot read Psalm 104 without seeing the importance of nature and God’s creative work. As believers in Jesus Christ we want to worship Jesus Christ who is the creator of nature in all things because of His excellence and His great creative power. This reminds me of Psalms 19, “the heavens declare the glory of God and the expanse shows His handiwork, day by day pours forth speech and night by night reveals knowledge. There is no speech and there are no words their voice is not heard. Their line has gone forth in all the earth and their words to the ends of the earth. He has set a tent

for the sun which as a bridegroom comes out of his chamber and rejoices as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from one end of heaven and his circuit unto their ends. There is nothing hidden from its heat” (Ps. 19: 1-6).

As I read these words and Thoreau’s, I thought about how often in our world today we don’t take time to watch the sun, look at the stars, or look at God’s great creation. In Psalm 104, the psalmist sets forth some beautiful pictures of God’s creation when he talks about how He causes the grass to grow and waters the mountain. The Psalmist views the cedar trees of Lebanon, he notices the birds, the storks, the high mountains and how the wild goats dwell there. As we read a great Psalm like this in our time of great technology we seldom take time to notice the theater of God, as Calvin called it. Watching the great works of the Lord in nature has been lost today. We need to get back to that and see the power of the Lord, and the greatness of His majesty seen in His great creative work. We do not worship nature but we do worship the God who created nature. We are told in the New Testament “all things were made through Him (Jn. 1: 3),” and that Jesus Christ is the agent of creation.

As we look at nature, we see the creation that Jesus Christ brought for us to see, observe and watch. May we spend our days allowing the Lord Jesus Christ to let us see the beauty of His creative work in nature and in our hearts through our

faith in Him as personal Lord and Savior of our lives and observe His theater acted out daily in nature.

26. The cycles of Genesis 3-12

A beautiful illustration of God's judgment, mingled with His grace is found in Genesis chapters 3 through 12. What we see is a cycle: a committing of sin, God's judgment, then God's mercy. This cycle occurs throughout these chapters giving us a theme. For example, Adam and Eve sinned. After they sinned, God pronounced His judgment on the woman, man and Satan. But in the midst of that judgment He shows mercy. Even though there was to be pain in childbirth the name Eve means living, so she is the mother of all living. Then the Lord provides animal skins to cover their shame, beautifully depicting the atoning work of Christ to cover our shame for sin.

This is followed by the sin of Cain in his violence toward Abel. As a result of that sin, Cain would be a nomad, constantly traveling. However, in the midst of that God said He would put a sign on Cain so people would not kill him.

Moving to another cycle, we can look at Noah. As we see Noah and his generation, we see the violence that permeated the world in chapter six and as a result of that violence, God pronounced the judgment of the flood. Following the flood we again see God's mercy, in that He said He would never destroy the earth again, but there would always be seed time and harvest, summer and winter and the rainbow would be a constant sign of God's mercy regarding that promise.

Next we have the sin of the tower of Babel. Instead of spreading out as God had told them, they came together and built a tower or ziggurat as many think. They were building what they thought would be a gate to God (babel) going back to the Akkadian, bab ili, gate of god, but instead it became Balal, absolute confusion. In the midst of this sin, God brings judgment of confusion by spreading people to different parts of the world because they spoke different languages. But the mercy of God is seen in Genesis 12: 3 with these immortal words spoken to Abraham that would make of him a great nation, He would bless him and make his name great, and then God said these words “and in you all families of the earth will be blessed.” So the mercy is the reversal of the judgment of dispersing people as they are brought together now in the Abrahamic covenant. And Paul could say in Galatians chapter three that in Jesus Christ the Gentiles have been blessed (Gal. 3: 8). Also at Pentecost in Acts chapter two we see that blessing fulfilled when the Spirit is poured out and instead of the diversification of tongues, everyone was hearing and understanding the message in their own language as they were speaking. So the Lord turns confusion into edification and this is all done through Jesus Christ, the one in whom all nations are blessed and the One who then sent the Spirit to bring together in God’s mercy a reversal of what had resulted in God’s judgment and dispersion.

27- The Different Themes of the Gospels (and Psalms) of Jesus Christ

When we think of the gospels, contrasting Matthew, Luke and John, we see their differences and the way they bring us to Christ. In Matthew, we see the model of a final David, especially in the use of gematria (use of numbers to teach theological ideas) of the number 14 which comes from the consonants **ד****ל****ד** equaling four, six, and four which spells David. The **ד** equals 4 and the **ל** equal 6 and the **ד** four and added together we get the number 14. In Matthew 1 there are 14 generations from Abraham to David 14 from David to the Babylonian captivity, and 14 generations from the Babylonian captivity to Christ. Thus David's name is suggested in this referencing to the number 14. We also see the final Israel, in that as Israel was called out of Egypt so Christ is called from Egypt in Matthew chapter 2. Jesus was also the final Moses as He goes up the mountain to give the Sermon on the Mount.

In Luke, we see the model of a second Adam, who in His genealogy we are taken back to Adam. In this gospel it is Jesus who says as the second Adam to the thief on the cross, "today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk. 23: 42). Paradise means garden and as the 2nd Adam, Christ is taking the thief on the cross back to paradise. This is unique to Luke.

Mark shows the activity of Jesus as a servant leading up to that great statement in chapter 10 "The Son of man has not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many" (Mk. 10: 45).

The gospel of John differs yet drives home the same message about the greatness and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. John picks seven signs and these signs are followed by a discourse. We have the sign of changing water to wine, followed by the discourse of the Creator who can give spiritual water to the woman at the well (Jn. 2: 4). In the second sign, we have Jesus healing a noble man's son from a distance in chapter four. In the third sign there is the healing of a man on the Sabbath followed by a discourse on his authority as the Son of God demonstrated by those that witnessed to it, namely Moses, the Father, John the Baptist and His works (Jn. 5). He thus has the authority to raise the dead and judge all mankind someday. In chapter six, in the 4th and 5th signs the Lord walks on water and multiplies bread to feed five thousand followed by a discourse when He speaks of Himself as the manna that has come down from heaven that will feed those who put their faith in Him eternally. He then claims to be the light of the world in chapter eight and heals a blind man in chapter nine in the 6th sign demonstrating that He is the light of the world.

In a climactic great statement Jesus claims to be the resurrection and the life, and in the 7th sign raises Lazarus from the dead to demonstrate His power over death in anticipation of His own resurrection.

There is also an emphasis in John of the physicality of our Lord. We have statements like, "I thirst", and blood and water flowing out of the side of Christ

(Jn. 19: 28, 34-37). In the resurrection narrative, every appearance becomes more physical from the disciples running to the empty tomb, Mary holding Jesus, Jesus coming to the disciples and showing them the nail prints in His hands and finally saying to Thomas, “bring your finger and put into my hands and my side and feel the nail prints, and Thomas calls out “My Lord and my God” (Jn. 20: 28). So we see in John a great emphasis on the physicality of our Lord, probably because of an error of incipient Gnosticism that was denying the human nature of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So in summary, these four gospels each make their unique contributions, Matthew showing Jesus as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, He is the final David and fulfills the Abrahamic covenant by blessing all nations in Abraham in that the women that are seen in His genealogy come from a variety of people such as the Moabites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites (Matt. 1). He is the One who fulfills not only the Abrahamic, Davidic, but also the New Covenant for His name is Jesus and He will save his people from their sins. As the final David who saves his people, as the final Israel who is called out of Egypt He obeys the Father, and as the final Moses gives His Torah in the Sermon on the Mount.

In Mark He is the servant, leading up to the confession that the Son of Man has come to serve. In Luke 3, He is the second Adam in the genealogy going back

to Adam and the great statement to the thief on the cross that that day he would be with Him in paradise. Again Paradise is a Persian word meaning garden so, Jesus is promising the thief on the cross that he would be in God's presence with Him, taking the thief back to the Garden of Eden. Then John, with his seven great signs beginning with the eternity of Jesus as he begins with the words, "In the beginning was the Word." These signs testify to the fact that Jesus is the Christ and in Him one can have eternal life.

28. Elijah and Elisha in I & II Kings and Ugaritic Literature

A great area of extra Biblical help comes from the Ancient Near East in what is called the Ugaritic Literature. It was the language of the Canaanites, where we find Baal, and his wife and consort, Asherah. The Ugaritic language, discovered in 1928, is known only in the form of writings found in the lost city of Ugarit. When we read in the book of Kings and especially the Elijah to Elisha narratives, we learn that the background of what we find in these chapters can be vastly elucidated by the Ugaritic texts. For example when Elijah goes up and calls on God to send down fire and rain from heaven, in the Ugaritic texts we are told that Baal is the Canaanite god that would bring the lightning and rain. However the Canaanite god Baal and all of his prophets were unable to do what only Yahweh could do because He is truly the Lord of lightning and rain.³¹ We are also told in the Ugaritic text that Baal would take care of widows and in the narrative of Elisha, it is Elisha who takes care of widows through the power of Yahweh.

The Ugaritic also says that Baal has the power of death and life.³² We however see in the Kings that the Lord working through the prophet Elisha has the power of life to raise the dead. It is further significant that we see Elisha as a type

³¹ James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near East in Pictures*, p. 168

³² Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East anthology of Texts and Pictures*, p. 113

of Christ in the narratives of the Kings in that he cares for the weak, is able to heal the sick and raise the dead.

While the Ugaritic literature can throw light on this text in terms of an Ancient Near Eastern background the ultimate fulfillment of Elisha's ministry finds its anti-type in Jesus Christ because He is "the resurrection and the Life and that whosoever believes in Him though he die, yet shall he live and whosoever lives and believes in Him shall never ever die" (Jn. 11: 25-26).

29. The False and the Good Shepherds

In the book of Ezekiel chapter 34, we read about the false shepherds who do not care for God's flock but mistreat them. He then tells of a shepherd that seeks out the flock and rescues them out from all people and the places that they have been scattered in verse twelve. The text continues in Ezekiel 34:13-16, "And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."

What is striking is how Jesus beautifully fulfills Ezekiel 34, almost verbatim in the teaching of the Good Shepherd in John 10. He is the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep; he knows them all by name, he takes them out, comforts them, takes them to pastures, and even lays down his life for them. So, this great text in

Ezekiel has it's fulfillment in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in our Good Shepherd.

30. The Freewill of Man in God's Sovereignty

In the Talmud, which is the Jewish book that interprets the Mishnah, in Berachot 33b³³ it quotes a Rabbinic statement that everything is in the power of heaven except **יְרֵאת שָׁמַיִם** the fear of heaven. What is meant here is that God is sovereign in everything except the free will of man. I think that when we look at the Scriptures over and over again, there is emphasis on the freedom of the will. In Ezekiel 18: 31-32 it says: "Cast away from you all transgressions by which you have transgressed and get for yourself a new heart and a new spirit for why will you die oh house of Israel. For it not my desire that anyone should die says the Lord God. Therefore repent and live." In Genesis, "after the fall, Cain is told sin is crouching at the door, but you may master it" (Gen. 4: 7). In the Hebrew Bible, we find that these texts are given over to the freedom of choice that God has left in the hearts of people. We see the same emphasis running throughout God's history with His people, making them responsible for the choices they make.

When we come to the New Testament, Jesus said, "Oh Jerusalem... I would have taken you but you would not" (Mt. 21: 37). In Revelation it says, "whosoever wills let him take, of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22: 17). So over and over in

³³ Babylonian Talmud Berachot 33b

Scripture there is the teaching that the Lord gives everyone an opportunity to respond to His grace. I believe that by prevenient grace (grace coming before salvation) everyone has the same opportunity to say yes to Jesus Christ. Looking at the rabbinic statement we find that our Lord Himself taught the same truth of freedom of the will to accept Him as Lord and Savior.

31. The General Judgment and Resurrection at Christ's Return

One of the great teachings of Christ is the hour of His coming and final judgment. In Matthew 13 we read of the parable of the wheat and weeds or tares, where the two are to grow together until the end of the age. At that time the Son of man will send forth his angels and will gather out of His kingdom everything, all stumbling blocks and those that do evil and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13: 41-42). We are told in verse 41, “then the righteous will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father The one who has ears, let him hear.” There were two ages in Judaism, העולם הזה the age that is and העולם הבא the age that is to come or the Messianic age. At the end of the age, the Lord will send His angels and they will gather out of the kingdom all the tares, everyone who does evil and cast into the fire, depicting the final judgment. But in contrast, the righteous will shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father. Jesus seems to speak of one general judgment when He returns ushering in the age to come or the final eternal age since all tares are tooted out.

This same teaching is brought forth in Matthew 24 and 25. Jesus teaches His return and the gathering together of the elect to meet Him at the great sounding of the trumpet. In Matthew 24: 29-31 it reads: “immediately after the affliction of those days the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give it's utterance and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken and

then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven and all tribes shall mourn which are upon the earth and they shall see the Son of man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will send out His angels with a great trumpet and they shall gather together His elect and gather them out of the four corners of the heavens unto their corners” (Matt. 24: 29-31). There is a great gathering together to meet Him but this is also followed by judgment. There is a warning by illustration of speaking of the unknown hour and how some will be taken away into judgment. He describes that there will be two will be in the field, one will be taken and one will be left, and two are grinding at the mill, one will be taken and one will be left. One is taken to be with Him and one will be left to face judgment (Matt. 24: 40-41).

This discourse is continued in chapter 25 in the different parables of the ten maidens and the talents followed by the judgment that will take place when the Son of Man returns. It says in Matthew 25:31 “When the Son of man shall come in His glory and all His angles with Him then will He sit upon His glorious throne.” This is the same teaching in Matthew 13. He is coming with His angels and there will be a separation like that of the goats and the sheep. He describes this by telling of those who were feeding the hungry, and giving cold water to the thirsty. Jesus says in verses 34-35, “Come blest of My Father, inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundation of the world for I was hungry and you fed

me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, and a stranger and you took me in” (Matt. 25: 35). They answered Him with, when did we see you in this state? “He said as much as you’ve done it unto the least of these my brethren, you’ve done it unto me” (Matt. 25: 40). This goes back to chapter 10 of Matthew where our Lord talked about the apostles going out to share the good news and those that received them would receive a prophet’s reward as if they were receiving Him. In Matthew 10:40 we read, “the one who receives you, receives me. The one who receives Me is receiving the one who sent Me. The one who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and the one who receives a righteous one in the name of the righteous one will receive a righteous reward” (Matt. 10: 40-41). Whosoever gives one of these little ones a cup of cold water in My name, verily I say to you he shall not lose his reward. In this context He is speaking of the apostles and others who will bear witness of Christ and those who receive them well, receives Christ. So when He says, “as much as you’ve done unto one of least of these my brethren” (Matt. 25: 40). He is talking about his emissaries who have preached the word through time. Those who has received their word and treated them well show and evidence their faith in Christ, so He will say to them, “enter into the kingdom that has been prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25: 34).

In that same judgment he turns to the goats and says, “depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Because I was hungry and you didn’t feed me, and I was thirsty and you didn’t give me drink. Again they say to Him, when did we see you this way, and again He will answer as much as you have done it unto the least of these, you’ve done it unto me” (Matt. 25: 42-45). In this final general judgment, they shall depart into eternal punishment and the righteous into eternal life (Matt. 25: 46). The Lord seems to be teaching that when He comes back, there will be this final separation of goats from sheep, and tares from wheat and that separation will be eternal separation.

Jesus further brings this out again in the gospel of John 5:25 when He talks about the day and the hour of His resurrection: “Verily, verily I say unto you that the hour is coming in which the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth and they who hear will live.” He then goes on to say in verse 28, “marvel not for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth. They who have done good unto a resurrection of life, and those who have done worthless things unto a resurrection of judgment.” Jesus speaks of a great day when He returns of the resurrection for every person. We must remember that He speaks of two destinies, one to a resurrection to life for those that have done good deeds. Not that it is their deeds that saved them, but their deeds show their faith. As we have said many times, if there is a fire in the

fireplace, there should be smoke coming out of the chimney. There are also those who have shown that they do not know the Lord and these will be raised to everlasting judgment. Here again Jesus seems to speak of one general resurrection and judgment.

This great teaching of the return of our Lord is repeated by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1, where he talks about the return of Christ when affliction will be afflicted upon those who were persecuting the believers, and rest will be given to the believer. All this happens according to Paul, when Christ returns paralleling the general judgment that Jesus spoke of in Matthew chapters 13 and 24-25 and John chapter 5. Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 when he is encouraging those who are going through hard times. “It is righteous thing for God to avenge those who are afflicting you with affliction and there will be those of you who are being afflicted given rest with us in the revelation of our Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels and flaming fire, taking vengeance upon those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. God shall punish them with everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord and the glory of His strength when he comes to be glorified in His saints and marveled by all those who believe” (II Thess. 1: 9-10). So we find the same basic truth of the judgment of the righteous and unrighteous together when Christ returns.

We can also look at Peter when he speaks of the return of Jesus Christ. The church is waiting for a new heaven and a new earth that will take place after the Lord returns. In 2 Peter chapter 3 verses 8-11, we are told that ‘the Lord is long suffering and wants all to repent. The day of the Lord is coming as a thief when the heavens will pass away and the elements thereof. The earth and its works “will be found out” in this final day of reckoning. He asks, what sort of people should we be? Peter is repeating what the Lord taught about the great day of reckoning and His final return and judgment. It is with this in mind that we should spend our days seeking to follow Jesus Christ, sharing the good news with others and seeking to be ready when He returns with our names in the book of life so that we can be brought in to that eternal life and fellowship with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

32. The Hilasterion and the Veil

A great institution of the Hebrew Bible is the tabernacle and it is wonderful to see how the articles of furniture point to Jesus Christ. Some of these are: the brazen altar on the outside of the tent of meeting represents Christ as our sacrifice (Heb. 10: 10); the laver lets us see Jesus as our cleansing (I Jn. 1:9); the lamp stand is Christ our light (Jn. 8: 12); in the table of showbread He is our sustenance (I Cor. 11: 29); the altar of incense before the veil sees Christ as our intercessor (Rom. 8: 34); the veil points to Christ as our access (Heb. 10: 20). Inside the veil we have the Ark of the Covenant and inside the ark there are the two tables of the law representing Christ as the fulfillment of the law (Matt. 5: 17). The manna represents Christ as our heavenly bread (Jn. 6: 23-40). Aaron's rod that budded points to the resurrected priesthood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 7: 24-25). On the lid of the ark is the mercy seat with two cherubim looking over it which picture Christ as our place of satisfaction or propitiation. Blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat once a year. After offering the blood of a bull for Himself and sprinkling it on the altar seven times for the people, this satisfied God's judgment on sins and covered them. The high priest would sprinkle the blood of a goat which pictorially covered sins for one year.

As we look at the New Testament there are several references to the tabernacle. The lid is mentioned in Romans 3: 24-25 where Paul writes to the

church at Rome, and after explaining that we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, Paul says that God has set forth Christ as a hilasterion (Rom. 3: 25). This word is the same word used in the Septuagint for the lid that was in the Holy of Holies on the box or Ark of the Covenant. It looks at the priest sprinkling the blood of a goat, picturing satisfaction before the Lord and then removing sins as well because you do not see sins due to the blood that is covering it. God has sent forth Christ as a covering or hilasterion through faith in His blood unto a demonstration of His righteousness on account of passing over of sin in the past” (vs 25). This word then has to do with propitiation or satisfaction. It says that God is perfectly satisfied through the sacrifice of His Son by His blood. This word also looks at expiation since it looks at divine removal of sins. Both propitiation and expiation are seen in the word hilasterion.

In Hebrews 10: 20, speaking of a heavenly sanctuary the writer makes reference to the veil. The writer calls the veil the flesh of Christ which opened the way into the Holy of Holies. What beauty we find in these two texts in Romans 3 where we find total satisfaction on our behalf, and Hebrews 10 where we see access or our ability to enter into the Lord’s presence at any time because Christ has already become the veil and opened it for us in the incarnation by his death and resurrection and returning to the right hand of God. May we worship Jesus Christ

as the one who is the mediator between us and the Father. He is our access and He accomplished this by becoming a propitiation, a satisfaction, for our sins through His shed blood.

33 – The Imitation of Christ’s Life

One of the great devotional works of all time is *de imitatione Christi*, the imitation of Christ. This is a great work by Thomas A Kempis. In the first chapter, the first section, there is a very beautiful quote in the Latin:

Qui sequitur me, non ambulat in tenebris, sed habebit lumen vitae. Haec sunt verba Christi, quibus admonemur quatenus uitam eius et mores imitemur, si volumus vereciter illuminari, et ab omni caecitate cordis liberari. Summum igitur studium nostrum sit in vita Jesu Christi meditari. ³⁴

“He who would follow me should not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. These are the words of Christ which we are being admonished that we would imitate His life and ethics, if we would be truly illuminated and from all hardness of heart would be liberated. Therefore, the sum of our study should be to meditate continually on the life of Jesus Christ.”

This book has influenced so many and John Wesley is one who had read it continually. It reminds me of the apostle Paul who said that it was his desire, in Philippians chapter 3 verse 10 to know Christ in the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering. The greatest goal in life is to know our Lord, to walk in His way, to love Him, to share the light with Him. May it be our constant prayer and our constant desire to know Christ and to meditate on His life and His teachings and what He would have us to do the whole of life.

³⁴ Thomas A’ Kempis, *Imitatione Christi*, Chapter 1. 1

34. The Importance of the Torah in Pirke Abot

In the Pirke Abot, which is the sayings of the fathers, a little tractate in the Mishnah, the Rabbis put great emphasis on the study of Torah. We are told that one should study the Torah as worship itself. One should study the Torah for Torah's sake alone and delve into the Torah continually (Pirke Abot 6.1).³⁵ We are to do this because "everything is in it, one is to look deeply into it, one is to grow old and grey over it. Do not stir from it for you have no better portion than it" (Pirke Abot 5. 20).³⁶ I believe the great emphasis given to the Torah and the wealth and beauty of it is given to us in this tractate.

Rabbi Oza Ben Kisma told a story saying, "I was once walking on a road and when a certain man met me and greeted me, I returned his greeting. He asked, From what place have you come? I said I am from a city of great scholars and sages. He said, Rabbi would you be willing live with us in our place? If you would do that I would give you thousands and thousands of gold dinars, precious stones and pearls. The Rabbi replied, Even if you gave me all the silver, gold and precious stones in the world, I would dwell nowhere but in the place of Torah. As it is written is Psalms 119:72 by David, I prefer the Torah of your mouth above thousands in gold and silver. Furthermore when a man departs from this world silver, gold, precious stones or pearls will not escort him but only Torah study and

³⁵ Pirke abot 6. 1

³⁶ Pirke abot 5. 20

good deeds. When you walk it shall guide you, when you lay down it will guard you, when you awake it will speak to you” (Pirke Abot 6.9).³⁷ When we look at a text like this we see the importance of the study of Torah and spending time in it. The wealthiest house one could ever live in is the house of the Torah.

I would like to say that in the New Testament and Hebrew Scriptures we see the constant emphasis on the Word of God. In the Psalms, God’s word is sweeter than honey (Ps. 19: 11). Paul says to Timothy to meditate on the Word of God, on the Scriptures, “for it will make you wise unto salvation which is in Jesus Christ” (II Tim. 3: 14). Jesus said “search the scriptures, for it is about Me” in John 5: 39. As Christians, one of the greatest ways we can worship the Lord is to study the Word of God, to grow old over it and not stir from it, for in it are the issues of life that lead us to Jesus Christ. It is the Scriptures that lead us to Him and our worship of Him. So let us spend our days and nights in the Word, in adoration of Jesus Christ. Paul said, “All scripture is God breathed and profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness so the man of God might be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (II Tim. 4: 16-17). Jesus took the Scriptures recorded in Luke 24: 44 and found Himself in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Let us give ourselves over to the study and meditation of the Word to learn more about Jesus Christ and to worship and adore Him.

³⁷ Ibid., 6. 9

35. The Important Creeds of the Church

Two great creeds in the church are the Apostles' Creed and Nicene creed.

The Apostles' Creed in the Greek reads as follows:

*Πιστεύω εἰς θεον πατερα, παντοκράτορα, ποιητήν οὐρανοῦ και γῆς. Και (εἰς) Ἰησουν Χριστον, υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν, τὸν συλληφθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου, γεννηθέντα ἐκ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου, παθόντα ἐπὶ ποντίου Πιλάτου, σταυρωθέντα, θάνοντα, καὶ ταφέντα, κατελθόντα εἰς τὰ κατώτατα, τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστάντα ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν, ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐράνους, καθεζόμενον ἐν δεξιᾷ θεοῦ πατρὸς παντοδυνάμου, ἐκεῖθεν ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς. Πιστεύω εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἄνιαν καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἁγίων κοινωνίαν ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν, ζωὴν αἰώνιον.*³⁸

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth and in Christ Jesus his only begotten Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into the heaven, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, from where he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the fellowship of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, and the life everlasting. Amen.

This creed summarized the heart of the Christian faith and ties together a number of Scriptures. *I believe in God the Father* can be seen throughout Scripture and especially in Genesis 1; He is the creator of all things. *And in Christ Jesus his only begotten son*, in John 3: 16 we read that “for God sent His only begotten son,” who is our Lord in John 20 seen in Thomas’ statement, “My Lord and my God.” *He*

³⁸ Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom, Vol II, p. 45

was begotten of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary; we go to Matthew 1 and Luke 1 and see this doctrine. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate seen in all the Gospels; and was buried we read in 1 Corinthians 15: 1-3. On the third day He arose from the dead according to Scripture stated in I Corinthians 15. He then ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. This is fulfilled in many Scriptures such as in the book of Acts chapter 1 and Luke 24 where we see the ascension of Christ and he is sitting at the right hand of the Father according to Acts 2, in fulfillment of Psalms 110. He is coming to judge the living and the dead. In 2 Timothy 4: 2, Paul says, we look forward to the return of Christ who will judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit and the church universal; in Ephesians 4: 4 there is one Spirit and one church, the body of Christ. We also believe in the forgiveness of sins found in Ephesians 1: 7 where we find the forgiveness of trespasses or sins by Christ's blood. We believe in the resurrection of the flesh seen in the resurrection of the body found in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Finally, there is the belief in eternal life. Jesus said I give to them eternal life and they shall never perish, as the great Scripture of John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

Another important creed is the Nicene creed of AD 381. We read:

Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα Θεόν Πατέρα, παντοκράτορα, ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς, ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀοράτων.

*Καὶ εἰς ἓνα Κύριον, Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων, Φῶς ἐκ φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο. Τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς Παρθένου καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, Σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, καὶ παθόντα καὶ ταφέντα, καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ κατὰ τὰς Γραφάς καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ καθεζόμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, οὗ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος. καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ Κύριον, τὸ ζωοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, τὸ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ υἱῷ συνπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον, τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν Προφητῶν. Εἰς μίαν, ἀγίαν, καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν Ἐκκλησίαν. Ὁμολογοῦμεν ἓν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. Προσδοκῶμεν ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν, καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. Ἀμήν.*³⁹

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.
and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who was
begotten from the Father, before all ages, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made, of the same substance with the
Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven and became
flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit
of the Virgin Mary, he became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and
he suffered, and was buried.*

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 57-58

*On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

This great creed is known especially by the words ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ, in the same substance with the Father, in other words, Jesus Christ is co-equal in deity with God the Father. This is a very important point in this creed. Also, the Holy Spirit τὸ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, proceeds out from the Father is seen in John, where the Spirit comes out from the Father (Jn. 15: 26). This creed sets forth the uniqueness of the Trinity, all sharing the same nature with the Father and intimate relationship with each other. It also stresses the fact that Jesus was eternally begotten, not made or created. As we read in the gospel of John, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word had no beginning and the Word was fully divine, sharing in the full quality of deity, and thus Jesus could say “before Abraham was, I Am” (Jn. 8).

This creed drives home the reality of the co-sharing of the divine nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit whom we worship, pray to and serve as the

Triune God. Matthew 28: 19-20 expresses the truth of trinity clearly in that the Church is to baptize believers in the name (singular) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, where we see One God (in the singular name) who exists in three distinct co-eternal persons of the God-head.

36. The Long and short of Psalm 1

A great literary way in which Psalm 1 is developed is by the use of assonance and what I would call the long and the short found in verse 3 and verse 4. It begins with “Happy is the man who does not walk in the council of the wicked, nor does he not stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His Torah he meditates day and night” (Ps. 1: 1-2). Meditate means to mumble under the breath. It is from the verb **הגה** meaning to mutter under the breath; it is in His Torah **תורתו** that he meditates. Rashi, a medieval Jewish commentator, said if we meditate in His Torah, it becomes my Torah. Paul spoke of the gospel as “my” gospel because he was so given to the good news of Jesus Christ that he claimed it as his own.

The long and the short of this text is found in verses 3 and 4. The writer elongates what happens to the person who meditates in the Torah day and night. Psalm 1:3 tells us “They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season without fail. Their leaves never wither, and in all they do, they

prosper.” You cannot say enough about the righteous person who meditates in the Torah.

Notice the short of it, the opposite however in verse 4. Psalm 1:4 reads: “But this is not true of the wicked. They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind. So what can we say about the wicked? They are ephemeral; they pass away like chaff, nothing fruitful.” So from a beautiful literary perspective, we have the long verse 3 showing the fruitfulness of one rooted in the Torah. Then we see the fruitlessness of the one who is like chaff and blows away with no endurance and has no value. What a beautiful contrast in what I call the long and short of this verse showing the contrast between the righteous and the wicked.

37. The Man is the Demutu of God.

In Genesis 1:26, when God created man it reads: God said “Let us make man in our image, according to our דמו ותננו likeness. “ The word can be compared with the Akkadian word demutu.⁴⁰ This is a statue that a king would set up in a place where the king could not personally be present, and that statue would represent the king. When we read the Torah in Hebrew, we read that mankind is God’s demutu. We are God’s representative. I believe this text is giving to mankind this great exaltation that we are next to God over the animal world. We are not an afterthought, we are God’s representative on earth, his demutu or statue of himself, we are His viceroy.

As we look at this great text and compare it with the Ancient Near East, and especially with Enuma Elish the Babylonian account of creation the difference is striking. After Marduk has defeated Tiamat and created the heaven and the earth, the minor gods were wondering, “what are we going to do?” We are going to have to do the work that we do not want to do (as in washing dishes or taking out the garbage). So they said, let us create savage man to do this work for us; he can do the work of the gods. Thus man was created out of the blood of kingu, the helper of Tiamat. What a great contrast between the Akkadian Enuma Elish where man is an afterthought to do the work the gods did not want to do, and the Hebrew text

⁴⁰ Jeremy Blacketal editors, a concise Dictionary of Akkadian, p 332

which describes the dignity of man. In the Hebrew text we are the epitome of God's creation.

Less one become arrogant however, in chapter 2 we are told that we are made of dust. The Rabbis said that we should always keep in mind that we are highly elevated in God's creation while at the same time we are but dust.

Therefore we should carry both a piece of gold and a clot of dirt or clay, to remind ourselves that we are precious, represented by the gold, while at the same time we are dust and we must remember that we are not equal to God, but simply clay.

38. The Models of the King and Potter

In higher critical interpretation, especially source criticism it was taught that Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 came from the priestly source around the time of the exile, while Genesis 2:4 to the end of chapter 2 came from an earlier source called the Yahwistic source around the 7th century BC. There was a presupposition of an evolutionary idea that Genesis 2 was more anthropomorphic and as time moves forward we moved from the anthropomorphic idea of God to a fuller and more perfect concept of God which we find in chapter 1. It was for this reason that chapter 1 was given a later date with the idea of a theological evolution.

When we look at these two chapters however, in chapter one, the writer, which I believe was Moses, saw God as a King. A King gives command, He says “let it be done.” Thus all the way through chapter 1 we see a king on the throne as the model shouting out commands so it is less anthropomorphic and more of a depiction of the transcendence of God. Whereas in chapter two the language is that of a potter seen in the word **יצר** for example which appears in Genesis 2:7 then we have the word again used in verse 9. The text says “And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden eastward and placed there the man that He had **יצר**, the man that “He had formed.” The word **יצר** is the Hebrew word for potter. So in chapter two we see the imagery of a potter, who gets his hands in the clay and mixes the elements that are being formed. What we have here is imminence or the

presence of God with His creation in Genesis 2 and the use of the name Yahweh over against Elohim in chapter 1 showing the transcendence of God as the king.

The author brings together these two great images, that of a king and that of a potter. So in chapter 1 instead of it being later and thus more formal, we have the formality of a king on the throne shouting out commands showing the transcendence of God as King of Kings. And in chapter two we have the imagery of a potter whereby God is identifying with His creation by getting his hands in the clay to fashion us. In these texts we see the Lord that we serve as both a king and a potter, both transcendent as our King, and imminent as our savior who became flesh (yet without sin) to identify with us and redeem us.

39. The Prologue of John

The seeds that will sprout in the rest of the Gospel of John can be found in John 1:1-14. We are told that “in the beginning was the Word” (Jn. 1: 1). This shows us the eternity of the Word which is Jesus Christ. As we look at the rest of the gospel, this truth of the eternity of our Lord is repeated in John where Jesus says, “Before Abraham was, I AM” (Jn. 8:58). We are also told that “the Word was face to face with God” (Jn. 1: 1) and this seed blossoms in the prayer of Christ in John 17, when He asked to be brought back to the glory he had shared in the presence of His Father. Then “the word was God” (Jn. 1:1). Found throughout the book of John we find Christ the Word, equal to God the Father in terms of His divinity, and in terms of His power as the second person of the blessed and holy trinity. We see the works that only He can do, works of creation as in turning water into wine and forgiveness of sin that only God can do. Jesus Christ accepted the claim to be God when Thomas proclaimed, “My Lord and my God” to Jesus in John chapter 20, after the resurrection.

It is in the prologue that we are told “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (Jn. 1: 3). He is the sole creator, the agent of creation. Throughout the gospel of John we see the creative work of Jesus Christ and His claim to create spiritual life as in bringing a new birth

to Nicodemus, or giving water to the woman at the well such that she would never thirst again.

We are told that in Him there is life and the life was the light of men. This truth of life and light that is found in Jesus Christ is reiterated throughout the Gospel of John. Here we see another seed that blossoms when we have the emphasis on life. “He that believes on the Son has life, he who does not believe does not have life.” (John 3:18). So, He is the life and the light. Jesus Christ said in John 8, “I am the light of the world.” He conquers darkness, He heals the eyes of a blind man, and he brings light to Nicodemus in the darkness of night showing how he can come out of darkness into light. Jesus shines in darkness and darkness cannot take Him down. His Light shines continually because He lives in resurrected glory (Jn. 1: 5).

John comes to be a witness; he is not the Messiah, but only a witness. When the religious leaders came to John and asked him if he was the Messiah he answered and said, “I am not the Christ,” ἐγὼ οὐκ εἰμὶ ὁ χριστός, five words in Greek (Jn. 1: 20). Then they asked are you Elijah? He answered them with two words in Greek οὐκ εἰμι meaning “I am not” (Jn. 1: 21). Then they asked are you the prophet of Deuteronomy 18 that was prophesied to come, and He answered with one word in Greek οὐ “no” (Jn. 1: 21). John testified that he was not the Messiah, but simply one pointing to the light, a voice crying in the wilderness.

This too becomes a seed that blossoms concerning the beautiful truth that John was a witness of the light, but he was not the light.

Throughout the Gospel of John we also read “He was in the world but the world did not know him even though the world came into being by Him, and He came to His own, but his very own did not receive him (Jn. 1: 10-11). His own people continue to reject him as found in chapters 5, 6, 9, and 11. But as many as receive Him and believe on his name whoever they are, He gives them authority to become children of God, to those who believe in His name (Jn. 1: 21). We have this strong emphasis on believing (Jn. 3: 16). This too will be a seed that blossoms throughout the gospel of John.

To become a son of God, one must be born again from God (Jn. 1: 13). In this theme we see regeneration which is found in John 3 with Jesus’ words to Nicodemus about the new birth (Jn. 3: 7).

Glory is another theme in the gospel of John. “The Word became flesh, and pitched his tent among us and we gazed upon His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1: 14). It is the glory of Christ that is talked about over and over again in the high priestly prayer of Christ, where we see the glory that He shared with his Father from all eternity. He will be restored to that glory as seen in His prayer (Jn. 17).

There is also the beautiful theme that through Jesus Christ we now have received the fullness of grace. While the law was given by Moses it is grace and truth that comes through Jesus Christ (Jn. 1: 16-17). As we look at the Gospel of John we see this seed growing on the testimony of the law given by Moses, that points to Jesus Christ who is the fullness of grace and truth (Jn. 5: 45-46). In Psalm 117, God is spoken of as being full of grace and truth. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus is seen as the second person of the trinity in all of His graciousness and He will say, “I am the way, the truth and the life, I am the truth (Jn. 14: 6), Finally, John writes, “no one has ever seen God but the only begotten God, being in the bosom of the Father, that one has exegeted, (ἐξηγήσατο), Him. Being in the bosom of the Father speaks of intimacy and this is a theme that is developed in John 17 with Jesus praying, “Father Restore to me the glory that I shared with you from the foundation of the world” (Jn. 17: 5).

What I see in the prologue are the theological seeds that blossom in the Gospel of John, seeds showing us the eternity of our Lord, His divinity, His life, the light that continues and conquers death in Christ, that John was to bear witness of Him, and that He came to his own but his own did not receive Him but to all those who will receive Him, they will become children of God. He is the final tabernacle who has tented among us. Jesus said, “Not on this mountain but in spirit and in truth will we worship,” as He spoke to the woman at the well (Jn. 4:

24). He is the new temple that has created that by His resurrection (Jn. 2: 19). He is also the truth, and He is now in the bosom of the Father in the place of resurrected glory. These are some of the seeds from the prologue (Jn. 1: 1-18) that we can see blossom as we look at the Gospel of John.

40 - The Return of Jesus Christ – The Final Resurrection - The Judgment – New Heaven and New Earth

One of the debated issues today among evangelical Christians has to do with the position of amillennialism, pre-millennialism and post millennialism. In the historic premillennial position the Lord, is seen as coming back to reign a thousand years upon the earth prior to the final judgment. There are actually two resurrections; 1) a resurrection when Christ comes back, 2) a resurrection at the end of the millennium with the final judgment. This is called historic pre-millennialism – one coming and two resurrections.

There are those who hold to a dispensational pre-millennialism who believe that the church is raptured followed by a 7 year tribulation period. The church returns with Christ back to the earth where there will be a thousand year millennium followed by the great white throne judgment and the final separation of believers and non believers with a new heaven and new earth for believers, and eternal separation for non-believers. This position is called dispensational pre-millennialism because a sharp distinction is made between the church and Israel, the church being raptured by God who then picks up his program with Israel during the 7 year tribulation period followed by the millennium. With this position there are actually three resurrections: 1) when the church is raptured for those who have died in the body of Christ , 2) when Christ returns with the church at the end of the tribulation period when those who have died during the tribulation period

will be raised, 3) at the end of the millennium for those who died in the millennium there will be a resurrection.

The amillennial position argues that there is actually no millennium. The word means without millennium. There is one great coming of Christ, one general resurrection, and one general judgment followed by the new heaven and new earth. The post-millennial position believes that the church will bring in the millennium as things will get better and better, and this will be followed then by Christ's return after the millennium. Again in both post and amillennialism the thousand years of Revelation 20 is understood as a symbolic number, not a literal thousand years, in a highly symbolic apocalyptic book. Those who are premillennial, whether dispensational premillennial, or historic premillennial accuse the amillennialist and postmillennialist of spiritualizing Scripture in their hermeneutics. I believe that when we try to take all Scripture together there are facets of truth in all of these systems, but not one encapsulates the whole.

Genesis 17: 7-8

For example, as we look at the Old Testament we are told in Genesis 17: 7-8, that the Lord promises to give Israel the land for an everlasting covenant. Notice in verse 7 of chapter 17, it says "I will maintain my covenant between me and between you and between your seed as an everlasting covenant." The word the text uses here in Hebrew means everlasting or eternal. The text goes on to say that God

will assign the land on which Abraham would sojourn for an everlasting possession, as found in verse 8. Further we have the phrase לעולם (forever) used in verse 13 which means everlasting or eternal. One of the things that is interesting to me is that all through Hebrew Scriptures the land promised to Israel is everlasting. I cannot find where the Lord promises to give a period of a thousand years or a limited period of time only in this land promise.

Daniel 12: 1-2

The same Hebrew word for example is used in Daniel 12, when Daniel speaks of the future resurrection that is to come for everybody where he speaks of everlasting life and everlasting punishment; some will go away to *olam* life, to everlasting life, and some to shame everlasting contempt. He uses the same word *olam*. It is my thinking that if *olam* means everlasting in Daniel chapter 12 that the same meaning should apply in Genesis 17, and other passages of the Hebrew Scripture that speak of Israel as having everlasting land and an everlasting possession, not simply a millennial application. When you look at Jewish expectation as well, especially in orthodox Judaism and early rabbinic interpretation, you will always find the idea of an everlasting covenant and everlasting land that the Lord is going to give to Israel. Therefore, I think if one is going to argue for a literal interpretation of this word one needs to keep it as it is

used throughout the Hebrew Scripture, especially like Daniel 12: 2, to mean eternal or everlasting.

Revelation 20: 1-6

Having said this as we come into the New Testament to take Revelation 20 and the reference to a millennium and apply it back to the Old Testament and make this covenant less than everlasting, I believe goes contrary to the teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures. Furthermore, in Revelation chapter 20 there is no mention of earth; it seems to be speaking about heaven. For example it reads: “I saw thrones and they sat upon them and judgment was given to them and I saw the souls who had been beheaded on account of the witnesses of Jesus and on account of word of God who had not worshiped the beast nor his image nor received the mark of the beast on their forehead, or upon their hand, and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years was finished; this is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who is having part in the first resurrection, upon these the second death is not having the authority for they shall be priests of God and Christ and they shall reign with him for a thousand years.” There is no mention here of where this reign occurs; it does not say it is definitely upon the earth. Therefore some apply the reigning to heaven as the place where the martyrs are reigning with Christ now as Augustine had argued, and that they now are enjoying that reign with Him.

It is interesting that the word ἔζησαν , they lived, is often said to mean physical resurrection. In both places here, the rest of them, that died did not ἔζησαν live until the thousand years was finished. Some believe that both of those are referring to physical resurrection. When I think of John as the author of Revelation my mind goes back to John chapter 11 verse 25 where John records Jesus as saying, “I am the resurrection and life, he who believes in me though he die yet shall he live.” So it is possible that the first living takes place right after death when the soul goes to be with the Lord. This seems to be implied from John 11: 25 and also when we look at the martyrs under the altar in Revelation 6: 10, we are told that they are crying out under the altar, “how long O Lord, holy and true do you not judge and avenge our blood upon those who dwell upon the earth?” We are then told that a white robe was given to each of them and it was said to them that they should rest a little while until there fellow servants and brethren should die who were about to be killed (Rev. 6: 11). In other words, in the history of the church there would be more who would suffer the same kind of violent death because of the witness for Christ.

Then each is given a white stole or a white garment; it is interesting as we trace this idea through the book of Revelation, that the white garment is a depiction of those who overcome. In Revelation 3: 5, “the one who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments and I will not wipe out his name out of the book of life;

and I will confess his name before my father and before his angels.” To be robed in white, as we track it through the book of Revelation beginning in chapter 3:5 we see the same idea in 3:18, 4:4, 6:11, 7:9 and 13:9-14 where it appears in a heavenly scene; so to be given white garments is simply a continuation of what John is describing of those who are going to be with Christ, reigning in heaven, just like those who overcome will be robed in white robes eternally in the Lord’s presence and will not be taken out of the book of life. We have the same words for example in 3:18 where it says, “I counsel you buy from me gold purified in the fire that you might be rich; and white garments, that you might put on and that the shame of your nakedness might not be made known.” The white garments here depicted purity that this church is to put on. Again seemingly picturing the ultimate purification and glorification like those in Revelation 6:11. We have the similar thought in Revelation 7: 9 where it reads as follows: “after these things I saw and behold a great crowd no one was able to number out of every nation, tribe, people and tongue standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed in white stoles or garments and palm branches were in their hands and they are crying, salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb,” and so forth. So to be robed in white is a picture of victory or triumph or reigning, and we see this continued in verse 13, for example, where it says, “and who are these who have put on white robes and from where have they come?” And I said to him, my Lord

you know. “These are the ones who have come out of great affliction and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. On account of this they are before the throne of God and they worship him day and night in his temple. And one who sets upon the throne will dwell upon among them. They shall no longer hunger nor thirst nor shall the sun fall upon them, nor any heat because the lamb who is the midst of the throne will shepherd them and he will guide them unto wells of living water and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 7: 13). Notice the white garment is a depiction of glorification, of reigning, of being in the presence of the Lord, and so again when the Lord returns in Revelation 19:14 we see the white garments again. It reads, “and the forces which were in heaven were following him upon white horses clothed in pure white linen.”

So white garments seem to depict, the reign of the martyrs who had died in Revelation chapter 6, reigning with Christ, waiting for final judgment upon those who had persecuted them, but indeed reigning.

It is also significant that the word ‘thousand’ need not be taken literally because when we think of the book Revelation numbers are symbolic. For example there will be a hundred and forty four thousand that are sealed out of the twelve tribes. Many commentaries understand this as a symbolic number, twelve times a thousand equaling a hundred and forty four thousand, meaning a perfect number of those who are protected by the Lord and cared for by the Lord in this

world and through any tribulation that might come. So the number one thousand or the idea of a millennium need not be necessarily taken as a literal thousand years and read back into the Hebrew Scriptures, especially when the Hebrew Scriptures focus on an eternal kingdom.

What might be said then of Satan being bound? We are told that he is bound and that at the end of the thousand years he is to be released connected with Gog and Magog. It is significant to me when I read the gospel of John again that Jesus makes the statement of Satan being judged at His passion upon the cross; he has already been judged and the Holy Spirit's task is to teach this to the world. In John 16:8, it reads: "when that one, the spirit of truth is come, he will reprove the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment. Concerning sin because they believe not on me, concerning righteousness because I go to my Father and you no longer see me, and concerning the judgment because the ruler of this world has been judged." It is significant that Satan's judgment already has taken place and in John 12:31 we have similar language being used when Jesus says, "now judgment is of this world, now the ruler of this world shall be cast out," and to be cast out pictures his lost power. When I read the book of Revelation, we were told that Satan will be bound during this thousand years and will not be able to blind the nations as he had done before and it seems that the point that is being made is that Satan's influence will not be able to thwart the movement of Christ's death and resurrection in the

spread of the Gospel and the establishment of His church. For example, Revelation 20:3, says, “the devil was bound and he was cast him into the abyss and it was sealed over him in order that he might not deceive the nations until the thousand years is finished (Rev. 20). The verb cast him into the bottomless pit ἔβαλεν (he cast) is the same verb used in John 12:31 ἐκβληθήσεται, “he shall be cast outside” speaking of Satan’s judgment. Jesus also said, “If I be lifted up then I will draw all to myself” (Jn. 12: 32). I think that what Jesus taught is that the cross and resurrection bind Satan and in that judgment upon Satan he is not able to thwart the spread of the Gospel that will go to all nations. Satan will not be able as in the past to keep the certain nations wrapped up in idolatry. I believe what John is now teaching both in the gospel of John and in Revelation 20: 1-3 through symbolism the same truth, that the gospel will go out through the whole world and the Satan is bound so he cannot stop the spread of gospel. The thousand years, following Augustine’s idea, start with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and will last to the second coming (taking it symbolical) and that Satan is bound in the sense that he cannot thwart the process of the gospel which will reach all nations. Right before Christ returns he will be released to lead final apostasy before his eternal confinement. It does not mean that he is not a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour as we were are told I Peter chapter 5, but it does mean that his power has been dethroned in terms of not being able to stop the spread of the gospel to all

peoples and all nations. Having seen these ideas, when one reads then the Old Testament it seems precarious to take this text in Revelation 20 and read it back to where the Hebrew Scriptures speak of an *olam* (eternal) land and an eternal dwelling to limit this to a thousand years. *Olam* and a thousand years really have to do with two different concepts, one is limited and the other is unlimited.

Matthew 13

In light of this, I also believe when we look at the Gospels themselves and read them in their normative or literal sense at each point the return of Christ seems to be a wrap up in great general judgment and final resurrection. The judgment of those that are tares or non-believers and the salvation of believers agrees with Daniel 12:1-2 that are those who sleep in the dust who will be raised, some to everlasting life and some to shame to everlasting contempt. This same general aspect combining resurrection and judgment followed by the eternal state. I believe comes through in the teachings of the Gospels and specifically in the teaching of our Lord Jesus. In Matthew 13 we have the encouragement of letting the wheat and the tares grow together until at the end of the age. At the end of the age the Lord will send forth reapers and they will gather together the tares out of the kingdom. The reapers speak of the angels that the Lord is going to send them forth at the end of the age and gather out non-believers from believers and bring the believers into his kingdom and bind the tares and bring them into the judgment.

When you read of this it seems difficult to see this kind of binding and casting them into the furnace of fire to be a depiction of what would go on for a thousand years; it seems that a literal normative reading of this text is that when Jesus Christ returns the Son of man sends forth his angels (13:41) and they “will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks and those who do iniquity and will cast them into the furnace of fire and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and then the righteous will shine in the kingdom of the Father” (Matt. 13: 4-43). This looks like a judgment that takes place simultaneously with the return of Jesus Christ and not something that can be extended over a thousand year period of time.

Also we have the same thought in Matthew 25 when Jesus returns. We are told that the Son of man when he returns in glory and all of his angels with him will set up on his glorious throne. Nations will be gathered together and God will separate sheep from goat. He will say to the goats, depart from me because “I don’t really know you for I was for hungry and you did not feed me,” and he will say to the sheep “enter into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world because I was hungry and you fed me, and I was thirsty, and you gave drink, etc.” As we come to the end of the verse 46 it says: “these shall go unto eternal punishment (goats) but the righteousness eternal life (sheep).” This is the same language of Daniel 12:2 pointing to one general judgment at the return of Christ illustrated by the imagery of sheep and goats just like the tares and weeds

illustration used earlier. There is no place here that seems to allow, for this judgment to be separated by a thousand year period of time, but seems to happen simultaneously with the Lord's return.

John 5

The same teaching occurs in John 5, when Jesus Christ speaks of his second coming and he says these words, “verily I say to you the hour is coming and all the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live” (Jn. 5: 25). Now ζῶω , to live, definitely here means bodily resurrection; and so I believe the second ζῶω of Revelation 20 does refer to bodily resurrection where the first, to that spiritual resurrection of the souls that live on in the white robes waiting for the bodily resurrection and who are guaranteed freedom from the second death which is also talked about here in John 5: 28ff. Jesus goes on to say in verse 28, “marvel not at this an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and they will come forth, they who have done good unto a resurrection of life, and they that have done worthless things unto a resurrection of judgment.” Again, there seems to be no need to separate this by a millennium or by a broad period of time. A literal normative reading of the text seems to teach that Christ is coming back and when he comes back there will be bodily resurrection for believers and non-believers and the final separation of the two that will take place at this time.

II Thessalonians 1

Paul then seems to affirm the same in II Thessalonians 1 when he talks about the return of Jesus Christ in which there will be both judgment upon non-believers and salvation rest for believers. Notice for example in II Thessalonians 1:6-10, he says, “if it is a righteous thing for God to render to those who are afflicting you affliction and to you who being afflicted rest with us in the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven with his holy angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance upon those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of Jesus. Who shall render eternal vindication from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his strength when he comes to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled among all those who have believed because our witness was believed by you in that day.” Notice that both the judgment of those who are afflicting believers will be in affliction and then there will be a rest for believers, Paul is saying, in the one event, in the unveiling of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven with his holy angels. So what Paul says here seems to agree with what our Lord had taught when Jesus Christ returns at his revelation with his mighty angels; there will judgment upon the world of non-believers and there will be salvation and rest upon those who have their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Again the Scriptures seem to teach one general coming and one general judgment and then the event that immediately

follow the general judgment seems to be the unveiling of the new heaven and new earth.

II Peter 3

II Peter 3 when Peter talks about the return of Jesus Christ he speaks about how the this earth is going to be destroyed and that we are hastening and looking forward to the arrival of the day of God at which time “the heavens being burned shall be destroyed, and the elements shall be burned and melt. We look for new a heaven and new earth according to His promise which we are earnestly waiting for in which dwells righteousness” (II Pet. 3: 10-13). So it appears that what Peter is looking forward to is basically the new heaven and new earth that is going to take place when the Lord returns, and he says this day can be like a thief and it is going to come suddenly and the heavens shall burn and the elements will be destroyed and there is going to be a new heaven and new earth. It is significant that Peter says nothing about a millennial reign or about a period of time upon the earth when this will take place but immediately he talks about the coming of the Lord followed by a new heaven and a new earth.

In light of this it seems that the rest of the New Testament is anticipating a final eternal kingdom. The millennium of Revelation 20 then does not equal promises of the Old Testament especially the land promises. If so, would not more have been said in the rest of the New Testament about this but nothing is said until

we come to Revelation 20, which also as we already have looked at seems to be speaking of a heavenly reign since nothing there is said about an earthly reign. So in light of this it seems when we put all of this information together that the eternal land promise is going to be in the new heaven and new earth when Jesus Christ returns after the final judgment. Believing Jewish people of the Old Testament will then be joined with believing saints of the new covenant, and Jew and Gentile, who have come to faith in Jesus Christ, will eternally reign in a new heaven and earth. If we understand a revival of Jewish people in Romans 11 which says “all Israel will be saved” as Paul affirms and that they will be grafted back into the own olive tree. Paul then anticipates one olive tree work of Jew and Gentile who will live in the new heavens and new earth and the salvation will be fulfilled in that *olam* land, that eternal land that the Lord had promised Abraham.

Hebrews 11

Even the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 11 says that Abraham was looking for a land, a father land and a heavenly city that the Lord who is the architect will build. The reason this land did not appear in his life time was because we as believers were to join him in this heavenly place, this heavenly city. The writer of Hebrews says for he was looking for “a city having foundations whose architect is God” (Heb. 11: 10). So basically Abraham and Jacob were looking for an eternal city, an eternal land. We today because, of the teaching of Jesus and Paul, and the

entire New Testament, look forward to a New Jerusalem in which there will be a new heaven and new earth. Isaiah 65 anticipates a new heaven and new earth. This is not a replacement theology, for we cannot say that there are not land promises for both Israel, the Old Testament believers, and the church will jointly experience this in the new heaven and new earth. But it will not be for a thousand years, but it will be for eternity agreeing with the phrase לעולם (for ever) in the Hebrew Bible.

Ezekiel 40-48

A couple of other thoughts as we reflect upon this, is how to deal with the text concerning the temple and the sacrificial system of the Ezekiel 40-48. We could understand this by what is called upokatastasis, i.e. something that is laid down and stands as a type a symbol of something else. For example the enemies of Israel, the Moabites and the Ammonites, are spoken as concerning the enemies of God's people in later days. We know that we do not see the literal Moab and Edom, but they become a upokatastasis, a type of the later enemies of God's people. And so I believe Ezekiel being apocalyptic is speaking of idealized worship in the temple of Ezekiel that will have its realization in a new heaven and new earth, not in a physical temple but with our Lord Jesus Christ who has replaced that physical temple. We see this idea in Revelation 21: 22 where the lamb will be in the new heaven and new earth, and there will be no need of a

temple because he is there; he becomes that temple. And so before the incarnation of Christ Ezekiel, I believe, is seeing an illustration, a symbol (as a priest himself) of what idealized worship would look like, but now that Christ has come and the incarnation of the God-man has occurred we see in Revelation 21-22 by progressive revelation what Jesus had predicted that no longer on this mountain or in Jerusalem we would worship but in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4: 21-23). And that truth is wrapped up in Jesus Christ who is the way the truth and the life and so we see in Revelation 21: 22 where he becomes the final temple with his people as we are seen together with them in the Holy of Holies.

It is also significant that in the Hebrew Scripture that there are references to a man who will die at a 100 years (Is. 65: 20), It is possible that this is a poetic way of saying that there will longevity in this final eternal kingdom also. The Torah also will go out from Zion (Is. 2: 3). This I believe is simply a reference to the fact that in that eternal kingdom of the new heaven and new earth, Jesus Christ will be the final rabbi or the final teacher who will establish the truth through his teaching worldwide. We are told that Messiah will arbitrate the peace among the nations (Is. 2: 4). Again this reference could teach that Jesus Christ is the One who brings peace and who will establish that peace among all peoples and there will be no more violence between peoples because of what Christ has accomplished through his death and resurrection and ultimate second coming.

Again, we were told that people will someday come and observe the feast of tabernacles in Zechariah 14. If the Egyptians will not come to that feast they would not have the inundation of the Nile. This could simply be a way of saying that the Feast of Tabernacles is illustration or a type of worship that is set up around Jesus Christ. Typically like Egypt, if people reject Christ they will not have water, and without water one cannot sustain life, meaning that only those who are willing to accept God's worship which now is in Jesus Christ can have life.

It is also significant that in the New Testament Jesus promises the disciples to set upon twelve thrones reigning over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19: 28). Again in eternity the apostles seem to have higher rank among the people of God because they were the ones who were with Christ, who were taught by Him, and who witnessed the resurrection. So He is promising them authority in his eternal kingdom.

It is significant to me that in the preaching of the early church that Peter could say in Acts 3: 20, "repent so that times of restoration might come from the face of the Lord." I believe "the restoration of all things" is taking us back to Eden again. In Revelation the trees of life brought back again in a new heaven and new earth picture a restoring of all things which were there at creation.

It is also significant in the book of Revelation that those who are overcomers are promised to rule the nations with an iron scepter (Rev. 2: 26-27). I believe here

we are looking at the church and believers who overcome sharing with Christ as Christ will judge the world with the iron scepter (which means authoritatively by the word of his mouth) and we as members of the church will simply be God's jury, so to speak, simply affirming that judgment Christ is bringing upon the world.

So putting all of these ideas together, it seems to me that a literal or normative reading of the New Testament as well as the Old testament leads to this position that Christ is going to return, then there will be a general resurrection of all peoples followed by a general judgment to eternal life or eternal death depending upon what one has done with Jesus Christ. Then there will a new heaven and new earth, as this world will be purged by fire bringing a newness. Christ will reign so there will be no need of the temple as He will be that temple.

Romans 11

As far as the land promise to the patriarchs of the old and to the Jewish people, in the future Israel will come to faith in Christ as there will a great revival spoken of in Romans 11: 26. And then the Lord will fulfill the eternal land promises not simply limited to a thousand year period but it will last eternally in a new heaven and new earth. The Lord then is not disallowing what he has promised but it is going to carry it out in a new heaven and new earth. Some have asked how does one account for Israel being brought back into their land in 1948 if there is not a millennial kingdom? Again I am not sure I see a connection between the two

things. Israel is brought back to the land so that God could preserve his people. It could become an encouragement to them to recognize the Lord's sovereignty and then what he has done ultimately in Jesus Christ. And so faith in Him will someday occur which will happen I believe among a large remnant of Jewish people. The Lord is bringing grace to the Jewish people in anticipation of that revival that will take place when they put their faith in Jesus Christ. I do not think that this means that there has to be a millennial kingdom or a temple in light of what has been said, but God is encouraging the Jewish people to look forward to the coming of the Messiah which is found in Jesus Christ. When they put their faith in Jesus Christ they will enter in to that eternal life of the new heaven and new earth which has been promised, then the eternal promise of land will be given after the final judgment when the new heaven and new earth is eternally here.

So in putting all of these pieces together and doing it in way while I realize may not have the final answer, it seems to me though that interpreting the Scripture in this way is to interpret them through progressive revelation. It is to interpret the Old Testament by the New by progressive revelation, and hence to interpret Revelation 20 in a way that it does not disallow the eternality of the promise of land by limiting it to a thousand years. And also this interpretation gives credence to the symbolic nature of the book of Revelation where a thousand is already used symbolically in the number 144,000 in Revelation 7.

In summary, in trying to see the whole, we are looking forward to the return of Jesus Christ and with this the great general resurrection that will occur and the final judgment seen in the sheep and goats, wheat and tares, a resurrection of life and death in John 5, the resurrection of Daniel 12, followed then by the new heaven and new earth that Isaiah 65: 17 speaks of as well as Peter in II Peter 3: 13, where the Lord is going to be faithful to fulfill his eternal land promise of the Hebrew Scriptures. We as believers in Jesus Christ are brought into that promise through Christ and as we are blessed in Abraham's seed in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3: 7-14) we enter into all of these covenant blessings. We will then be with our Lord Jesus Christ where there is no need of a temple because he is that eternal temple that we can adore and worship throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity in a new heaven and new earth.

41 - The Sanctity of life in the Womb to the end of life

One of the most important areas of the Scripture is to understand the sanctity of life from conception in the mother's womb to the end of one's earthly life.

When we read the Word of God, there are several passages in the Old and New Testament that teach the sanctity of human life from the womb.

Psalm 139: 11-16

First, there is Psalm 139. When we look at Psalm 139, the Psalmist is talking about getting away from God's presence and he feels that it might become so dark that God would not be able to see him. But he then says that, even the night will be light because God created the night and the day. "Indeed darkness will not cause itself to darken you from me because the night will shine as the day," the Psalmist says (v. 12). In other words darkness and the light are the same to the Lord and so the darkness can never hide us or conceal us from his presence. Then in verse 13, he says, "but you fashioned me in my mother's womb." Literally, you "fashioned my kidneys and you knit me together in the womb of my mother" (vs 13). Notice clearly the Psalmist says that the Lord had created his inner being in his mother's womb and had fashioned or knit him together in womb of his mother.

In verse 14, the Psalmist continues: "I will praise you because wonderful are your works and my soul knows that exceedingly well, for my frame was not hidden from you, when I was made in secret when I was literally embroidered, in the

lowest parts of the earth. He says his frame was not hidden from God in his mother's womb, but the Lord was there with him and was creating his arteries and everything about him. The Lord's eyes saw his embryo in his mother's womb and in God's book all of them were written, literally "days were fashioned," and yet there was not one of them (139: 16). In other words, you not only knit together my inner being the Psalmist says, but You fashioned my days of my life and You determined what my days would be like, as a potter fashioning a vessel.

So this text beautifully speaks of the Lord being able to see in the darkness of the mother's womb and even through the embryo fashioning his interior being. What a beautiful text teaching the sanctity of life from the mother's womb in that even the very days of the life of the Psalmist were fashioned before there was one of the them. So we see the beautiful sanctity of the child at conception as the Lord's creative work in forming and molding this human being in the womb of the mother and even determining his days. What a beautiful text on the sanctity of life from the womb.

Jeremiah 1: 5 and Genesis 12: 3

In Jeremiah 1, Jeremiah receives his call as a prophet before he was born. Notice Yahweh says: "I formed you in the womb; I chose you or literally I knew you intimately" (1: 5). In Jeremiah 1: 5 the text uses the same Hebrew word of a potter fashioning Jeremiah in the womb, and he then says "I intimately knew you

before you came from the womb and sanctified you to be a prophet to the nations.” In other words, before I was born, Jeremiah is saying, and he is quoting the Lord here, “before I came forth from the womb, I was set apart in a special way to be a prophet to the nations.” The potter is the Lord himself busy at work in the womb preparing Jeremiah for this ministry. Again we see the great sanctity of the life of a prophet being called and prepared before birth to carry out the will of God.

Further, the word seed often appears in the Hebrew Scripture and relates to the sanctity of life. The Lord says to Abraham, for example in Genesis 12: 3: “in your seed I will bring a blessing on all nations.” The seed from Abraham comes through Isaac, and it is a special seed destined to bring a blessing. Again this shows the sanctity of that seed having a future outside of the womb. Everything starts and begins at conception and predictably shows how the Lord would bless all peoples in the seed of Abraham in Christ. And when we think of this great soteriological and Christological fulfillment that from the womb of Sarah that seed was destined to bring forth the Messiah, we see again the importance of and the beauty and the sanctity of human life of the soul in the seed right at conception, and God’s purpose to carry out His salvation program to bless all nations in Abraham’s seed.

Luke 1: 44 and 2: 12

When we come to the New Testament Gospels and in the Epistles we have similar great teaching concerning the sanctity of life in the womb. For example in

the Gospel of Luke, when Mary visits Elizabeth, we are told that the virgin Mary was pregnant with the Lord Jesus and Elizabeth was pregnant with the John the Baptist. When Mary entered to meet Elizabeth, we are told that the baby leaped in the womb of Elizabeth and as Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1: 44). The Greek word for baby is brephos and can be translated “child” and so from the womb, John is the child or the brephos that leaps at a recognition of the Messiah the Lord Jesus that he would introduce who was the in the womb of Mary. That same Greek word brephos is also used by Luke when the shepherds are told of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke 2: 12 it reads: “This will be a sign to you, you shall find the child (the brephos) wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. And then there was suddenly with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God and saying: “glory in the highest to God and peace upon earth among men of a (His) good pleasure.” Notice the child, the brephos, outside of the womb here is the same Greek word as the child, brephos, inside of the womb of the Elizabeth in John the Baptist. Luke being a physician uses the same Greek word to express the human life of the child, the brephos in the womb, John and the child our Lord Jesus Christ, outside of the womb in the manger. Both show the absolute sanctity of life from conception and after birth by the use of the same Greek word brephos for child in both instances.

Galatians 1: 15

It is also significant that in the book of Galatians we have the apostle Paul being called to be an apostle from his mother's womb, just like Jeremiah. He was separated from his mother's womb with the calling that the Lord had put upon him to preach the gospel and he describes that in Galatians 1: 15 when he says: "when it pleased God who separated me out of my mother's womb and called me through his grace to reveal His son in me." In other words, Paul was set apart, a circle was drawn around him as it were, from the womb, the womb being the source or the place where Paul's call took place. Paul was destined to be an apostle just like Jeremiah was to be a prophet by the Lord who set him apart with this calling from the womb of his mother. When we think of the idea in Judaism that you need two witnesses to establish a case, here we have four witnesses, two in the Old Testament, Abraham's seed and Jeremiah and two in the New Testament, John/Jesus and Paul, establishing the case of the sanctity of life from the womb. When we think about it, to have stopped that process in the womb would have been to have stopped the very work of God's salvation in his covenant with Abraham, in his work with Jeremiah the prophet, in the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and John the Baptist, and in the apostle Paul. All the way through we see the Lord speaking in his Holy Scriptures of the sanctity of the soul and sanctity of life from conception to the very end of life. In the book of Ecclesiastes 12: 7 we

are told that the soul returns to God who gave it. At no point can one attack a soul which God has given without going directly against the created purpose and the will of God.

Scripture teaches the sanctity of life from the womb to the very end of life because God is the Creator of the soul and the fashioner of the soul. He is the one who alone gives life and guards that life from conception, to the very of end of life. Praise the Lord for the sanctity of human life from conception throughout life, through old age, to the very end of life. This is the great creative work that the Lord has always done. As a pastor, many years ago, we received a call from a young lady that was contemplating abortion. Janet and I shared these passages with this young lady and her family, and after reading them and pondering them she desired to follow the Word of God as a believer. We arranged that she could go to a place where other Christians would help her through the birthing of the baby, and then if she felt like she would want to have the baby adopted she could do so. She went to this loving home, those ministering there nurtured her and loved her and she had the child. But instead of adopting the child out, she decided to keep the baby herself and take care of it as its mother. As the time went on, Janet and I remember talking to her. The child had grown up and had become a wonderful servant of Jesus Christ. And as we look back over all of that, we cannot help but see the hand of God working in this mother's heart and in the life of her child, and

the great salvation work that both are able to bring to others as a result of believing and practicing the sanctity of human life from the womb.

The sanctity of life relates to its sacredness to the end of earthly life. The awful evil of euthanasia is also an attack on the sanctity of human life and God's creation. All of these passages can be equally applied to the sanctity of every person as God's special creation to the very end of earthly life when God alone determines life's end. Life is sacred from conception to the very end of life.

42. The Shema and the use of Ehad

The Shema in Deuteronomy 6: 4 reads, “Hear O Israel the Lord your God is One Lord.” The adjective **אֶחָד** meaning one is also used in Genesis 2: 24 in this way, “the Lord made male and female and they became **אֶחָד בָּשָׂר** one flesh.” In Genesis 1, on the first day of creation it reads and there was evening and there was morning which is clearly two but the text continues **אֶחָד יוֹם** , “day one.” So the word **אֶחָד** in these two texts in the Torah means we can have two, male and female but have one flesh, or morning and evening but “one day.”

This same adjective **אֶחָד** used in Deuteronomy 6:4 which allows for the reality of Trinity seen through the lenses of progressive revelation. Had the text used the adjective **יְהוָה יֶחֱד** that would have meant that God was a single unity without any other persons within the Godhead. For example, in Genesis 22: 2 God said to Abraham “take your **יְהוָה יֶחֱד** son, your one and only son whom you love and bring him to Mt. Moriah.” We must remember that there was only one son of the promise and that was Isaac. When the Torah uses **אֶחָד** ehad and not **יְהוָה יֶחֱד** (yahid) in Deuteronomy 6: 4, I believe the Holy Spirit is allowing for the reality of the Trinity that we worship in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit but One God. By the use of ehad, if we have male and female forming one flesh, and we have evening and

morning equaling only one day, I believe in the Shema we can have three distinct persons revealed progressively through Scripture that forms one God. A Triune God fulfills the Shema in the One God we Christians can pray to existing in the co-eternal persons, being God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is what I personally believe and understand as a Christian reading Deuteronomy 6:4 in light of the progressive revelation finalized in the New Testament.

43 – The simple life in following Christ

In David Thoreau's *Walden*, there are some classic statements that, I believe, can be applied biblically in our day and time. In his day, he talks about the mass of people "laying up treasures where moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal" (pg 8). He says, "it is a fool's life as they will find when they get to it, if not before" (pg 8). He then says that, as for many men, because of their constant labor and working for financial gain, man has no time but to be anything but a machine (pg 9). The finest qualities of our nature like the bloom on fruits can be preserved only by the most delicate handling, yet we do not treat ourselves, or one another, thus tenderly" (pg 9). Later he says that "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation" (pg 10). He encourages a simple life. He suggests a life that is not bogged down with constant activity, but a simple life of food and shelter, which he tried in his experience at Walden. Further, he says that "most of the luxuries and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only dispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind" (pg 14). All of the above is found in Thoreau's *Walden* in pages 9 through 14, with quotes scattered throughout those pages.⁴¹

As I look at the New Testament, I am reminded of the constant exhortation of Jesus who says, "lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and

⁴¹ David Thoreau, *Walden*, pp. 9-14

rust corrupt and thieves steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts and where thieves do not dig through and steal” (Mt. 6: 20). Paul tells Timothy in I Timothy 6: 8, “Be content with food and clothing in the carrying out of the ministry.” One of the reasons, I believe, that we often lead lives of busyness is that the simple things of life have been replaced by the luxuries and the desires that we often want. One of the greatest exhortations that we can find comes from our Lord Jesus Christ who calls us to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness (Mt. 6: 33). The basic things of life are food, clothing and shelter. He promises that these will be supplied to us, as the necessities of life. May we put forth that effort to live in the light of eternity, not sacrificing the present for the world that is to come.

44 – The Struggle of the gods

An area of Ancient Near-Eastern interest are the plagues of Egypt. When we read the account of the plagues, it is striking that God says, “I am contending against all of the Gods of Egypt” (Exod. 12: 12). It was in the plagues that Yahweh showed himself as the true God and Eternal One. This is similar in what happened with the contest with Ba’al in the book of Kings. Each plague is representative of a different god. For example, the river was worshipped as a god and it turns into blood. The frog was venerated as a deity and it is destroyed and becomes a stench in the noses of the Egyptians. There were some gods that were to protect from locusts and different diseases and yet they all failed. There was Ra, the sun god, that was to bring light and yet he was unable to bring Egyptians light but the Lord brought light to the Israelites.⁴² Then, the first born was considered a deity and the Lord judges the first born as well. So, there is in the plagues a statement against all the gods represented in these plagues. As we read them, we can worship the Lord as the King of Kings and as the Lord of Lords, as the only true Living God who works wonders for His people and the greatest was when He sent His only begotten Son to affect salvation on our behalf.

⁴² Merrill F. Unger, The New Unger’s Bible Handbook, pp. 73-74

45. The Suzerainty Treaty

A great discovery in the Ancient Near East was the Hittite suzerainty treaty. In the Hittite treaty, a king would make a treaty with a vassal people. The outline of that treaty found in these texts show an amazing parallel in the book of Deuteronomy. We might call the king the Suzerain, the ruler, and the people are his vassals. The form of the treaty went something like this: in the prologue the king would tell the people: “here is what I have done for you, and how I have cared for you.” The body of the treaty then is composed of two parts: the first being what the king expects of the vassal people, or the relationship between the king or suzerain and the people. They are not to go to any other king; they are to give him total loyalty. The second part of the body of the treaty was how the vassals were to relate to each other in keeping this treaty. This is followed by a blessing and cursing section. It would say, if you do what I say, here are the blessings that will come to you; if you do not do what I say, then here are the curses that will come to you. The treaty is concluded by an epilogue where a jury is called to bear witness that a treaty has been made.

It is this background that helps us understand the book of Deuteronomy. These treaties are basically of second millennium B.C. which points to Moses as the author of the book of Deuteronomy. As we look at the book, the prologue is in

the first four chapters. Moses is addressing the generation that is about to enter the land. Yahweh tells the people what He has done for them. He is the Suzerain, they are the vassal and there is the review of how He has brought them up to this point, and what He has done for them. This is followed in chapters 4 to 26 by the body of the treaty. In chapters 4 to 11, we have the first part of what we might call the vertical part or how the people are to relate to the Lord as the Suzerain. They are to love Him with all their heart soul and mind as seen in the Shema (Deut. 6), be faithful to Him and do away with all of their idolatry and have no other Suzerain before Him (Deut. 5). This is followed by the second part of the body of the treaty or what we can call the horizontal portion. In chapters 12 to 26 the book explains how the people are to relate to each other. Here is what I expect of you in keeping the treaty, God is saying. In chapters 27 to 30, Moses sets forth the realities of blessing and cursing. As we saw above, if you do what I say, Yahweh says, here are the blessings, but if you do not do what I say, here are the curses that will come to you.

Finally, in chapters 31 to 34, we have the conclusion or the epilogue. Chapter 32 is especially insightful where we find a jury called to bear witness that a treaty has been made. The jury is heaven and earth. The text says “hear oh heavens and I will speak and let the earth hear the words of my mouth” (Deut. 32:

1). Heaven and earth are a dual witness that a covenant has been made between God the Suzerain and Israel as the vassal people.

In conclusion, following this Hittite treaty pattern, Deuteronomy starts off with what God had done for Israel, followed by the body of what God expects from them in relation to Himself and the relation they have with each other. If they obey Him they will experience blessings, and if they do not obey, they will experience curses. This is followed by the courtroom scene where we see a jury bearing witness that a covenant has been made. This is a beautiful book and when Jesus Christ is tempted by Satan in the New Testament, He quotes from Deuteronomy repeatedly showing that He is the God-Man that fulfilled as the final Israel that which Israel did not effectively fulfill as we know from their history. The Suzerainty treaty has opened a path through the book of Deuteronomy to help us understand how the Holy Spirit used its format for our edification and learning.

46 – The Targumim in Understanding the New Testament

One of the great areas of Jewish literature is called the Targumim. The Targumim are the Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible. When the Jewish people went into the Babylonian captivity, they picked up the language of Aramaic and lost the actual speaking of Hebrew. In the synagogue, Hebrew was still the language of religion that was read. The Torah would be read in Hebrew but it would be translated into Aramaic. These translations became part of what we call the Targumim. It is significant that when we look at them, and study them, we learn some insightful information that can help us in the New Testament. While these were oral, they were codified, or put into written form, around the second century A.D.

As we look at the Targumim, and some of the background information they give us, one is the word *memra*, the Aramaic word meaning “word” that appears in Genesis 1 in Targum yerushalmi (the Jerusalem Targum).⁴³ It appears in the Targums as a substitute for God’s name himself. I think this is significant; it reads like this, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” and “the Word said,” and so forth. The two, God and the Word, were used interchangeably in this Targum. As we look at John I, John says, “In the beginning was the Word and all things were made by the Word.” That Word, of course, is the eternal Second

⁴³ Targum Yerushalmi, Genesis 1

Person of the God-Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. What is striking is that John, I believe, is working more from a Hebrew background than a Greek background. Any Jewish reader, I believe, would have connected the word “Word” with the Aramaic word *memra*, showing the eternity of Jesus Christ and His full divinity.

It is also significant that in the book of Ephesians chapter four that Paul is speaking of Jesus Christ ascending into Heaven and leading captivity captive and giving gifts to men. It says, “and to each was given the grace according to the measure of the free gift of Christ. Wherefore, he says, when He ascended on high, he led captivity captive and He gave gifts to men (4: 8).” This is a reference to Psalm 68: 18. The Hebrew speaks of the Lord ascending into heaven after he had come down to earth and led Israel into Canaan. After He had received gifts from men, He then shared it with the Israelites. We now have a change from the idea of receiving gifts to that of giving gifts and the application is applied to Jesus Christ. He is the one who has come to earth and has defeated sin, Satan, the demons, and having done so is now ascended back to heaven leading them captive, as it were, behind Him as the victorious Sovereign. He has now given gifts to men, (not having received gifts). This quote in Ephesians of giving gifts and descending into the earth rather than crossing the sea comes from the Targum Neofeti text that I believe sheds light on Paul’s use of this phrase here.

It is striking that as we look at the New Testament, that the Targumum played a key role in showing Jesus Christ as the eternal *memra*, or Word, equal with God the Father and as the One who ascended into heaven like Yahweh. As the Second person of the blessed Trinity, He has now has given gifts to the Church to be used in the exercise of its ministry.

47. The Three Matterhorns of the Old Testament in the Covenants

In the Hebrew Scriptures we have what might be called the Matterhorns of Scripture. By this I mean the covenants, the great covenants to Abraham, David, and the New Covenant. After calling Abraham out of Haran of the Chaldeans, the Lord said to Abram, “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and literally in the Hebrew it says, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

The Abrahamic Covenant - Genesis 12: 1-3

Genesis 12: 3, reads **וְנִבְרַכְוּ בְךָ כָּל מְשִׁפָּחַת הָאָדָמָה** “and in you all families of the earth will be blessed.” This great covenant promise tells Abraham that the Lord is going to make him a great nation blessing those that bless him and cursing those who curse him. Then there is this beautiful conclusion “in you all the nations of the earth will be blessed” This is a Niphal stem in Hebrew which normally is the passive stem of the Qal. Also the LXX render it as a passive in **ἐνευλογηθήσονται**, “they shall be blessed.” This gives us a wonderful anticipation of Jesus Christ. As we look at the New Testament and specifically at the writings of Paul in Galatians we see how Paul quotes this very text and applies it to Jesus Christ when he writes, “Therefore know that only those who are of faith

are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham" (Gal. 3:7-9).

This great covenant points to Jesus Christ; He is the seed of Abraham in whom both Jew and Gentile who put their faith in Jesus Christ receive the spiritual blessing of salvation and become the people of God through faith in Him, and this will encompass all nations. In Revelation 5:9, we see every tribe and people singing praise to the lamb for what He has accomplished by His redemption.

The Davidic Covenant – II Sam 7: 12-14

We then have the second Matterhorn in the Davidic covenant found in 2 Samuel 7:12-14 that reads: "And when your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with you fathers, I will establish your seed after you, which shall proceed out of you bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son." The anticipation here is that one who is eternal will reign on David's throne forever. This is looking forward to Jesus Christ who will be the eternal King who is the God-Man, the Second Person in the Holy Trinity.

In the Psalter, especially in Psalm 110:1, we see a further anticipation of the fulfillment of this covenant with the words:

נָאֵם יְהוָה לְאֹדְנִי שֵׁב לְיְמֵינִי עַד אֲשִׁית אֲבִיךָ הַדָּם לְבִלְלִיךָ

“The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” In this Psalm Christ is not only sitting at the right hand of the Father but He is also a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek as we will find in verse 4 of this Psalm and in Hebrews 7 by virtue of His resurrection.

We need to see the great fulfillment of this Davidic covenant in Jesus Christ.

Psalm 110:1 and 2 Samuel 7: 12-14 go together as we look at the teaching in the New Testament where we find that Psalm 110:1 is the most quoted around Christ’s eternal Davidic kingship. It was Jesus who asked the religious leaders in Matthew 22:43-46: “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make your enemies your footstool’”? “If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?” Of course no one was able to answer the question. Jesus was showing His divinity in the question as to how David could be the Messiah Lord if he is only the son? We know this points to the reality of the divinity of Jesus Christ who was David’s Lord as well as coming from the seed of David. Psalm 110: 1 is also seen in Acts 2, when Peter preaches that great sermon describing what had happened at Pentecost. He first quotes Joel 2, and Psalm 16 concerning the resurrection of Christ, “You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, neither will you suffer Your Holy One to see corruption.” Then Peter says, in Acts 2:29-36, “Men and brethren let me speak

freely to you of the patriarch David that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that from the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne (He then quotes from 2 Samuel chapter 7), he foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption” (Acts 2: 30-31). After speaking of that great resurrection event, he applies Joel and Psalm 110: 1 and says, “This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which you now see and hear. ‘For David did not ascend into heaven, but he says himself: The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2: 32-36). So the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the time He entered into His role as the resurrected King fulfilling the Davidic covenant.

This is promised by the angel Gabriel when he appeared to Mary. We read in Luke 1:31-33 “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” What a beautiful prediction of Jesus Christ, the virgin born Son of God through the miraculous biological miracle of the virgin birth who would become the eternal King as the resurrected Lord and reign on David’s throne forever at the Father’s right hand and will continue that reign at His return throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

While He is reigning now, He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet and the last enemy destroyed is death. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:25-26, “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” So Jesus Christ is reigning having conquered sin and Satan and the demons; He is now reigning at the Father’s right hand fulfilling the Davidic covenant and some day when He returns He will put the last enemy under His feet; that is death. We can say with Paul, “death where is your sting, grave where is your victory” (I Cor. 15: 55). Revelation sees the New Jerusalem where there is no more tears or death, for the former things have passed away (Rev. 21: 4). The Davidic covenant has tremendous meaning for believers in Jesus Christ for He is the one who is going to reign forever; He is the one who has conquered sin and death and will cast death itself into the lake of fire. We as believers can anticipate the wonders of that reality when we have our faith rooted in Jesus Christ.

The New Covenant – Jeremiah 31: 31-34

We look now at the third Matterhorn of the Hebrew Scriptures in the New Covenant. These three covenants are separated by time. The Abrahamic Covenant was announced around 2000 BC, the Davidic Covenant around 1000 BC, and the New Covenant around 600 BC under the ministry of Jeremiah. Jeremiah having announced that Judah was to go into Babylon says these words in Jeremiah 31:31-34, “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

What a beautiful covenant that is anticipating the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to establish this New Covenant relationship. As we look at the last supper in the Gospel of Luke, the Lord, as He was ready to go to the cross, took the bread and

broke it and said “this is my body that is broken for you. And likewise He took the cup and we are told He said, this cup will represent the New Covenant in my blood that is being shed for many” (Lk. 22: 19-20). So the New Covenant is pointing to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that He makes on our behalf.

As we look at the book of Hebrews chapters 8 – 10, the writer begins by opening with the new covenant from Jeremiah 31, expounds on its fulfillment in Christ, and then closes by again quoting Jeremiah 31. We see this New Covenant expounded in what we might call an envelope effect. The writer of Hebrews is trying to encourage the people to go forward with Jesus Christ and not go back to a sacrificial system. He does this by showing that the New Covenant is based on a better sacrifice and better sanctuary than the Old Covenant. He quotes Jeremiah 31:31-32: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jer. 31: 31-34; Hebrews 8: 7-10). He goes on to say that this covenant having been made new, the old covenant of the sacrificial system is now

vanishing and will no longer be in existence. He goes on to contrast in chapter nine, the earthly and heavenly sanctuary. The earthly, looking back at the tabernacle which was now a shadow points to the reality of the heavenly sanctuary where Christ the High Priest has entered once for all to put away sins forever by His sacrifice. This is described in chapters nine and ten as the writer says in Hebrews 10:1-4: “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”

He then goes on to describe how Jesus Christ, by coming into this world fulfills the New Covenant and takes away sin permanently. He quotes Psalms 40:6, “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire; my ears you opened: burnt offering and sin offering you have not required.” A body, however, has fulfilled all of these requirements and that body is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in His incarnate body as the God-Man. It was Christ’s will to come and provide a sacrifice; in so doing He is taking away the first, the old covenant sacrificial system, that He might establish the second, the New Covenant. By will of Jesus Christ coming to earth

and the offering of His body once for ever we have all been sanctified because of that sacrifice. Every high priest stands daily offering the same sacrifice that can never take away sins. But this sacrifice, on behalf of sins, was offered once for ever. Christ is now sitting at the right hand of God which fulfills Psalm 110:1 and He is going to be there until He puts all enemies under his feet. The writer of Hebrews concludes by saying “by one sacrifice He has perfected forever, those who are being sanctified” (Heb. 10: 14).

He then goes back to Jeremiah 31: 31-34, and says, “the Holy Spirit is testifying to us after he said, this is the covenant I am making with them, after these days, says the Lord, when I put my laws in their hearts and write them upon their understanding and their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more. Where there is sacrifice for these, there is no longer an offering concerning sin” (Heb. 10: 15-18). So, we see the envelope affect here, the author opens the envelop in chapter eight beginning with Jeremiah 31:31-34, speaking of the new covenant, he then talks about its contents. He then closes the envelope by again quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34 in chapter 10. The opening and closing of the envelope with the covenant of Jeremiah 31, emphasizes the removal of sins once for all by the sacrifice of Christ.

The writer of Hebrews then says, “We then have boldness that we can enter into the holiest place by the blood of Jesus, which He has made for us a new and

living way through the veil that is His flesh. Since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a genuine heart and full assurance of faith because we have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience through the sacrifice of Christ. Let us hold firm to this confession and steadfast in this hope and spur one another on to love and good works” (Heb. 10: 19-23). He tells them to not forsake from gathering together, as some are, and not go back to the sacrificial system of the old covenant (Heb. 10: 24-25). What a beautiful covenant that Jesus Christ has come to fulfill by the sacrifice of His blood for our sins by which we should be encouraged to always press on in Jesus Christ.

So we see three Matterhorns; the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12: 1-3) by which we are blessed in Jesus Christ in the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3), the Davidic Covenant found in 2 Samuel 7: 12-13 that one would reign on David’s throne forever, fulfilled in Jesus Christ in Luke 1: 31-33 as that One who begins and continues to reign until He puts death under His feet (I Cor. 15: 26). And the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 spoken of on that day that Jesus met with His disciples in that upper room, and He said “this represents the blood of the New Covenant that is being shed for many” (Lk. 22: 20). Jesus fulfills these great Matterhorns of the Hebrew Scriptures. May we ever praise Him in whom we have been blessed with our sins forgiven and now we have an eternal King-Priest who has defeated death

for us and who ever lives as our great High Priest making intercession for us,
having fulfilled the New Covenant.

48. The Two Great Commandments

In the Hebrew Scripture, the Shema of Deuteronomy 6: 4 is a very central text. But the next verse describes the relationship we are to have with the Lord as it reads: “and you shall love the Lord your God with all you heart, with all our soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6: 5). Then in Leviticus 19: 18, we have these words, “and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” These two great commandments, point to our vertical relationship to the Lord, and the horizontal relationship we are to have with our neighbor by loving them as we love ourselves. These were reiterated by Jesus Christ when He was asked which of the 613 commandments of Judaism is the greatest commandment which we should observe (Mt. 22: 36). Jesus answered with these wonderful words, “You shall love the Lord you God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your understanding. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like it, in that you should love your neighbor as yourself. In these two commandments, all the law and the prophets hang together” (Mt. 22: 37-40). How wonderful it is to hear these words repeated from the Torah by our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Didache, which is a first century document written around 70 to 150 AD, these words were picked up in the very first chapter as the essence of what a Christian preparing for baptism should observe. In the discussion in the Didache in chapters 1 - 6, there is the way of life and the way of death. The way of life

encompasses first and foremost these two great commandments. The Didache begins, “there are two ways; the first is the way of life and the other of death. And there is a great difference between the two ways. The way of life is this, first you shall love God who made you and then second you shall love your neighbor as yourself, and all things whatsoever you would not be done to you, you also do not do to another” (Didache ch1). It then goes on to describe how you love your neighbor as yourself by blessing and not cursing.

What is striking to me is that the bottom line of the Word of God in both Old and New Testament, and in the beginning of a document that was very well known right after the time of the apostles is the summation which our Lord highlighted, “to love God with all our hearts, soul, and mind, and then to love our neighbor as ourselves.” May we live our lives, applying these two great commandments, as our Lord Jesus has instructed us in our love and obedience to Him and His Word.

49. The Two Great Doctrinal Text

A number of years ago as a seminary student going through the book of Titus, I was fascinated by two great texts found in the middle of this book, one in chapter two and one in chapter three; both are beautiful doctrinal texts. Doctrine becomes the basis of application to the Apostle Paul in the book of Titus.

In Titus 2:11-14, it reads, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

I was amazed at this verse especially because, of the Granville Sharpe rule in Greek. When you have one article and a conjunction, with a noun or an adjective and, then when there is another noun or adjective but no definite article with the second noun of the phrase, then what we are looking at is one and the same thing. So, in looking at this text Paul says, “we are looking for the blessed hope and glorious manifestation, meaning that the blessed hope and the glorious manifestation are one in the same.” Further the phrase, “Of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ,” we have a beautiful text speaking of the deity of Jesus Christ. The Greek text reads:

τοῦ Μεγάλου Θεοῦ Καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The Greek article τοῦ covers the words “Great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” So Jesus is both

God and Savior. Paul goes on, “who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2: 14). What a beautiful phrase looking the vicarious atonement that Jesus Christ redeems us, by the price that He paid, which was His own blood. He redeems us from all lawlessness and purifies us to Himself a treasured people. (Titus 2: 14). The words λαὸν περιούσιον means “a treasured people.” The word περιούσιον meaning “treasured” views us as His special people. In Hebrew in Ecclesiastes 2: 8 it speaks of the תְּלִמָּוֹת or “treasure of kings.” The Septuagint translates this word by περιούσιον meaning “treasure” We find the same idea Exodus 19: 5 where Israel is called “a treasured people.” So we have a beautiful picture here of how treasured we are now that Christ has made us his very own. When I was a boy I heard the translation, “that He might purify to Himself a peculiar people,” and I wondered if we really were peculiar or strange. Later, I understood that this actually means “treasure” peculiar in the sense that in the old English translation that we are a peculiar or precious treasured people. With this background theology, Paul then concludes that we are to be zealous for good works. He exhorts Timothy to speak and exhort and reprove with every commandment, and to let no one despise him. Great practicality grows out of the wonderful theological truth of this passage.

The second doctrinal section is found in Titus chapter 3. It speaks of how we should maintain good deeds over against our past life as living in envy, hating one another and not living according to God's will (Titus 3: 3). "But when the kindness and philanthropy (the love for humankind) of God our Savior appeared, not out of works of righteousness that we have accomplished but according to His mercy. He saved us through the through the bath of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3: 4).

I believe this great text here refers back to Ezekiel 36: 25-26 and the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ concerning the new birth (Jn. 3: 3). In this regeneration, He poured out His Spirit upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, having been justified (δικαιωθέντες) by the grace of that One. In other words, we have been pardoned, acquitted, and declared righteous by God's grace through Christ. What a beautiful forensic term that in order for us to be acquitted our Lord Jesus was willing to pay the penalty for our sins, "so that we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3: 7). The result of all of this work of salvation is that we have now become heirs of God, according to our hope of eternal life. Paul's point of application is that it is on this basis of these great doctrinal truths that we can be kind to others.

What a beautiful combination of two doctrinal texts hidden as it were in this book of Titus that became the basis of Paul's instruction for practical living.

50. Walking and Sitting with the Lord – Definitions of a Disciple

Our ultimate goal in life should be to be a disciple of Jesus Christ by getting to know Him in a personal way, by sitting at His feet to learn from Him, and by walking with Him throughout our days.

I was amazed at the Hebrew verb **הלך**, “to walk” and how it is used throughout the early part of the book of Genesis. In Genesis chapter 3 after Adam had sinned, it says that “they heard the voice of Yahweh God walking in the garden literally in the breath of the day,” probably in the cool or evening portion of the day (Gen. 3: 8) The Hebrew participle **מתהלך** “walking” is what we call a Hithpael stem in Hebrew and it looks at a reciprocal relationship. God no doubt had spent much time, walking with Adam and Eve and it was the fall that destroyed that relationship. The thing that I think the Lord wants more than anything else is a reciprocal relationship with Him.

This great theme is reiterated again with Enoch in Genesis 5:22 where it says **וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ אֵת יְהוָה** “and Enoch walked with God.” The same expression is also stated in Genesis 5:24 stating again that Enoch walked with God and then the Lord took him to be with Him. What a beautiful reiteration of this great theme that Enoch, a godly man, shared a reciprocal relationship with God by walking, and fellowshiping, and being instructed by Him.

Also before the flood we see the same thing with Noah. We are told that “Noah walked with God” (Gen. 6: 9). And again the verb **וַיִּהְיוּ** (he walked) is used to describe that fellowship that Noah had with the Lord. It took time to walk with the Lord in a reciprocal relationship, and then we are told that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6: 8). As we think about this theme and trace it throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, we see these great men wanting to be in God’s presence, wanting to get to know Him, and walking with Him in a reciprocal way that depicts this theme.

I am reminded of Jesus on the road to Emmaus who was walking with the two disciples and opening up the Scriptures concerning Himself in the Torah, and in the Prophets, (Luke 24: 27). As we look at the Hebrew Scriptures the desire of one after another of the great men of God was their great desire to know the Lord in an intimate way. I think of Moses who wanted to see the Lord, if only His backside (Exod. 33: 23); he wanted relationship with Him. I think of David, a man after God’s own heart, who loved the Lord even in spite of all his problems and wanted that intimacy of fellowship with Him. His heart panted after the Lord for that fellowship (Ps. 42: 1).

I think of Isaiah who sees the Lord and himself as a man of unclean lips in Isaiah 6: 5, but wanting that relationship with a holy God. Or Ezekiel who eats a book to find the message that he was to deliver and it was sweet to him because it

brought him into a relationship with the Lord (Ezek. 3: 1-3). Before that, he had seen the glory of the Lord and marveled at it recorded in Ezekiel chapter one. I think of Daniel who sought the Lord and prayed diligently and desired an intimate relationship with Him (Dan. 6: 10). We could go on looking at all the different saints of the Old Testament.

When we come to the New Testament, I also think of Paul in Philippians chapter three who said that his great desire was “to know Christ and the fellowship of His suffering and the power of His resurrection” (Phil. 3: 10). Paul wanted above everything have a relationship with Christ. As we continue thinking of these things, we remember Martha and Mary. Martha was distracted doing many things as reported in Luke 10: 40 and Jesus said, “Martha Martha, you are very busy and troubled about many things” but Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, and Jesus said, that Mary has chosen the better part that will not be taken away from her” (Lk. 10: 40-42).

The best thing we can do in life is to walk with the Lord, sit at His feet and to accompany Him throughout life. As the disciples walked and shared and saw the Lord in His glory. So are we to spend our days walking with the Lord with intimacy of fellowship, and sitting at His feet in worship as Mary did.

In these beautiful examples of fellowship I believe we see the goal and heart of a disciple. A disciple wants to have a personal relationship with His Lord. What

greater joy is there than to know that Jesus wants to share in that fellowship with us. So as Paul said, his great passion in life was to know Christ in a deeper and richer way. We too need this to be our passion as we spend our days walking with Him and sitting at His feet so that we can know Him in a deeper and fuller way both here and throughout eternity.

51 – Types of Messianic Psalms

It is interesting to see different types of messianic Psalms we have those that are indirectly prophetic or typical, those that are typically prophetic, and those that directly messianic. I think Psalm 2 is an example of an indirectly messianic Psalm as it depicts the coronation day of a king who becomes a type of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His coronation as the final and eternal King (Acts 4: 23-28; 13: 33-34; Rev. 19: 15). Psalm 22 seems to be a typically prophetic Psalm in that while the Psalmist is a type of the suffering Christ, the words go beyond the Psalmist and prophetically point to the cross of Christ in a beautiful unmistakable manner (cf. Matt. 27; Lk. 23; Jn. 19). Psalms 110 we might categorize as a directly messianic Psalm in that it goes beyond any earthly person when the Psalmist writes “The Lord said to My Lord sit here at my right side until I make your enemies the footstool of your feet” (v. 1) and “you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (v.4).

Here is a king and a priest and Christ fulfills both offices in Himself. Psalm 110 is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament looking at the resurrection of Christ (Acts. 2: 34-36; Eph. 1: 20; Heb. 1: 10), His present session at the Father’s right hand waiting to put the last enemy of death under His feet (I Cor. 15: 25-26), and His eternal priesthood after the order of Melchizedek based on His resurrection (Heb. 7).

52 - Different Models of Matthew 2

We see different models in the book of Matthew chapter 2 relative to the reactions concerning Jesus Christ. First we have the wise men that travel a long distance from the east to see the child Jesus. They represent those who will search until they find the Lord. Second there are those who are totally disinterested pictured in the religious leaders. They have searched the Scriptures and know where He was to be born, in Bethlehem, but there is no indication that they have any interest in going with the magi to find the Lord. They may know a lot about Christ but have very little interest in worshiping Him. Third there are those like Herod. Herod acted like he wanted to see Christ but in essence he wanted to destroy Him. Here we see a model of those who want to destroy the Christ, those who hate the church and persecute it in any way they can. May the model of the Magi be our model as we follow in searching until we find the Lord and not be one who is indifferent or antagonistic toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

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