“Some of you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will restore the foundations once established in long ages past; you will be called the repairer of broken walls, the restorer of streets where people live. If you keep from desecrating the Sabbath, from doing whatever you want on My holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy day of *Yehovah* honorable; if you honor this day by not pursuing your own interests, or by seeking your own pleasure, or by speaking many words; and instead you choose to delight yourself in *Yehovah*, then I will make you ride over the heights of the land, and let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob.” For the mouth of *Yehovah* has spoken. Isaiah 58:12-14.

The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel

A First Century Hebraic Perspective of the Eternal Covenant of Peace

Book One

Dedication and Appreciation

This is dedicated to my wife. I am so grateful for the sacrifices you made so that I could complete this book. You are my gift.

There are 8 friends—Charlie, Ihnna, Carol, Loren, Chuck & Sarah, Steve & Marge—who have given me tremendous encouragement and support in my research and publications. God placed each of you in my life to encourage me to write about all of these concerns. I see the light of the Lord in your lives and I am unspeakably grateful. And there are just several good friends all of whom I cannot sufficiently explain the value you have added to my life. Nevertheless, I want to say thank you Mike for inviting me into your home to study Hosea. The verses we studied had a tremendous impact upon my thoughts and this book. Thank you, Damon for insights, praying, and for your friendship. Thank you, Sam and everyone at The Gathering in in Carmel—Bill, Brian, Steve, Greg, and others—for lovingly accepting me into your fellowship. Joseph & Nancy, and Denny & Kris—you were the best neighbors anyone could have hoped for. Bob & Barbara, and Kit and Tricia—you provided such kindness, care, and were stable prophetic influences in my life, especially when things became tremendously difficult. Thank you for your love, time, and commitment. Karen, Jay, Kimberly & Andrew, the Barn would not have been the place of fond memories that it is without each of you and so many others as well. Randy and Carolyn—for enduring friendship, as well as for training and time on the white-water where I learned to pray hard! Monte—for being such a great roommate in seminary. Brent, Kathy and Jason—for opening your homes to us and making us part of your family when we moved. And especially, Steve and Barb—you have been life-long friends. I could never sufficiently express my gratitude to the Lord for your friendship in my life. I love each of you and your families so dearly!

The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel

A First Century Hebraic Perspective of the Eternal Covenant of Peace

Book One

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Library of Congress Data

Service, Steven R.

The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel: A First Century Hebraic Perspective of the Eternal Covenant of Peace

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Book One ISBN: 9798195954284, Book Two ISBN: 9798191991795

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Description

According to Jesus, His followers would perform greater miracles. There are a number of reasons why this is not the case today. The Old Testament Deuteronomists, Second Temple Judaism, early Christian Orthodoxy, the Reform Movement, and Protestant Evangelicalism are all culpable for nefarious agendas throughout history attempting to remove divine-human subjectivity from faith in an attempt to intellectualize the Judeo-Christian Religion. Counterfeit substitute spiritualities have replaced the powerful legacy of the Israelite heritage which was the treasure of Jacob. He entered into the spiritual realm of the *aiona*, as did many others who were empowered to perform the works of God. This life living under the grace of God, which began with Noah, that characterized the life of Abraham, and that was celebrated by King David was the ancient life of Eden that Jesus came to restore. Although the example and direction in Scripture has been obscured, we are going to elucidate how it was that Jesus performed miracles and how this was taught to His Jewish disciples. Our goal herein, is to restore the lost and forgotten spirituality of ancient Israel.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to several researchers whose scholarship enriched my work on *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* and *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel*. These include R. Travers Herford (*Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*), Alan F. Segal (*Two Powers in Heaven*), Margaret Barker (King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John's Gospel, The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God, and The Mother of the Lord. Vol. 1, The Lady in the Temple), and Michael Heiser (*The Unseen Realm*). Finally, I express my sincere appreciation to Peter E. Prosser (Dispensationalist Eschatology and its Influence on American and British Religious Movements) for his mentorship during my graduate studies.

I fondly remember Dr. Prosser for a paper he let me write. I had been working on a commentary of the book of John and asked another professor whose class revolved around the life and teachings of Christ, if I could use this as the basis for our semester paper. Surprisingly, he rejected the idea.

Somehow Dr. Prosser and I ended up conversing about John's Gospel and the concept of being birthed through water. The church historian was also the first individual to call my attention to the concept of remembrance pertaining to the use of *zachar* in the Scriptures having to do with re-enlivening the presence of God.

I decided to take a chance on the basis of our mutual interest, and made an appeal to Dr. Prosser to allow me to complete the commentary on John. Of course, the elucidation of an extant Hebraic perspective, which predated the Orthodox construct, would have tremendous importance in the development of Christian History**,** especially with respect to making sense of spiritual experience over the last 2,000 years or so. When Dr. Prosser approved my proposal, I was elated and off to the races.

I am grateful for Prosser's insights and for the allowance to move that project further along. Ultimately, his course work revolving around the historical development of dispensationalism gave rise to several important ideas that help us to recapture the essence of Hebraic spirituality. May all of Dr. Prosser's family and continuing generations always be blessed!

Reading and Listening Notes

In instances where passages of Scripture are quoted or referenced without offering a copyrighted Bible version, typically, I have used the public domain American Standard Version and have updated this with revisions to make these more readable with contemporary terms.

In some instances, Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic terms are inserted into the biblical quotes in order to highlight information that has been hidden from readers by the work of translators. These few terms have been well defined and it is not necessary for anyone to know how to read the biblical languages to make sense of what is offered here. These terms have been italicized in the quotations making them fairly easy to identify.

These changes have been made to elucidate what the original authors taught in their own languages—teachings that ultimately have been hidden from the purview of English readers. Our goal is to elucidate facets of the knowledge base which existed long ago, but which have been lost and forgotten.

At times, I have used popular versions such as the New English Translation or the New American Standard Bible, but have rendered "the LORD" as "*Yehovah*" or "eternal" as "*aionios*," etc. Once again, the goal is to enhance the understanding of readers. In such cases I have included the respective note "modified NET," or "modified NASB," etc.

In many instances I quote Philo in order to demonstrate that the lost and forgotten understandings presented here were very much known in the first century A.D. Although there are more recent translations of Philo, I intentionally used the public domain version translated by C. D. Yonge. Some individuals may desire to check my work and this version is readily available from several sources online. I did this for the sake of readers who might not be able to obtain more recent works. The more widely used academic translation is: *Philo: In Ten Volumes (and Two Supplements)*. Translated by F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929–1962.

At the time of the publication of this book, a beta companion version was posted online for listening at YouTube.com

@hebraicspirituality. For the most part, I have endeavored to make the audio version match the printed text so that audiences could listen and read at the same time. For those who may be less familiar, note that the speed of YouTube videos can be adjusted in the settings.

Finally, I also want to thank readers in advance for their interest and pursuit of the Hebraic spirituality by which Jesus performed miracles. In ancient times, these works reshaped the lives of those who sought *Yehovah* with all of their being and turned the world upside down. By the time we are finished, readers will understand very precisely not only how Jesus performed miracles, but more importantly, how He was teaching His disciples and posterity to perform even greater works with the continuance of signs and wonders.

We are going to cover a great deal of ground in understanding the Scriptures on the way to unveiling the spirituality of Jesus.

If we had been able to read the Bible plainly, without a great deal of baggage comprised of incorrect religious knowledge that has been added throughout history and that now misleads our thoughts, what is presented herein would have been self-evident.

Therefore, much of our work will be focused upon calling out historical error with respect to misinterpretation of biblical concepts. Concerning several topics, we are going to confront documentable religio-political agendas in history wherein Jewish and Christian leaders attempted not only to hide information from posterity, but also examine how they intentionally set out to destroy practices that revolved around divine-human encounter. Our goal is to identify a multitude of errors so that we are eventually able to dismiss these invalid guideposts of biblical interpretation that have kept us from reading the Bible in the same manner as those in long ages past. We have to regain the Hebraic background knowledge that has been lost and forgotten so that we can understand the sacred writings in the same way as those who were alive between the time of Abraham and Jesus.

Much has been lost, and the restoration of these understandings will take some time.

Section One

Introduction

Biblical Knowledge Check

As we begin our journey into the faith traditions of the Bible, we want to begin with a few questions.

First Question—How many separate faith traditions were presented in the Old Testament wherein individuals authentically worshiped *Yehovah*?

If you answered, “one,” that response is incorrect.

If you answered, “two,” you get a gold star.

Second Question— Second Question—Did the faith tradition of the New Testament restore the spirituality which had previously existed in the Old Testament?

If your answer was “no,” that response is incorrect.

If you answered, “yes,” you get another gold star.

Third Question—Using the contextual study of Scripture as a guide, would it be accurate to define the term “grace” as the “unmerited favor of God?”

If your answer was “yes,” that response is incorrect.

If you answered, “no,” you now have three gold stars.

I am curious how everybody scored. The questions seemed easy enough. However, a bunch of us got several of these wrong—probably because we depended upon common knowledge we inherited from our religious traditions.

So then let me offer some extra credit questions—How many divine beings in the Old Testament had the name *Yehovah*?

If you answered, “one,” that response is incorrect.

If you answered, “two,” you get another gold star.

And then, one final chance to score more points—did Jesus teach doctrines, which if believed intellectually would have allowed so called believers to get into heaven after they died?

If you answered, “yes,” once again, that response is incorrect.

If you answered, “no,” you are correct and may have accumulated 5 gold stars.

If you did not earn as many stars as you hoped for with these questions, that’s okay. The exciting news is that we are going to study many topics to see what the Bible teaches regarding these concerns.

Because of faulty information passed down to posterity, many of us have been misled into thinking that the Old Testament was all about Judaism and that the New Testament was concerned with an entirely new religious movement known of as Christianity.

The Genius of Einstein

The band, Eiffel 65, summarized a problem that is endemic to Christianity, and they challenge us to travel a path to rediscovery:

> "We live in a bubble baby, a bubble's not reality,
> you gotta' have a look outside…
> The bubble's not reality,
> but it's inside your mind,
> making you forget where you're from
> and what's behind."[1]

Inherent egocentrism may prevent us from ever discovering the actual meaning of "grace," which is translated from the Greek term *charis* and the Hebrew term *chen*. Therefore, we might be kept from understanding and embracing the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace and the spiritual realities that were the concerns of ancient Israel. Individual, cultural, social, literary, spiritual, and religio-political mindsets deceptively convince each of us that we have sufficient education and awareness, whereby we have become qualified to judge and to situate ourselves in what supposedly are the most correct perspectives and intellectual positions. Ironically, as we grow in maturity of thought, the shape of the bubble in which we live changes and so does our perspective upon matters about which we were previously certain.

What process precipitates the adoption of a new perspective?

The question itself is the portal to a road each of us needs to travel if we are to receive the maximum benefit of this book. The desire and willingness to seek and acquire knowledge is predicated upon the underlying assumption that there is more to know. The awareness that discovery is possible is the turning point toward potential that could provide the keys to change one's existence. The openness and willingness to give oneself to the demands of investigation is driven by the hope of obtaining such treasure.

---

[1] *Living in a Bubble*, from "Europop" by Eiffel 65, Bliss Corporation, Universal Records, Republic Music, 1999.

Nevertheless, the unseen dilemma we face concerns our present intellectual commitments. Will dominant contemporary conclusions that we have accepted as fact be allowed to continue to hold us back from new realizations?

Since there is in actuality the potential to learn far more than is presently known, the facets of the limited knowledge to which we cling and consider to be accurate are, in reality conclusions that have been based on very narrow streams of understanding. Stubborn ignorance stagnates the mind, allowing for no possibility of growth. This is a problem that is endemic to all of humankind. The gift of self-awareness and our freedom to call into question popular worldviews and conclusions may help each of us find our way to new understandings—thereby enabling us to walk in new horizons of discovery.

Historical discussion includes Albert Einstein's assertion that if he had first studied traditional mathematics, these would have kept him from his greatest discoveries. It is difficult to replace firmly planted ideas with new ones. Einstein's genius was the intuitive realization that the intellectual method of rational deduction steering history had not arrived at scientific or mathematical conclusions that were accurate. On the basis of this reflection, he did not accept and follow the party-lines of modern investigation, but instead began to look inductively at the world around him to see if alternate realizations were possible. Moreover, Einstein was not trapped by the seductive snare of a desire for popularity. He neither pandered for the approval of his ideas, nor for personal acceptance by his peers. Instead, he was courageous enough to question the *status quo* of the establishment. As a result, he moved on to discover and embrace what others around him could not see.

Our mission and demeanor are the same as we re-examine the Scriptures and the history of the Judeo-Christian faith tradition. And to be honest, what we discover might not always make us comfortable.

But please, as we proceed with criticisms of leaders in these faith movements and comment negatively on the malevolent actions and agendas of religious orders and individuals, let us not become reactionary. Such a disposition only results in reduplication

of error. It takes maturity to control one's frustration or anger. And it requires patience to determine a more favorable course. Jesus called His disciples to love and to forgive their neighbors, and this is not always an easy calling. Hatred is a snare that defiles those caught in its trap. Be filled with peace always, and move forward in love!

The blindness of some of Einstein's contemporaries was fostered by an elitist attitude. Pride blinds those whom it has enslaved, and the desire to please others is a snare. Some satisfy their own human desire for acceptance and maintain their statuses as approved members of scientific and religious communities by just merely going with the flow of what everyone else thinks.

It takes tremendous courage to disagree and to actually say something about it in a positive and respectful manner.

Einstein's contemporaries also proved that they were steeped in ignorance. Along with having gained important titles and appointed positions of authority, they also assumed this afforded them the privilege to judge and perhaps to ridicule others who thought outside the box. However, they only proved that they were irremediably entrenched in the intellectual inaccuracies of their predecessors. They were crippled and prevented from becoming newly defined by emerging realizations.

Enticing arguments, convincing ideas, and captivating prescriptions for thought and doctrine that steered former generations and stroked arrogant egos, albeit well-intended, live on to maniacally control the lives of those who will not call these into question.

The possibility for intellectual growth depends not only upon the predisposition of an inquisitive mindset, but moreover, upon an individual's ongoing freedom to question the legitimacy of the knowledge she or he has acquired. The most absolute certainties are fallible. Einstein learned to question those of his contemporaries and perhaps suffered a bit of marginalization and pain for this. Nevertheless, his detractors were eventually cured of arrogance with the practical demonstration of his realizations.

The knowledge base of humankind and its best skills in interpretation and understanding are limited by the process of

rational deduction. The breakthrough to a new perspective is engendered by first arriving at the humbling realization that much of what we think we know is, in fact, incomplete or flawed.

Only in the Ineffable is there omniscience.

A dedicated theologian, a man of enduring faith, and a personal friend once explained that he began to learn when he started calling into question everything that he had ever been taught. While hanging on tightly to Jesus, his Teacher, he began his journey outside the faith tradition in which he was raised, questioning the very legitimacy of its doctrines and praxes. What about the ideas laced with agendas that contained and conditioned him? Where did they come from? His ardent curiosity and unstoppable desire to learn propelled him into an intellectual journey that reshaped his spiritual life. He realized that his true security did not come from fallible doctrine or by championing his denominational party-

lines, but instead through embrace of the mystery of personal relationship with God, his Father, through his Messiah. As he embraced the Ineffable, intellectual study became something new. His own refreshing literary work, entitled “The Messianic Matrix: A Theological Abstract on Pentecost,” today serves to reshape the tradition in which he was raised.

Moving forward in the genius of Einstein, we call into question, not only the definition of “grace” and prevailing understandings regarding God’s covenant relationship with various members of humankind, but, moreover, enduring centuries of agenda, misconception, and error that have misled seekers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Early Orthodox Christian leaders, who had been raised reading Classical Greek, superimposed the translation of “favor” over instances of *chen* and *charis* in the Scriptures, which should have been interpreted as the manifest presence of God, with Whom celebrants of the Eternal Covenant had found divine-human guidance, help, and peace. By making use of inductive contextual analysis, we are able to determine that Grace was the presence of God’s living voice. Grace was the personal abiding presence of His Word. Grace allowed for those seeking righteousness to enter

behind the veil separating heaven from earth—in order that the obedient might stand in the *aiona*—before the throne of God. Furthermore, the early Greek bishops converted Hebraic actionable faithfulness into cognitive belief, licensing themselves to impose Aristotelian rational deduction upon the Scriptures in order to derive factual doctrines.

Abraham was the example of faith in the Scriptures. And Abraham's faith is what the Apostle Paul taught adherents in the Christian Era to embrace. This was a faith that was embedded in two-way divine-human communication by means of various kinds of mysterious encounter with the Word of God. Authentic faith was proven by obedience in carrying out God's direction. Put quite simply, any brand of faith that does not prove itself by works is not the faith described in the Scriptures.

By and large, the faith prescribed by Orthodox Churchianity has instead often been shaped by Aristotle's philosophical influence, wherein the Greek term *pisteuo* is translated as having to do with intellectual belief, verbal confession, and the affirmation of religious information. This had absolutely nothing to do with the faith of Abraham who surrendered his will, loyalty, and future to *Yehovah* as a servant. This is what God accounted to the Patriarch as righteousness. And Abraham would become a father to nations of peoples who would replicate the exact same loyal faithfulness and obedience to God Most High.

No matter what we have been led to assume by churchianity, the faith of the Scriptures was never rooted in an effort to discover correct theological knowledge. The practice of gaining knowledge in the Greek Bible is called gnosis. Religious practices that revolved around the intellectual acquisition of correct knowledge or doctrine is Gnosticism. Neither Jesus nor Paul, nor anyone else in the Bible, taught gnostic means by which to get into heaven after death. However, a large segment of churchianity has been founded upon this very activity.

Abraham entered into God's reign on the Earth through divine-human encounters. He sought God Most High, or in some cases, translations of the Scriptures make it seem as if the Patriarch just ran into the Word along the path of his daily routine. Suddenly

he found himself standing before angelic beings or was subsumed into lengthy visionary experiences.

Similarly, Jesus taught His disciples that the daily priority was to seek God's kingdom and righteousness. If entry into the kingdom came first, then all other needs in life would fall into place. Those who encountered the Lord would be set on course with the expectation of obedience. By walking out their deeds as they had been divinely instructed, those who were truly loyally faithful proved their allegiances to God.

In his epistles, John declared that the authentic followers of the Word were those who obeyed His commands. They were not instructed by human leaders, but instead they set about listening through the anointing they had received from the Spirit. The Hebraic *aionios* life was characterized by continuing encounters with the mysterious presence of the Word.

Therefore, one's daily choices, behavior, and character mattered if they hoped to continue in fellowship with the abiding Word of God.

> Now, little children, remain in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not draw back from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness also has been born of Him.[2]

Later when John wrote again, he encouraged listeners,

> Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does what is good is of God; the one who does what is evil has not seen God.[3]

Herein, we want to point out that encounter with the Word of God was seen and heard. Accordingly, just as Jesus had instructed the disciples to pray that they would have eyes to see and ears to hear, they needed to recognize their connection with their angelic identities who beheld the face or presence of God.

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[2] 1 John 2:28-29 NASB

[3] 3 John 1:11 NASB

Recall that Jesus had warned His disciples, “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones. I am telling you that in heaven, their angels continually behold the face of My Father Who is in heaven.”[4] Human eyes might not be able to see into the spiritual realm. However, human physical limitations were overcome by God’s provision of an alternate heavenly identity.

Later we are going to discuss the historical narrative of the Sabbath, wherein, those entering into the celebration of the holy realm received an “additional soul”—spoken of in Hebrew as the “*neshama yeterah*” (נְשָׁמָה יְתֵרָה). Herein, they were given spiritual eyes to see and spiritual ears to hear.

Accordingly, Jesus had instructed the disciples to pray that they would have eyes to see and ears to hear.

So then, there was a distinction between the nation of Israel and those who followed in the spirituality of the namesake of “*Ish-raah-el*.” Those who saw and heard the Word of God and who obeyed were the authentic “*Ish-raah-el-ite*s.”

Individuals could not lay claim to this title unless their works of obedience proved their identities. First and foremost, inheritors of the *aionios* life were affirmed by the ongoing love they demonstrated for their neighbors.

Loving one’s neighbors in obedience to the Word was the ultimate objective of Hebraic Spirituality and the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. John exclaimed, “God is love.” Therefore, those who were truly born of God proved as much by their choices, actions, and character.

If theologians want to spend all day reading the Bible in order to extract theological doctrines, so be it. However, do not be deceived. Jesus did not have anything to do with that kind of gnostic religious practice. Instead, He taught willing faithful seekers the way to enter into the realm of the spirit. He taught those who loved *Yehovah* with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength—as was proven by their actions—how to become empowered by God’s *chen*, *charis*, or grace, and how to manifest God’s kingdom on the Earth. They entered the holy place. They heard and saw what the

[4] Matthew 18:10

Father was doing and replicated His works in the needy world around them.

Why is it that for hundreds of years, theologians have studied the Bible but have not figured this out?

Although many leaders within the Judeo-Christian movement have claimed to be the followers of Abraham, Moses, or Jesus, quite often they are terrified to consider the implications of the kind of spirituality that these men practiced and modeled for others. All too often, religious teachers love the safety of their doctrines and the impregnability of the daily principles for life. And quite often, ones such as these fall into the destructive snare of codependently taking upon themselves the responsibility of controlling the lives of others—a work that should have remained under the domain of God's Spirit.

If your congregation's leader does not abide with a focused initiative opening the pathway into the spirituality of the heroes of faith in Scripture, all of whom heard the voice of God and faithfully obeyed, then why are you really there? If he or she focuses on the five or six principles they have extracted from a particular passage in the Bible, are they not merely prescribing another law?

Ultimately, we have to ask ourselves whether or not we authentically desire to pursue the ancient spirituality of *Ish-raah-el*.

Do you want to see and to hear God for yourself, and do you want to walk with Him as His faithful servant?

We so easily take for granted the theological perspectives and church practices that we have been taught and may have naively trusted. Nobody ever calls into question matters about which we think we are certain. Instead, we naturally live in a dynamic of taking the information that we have been intellectually spoon-fed and apply these prescribed ideas back over our reading of the biblical texts.

We live in a bubble baby, but we've gotta' have a look outside!

The intellectual loss of the meaning of the first century's understanding of grace and faith occurred over a period of less than 200 years. Subsequently, as theologians, scholars, and students of the Scriptures read, translated, and interpreted for the last 2,000

years, we have unwittingly and unquestioningly superimposed our own contemporary definitions of terms back over the texts of the Bible. After multiplied generations of misunderstanding have built up layer upon layer of misapprehension, misinterpretation, and misapplication of the intended spiritual instruction left to posterity in the Scriptures, to a large degree, we have lost our way. As we will consider, in fact, many biblical terms that we think we have accurately understood no longer point back to the same concepts authors of the Scriptures had in mind when they wrote to preserve the Hebraic paradigm of faith that spanned from Abraham, that was celebrated by King David, and that Jesus sought for His disciples to embrace.[5]

Resultantly, well-intended adherents of Judeo-Christian faith traditions, in large part, have read translations of the Scriptures rather than original language documents and have depended upon these in order to find prescriptions for their spiritualities. However, they may have been somewhat misled by relying upon texts that have not accurately portrayed the concerns of the original authors.

This problem has been further compounded by philosophical changes in the ways the world has been trained to think, as well as by the well-intended, loyalist, unquestioning, absolutist, religio-political commitments we have unwittingly made to religious traditions that have blinded us to the original intentions of the authors of Scripture.

Each of us would like to think that the religious tradition in which we presently abide has gotten everything perfectly correct about theology and spirituality according to the Bible. However, these prescriptions for faith might not be as infallible as we have assumed. Consequently, devotional readers examining incomplete or inaccurate translations of the Scriptures, and ones who have remained devout to their religious traditions for centuries have been prevented from clearly understanding and following in the heritage intended for them in the biblical writings.

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[5] Note Matthew 1:1: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

Due to these and other intricacies, Judeo-Christian spirituality has meandered quite far away, not only from the lost and forgotten Hebraic knowledgebase, but also, from the faith practices of the first century believers. Not only will we unveil how the meaning of "grace" and the concept of faithfulness based upon the translation of *pisteuo* were lost, but we will also reexamine the spiritual implications of how tangible encounter with the Lord was understood from the time of the ancient Israelites to the time of the disciples of Jesus. Perhaps if we find the means to humble ourselves, we will also find our way back to the dynamic, living, mysterious, miraculous faith that altered the course of history in the first century.

To be honest, the loss of our comprehension of biblical concepts is scandalous!

Moving ahead, as I address religious agendas that were at work in the centuries following the life of Jesus, I will offer a critically reflective journey spanning from the first century to the fourth century A.D. We are going to see that well-intended Christian Orthodoxy established itself hundreds of years after Jesus walked the Earth, in an entirely different context of thought, faith, and spiritual experience than that of the Jewish disciples of Jesus—and how Orthodoxy made considerable mistakes in its understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures. Moreover, we are going to examine what can only be described as a hateful malevolent pogrom by early Orthodoxy, aimed at the eradication of divine-human miraculous subjective experience with the Word, which mirrored the earlier agendas and destruction caused by Second Temple Judaism. Our goal in bringing these matters to light is to honestly point out error and wrongdoing and then to call both Christian Orthodoxy and Judaism to move forward toward maturity.

By recognizing and confronting historical religious agendas, and in admitting that our forefathers made huge mistakes, we step toward healing and restoration. I hope that readers will understand that I have no intention to malign Orthodoxy, in whose tradition I was raised and appreciate, nor to speak ill of any Christian denomination or to disparage that of our Jewish forerunners who have ascribed faith in the same Heavenly Father.

Sadly, in some cases throughout history, there were harmful agendas at work, and in order to make sense of changes in our understanding, we cannot leave these problems unaddressed.

Some of the issues that led to the loss of the meaning of "grace" and other biblical terms were not specifically the fault of anyone in particular. Innocently minded students are naturally inclined to absorb and to become absorbed into the teachings of those who they understand to be well-intended teachers. Moreover, we live in a world where languages evolve, pass away, and then sometimes even are once again revived. In the process, older, foundational understandings can be easily lost. However, where there was malicious intent or good aspiration with ignorance, it is only realistic in a responsible historical discussion to honestly address wrongdoing, error, and harmful agendas where these have occurred. This is necessary not only to avoid making the same mistakes with respect to our own character and behavior, but moreover, to discontinue walking in the same intellectual errors we have innocently accepted for multiplied generations over thousands of years.

Unstable ancient foundations should not be covered up or ignored, but instead these need to be identified, humbly understood for what they were, and then be courageously replaced.

I hope for my audience to come away with the realization that a faith structure existed hundreds of years before Christian Orthodoxy that was vastly different than what has been passed down to posterity. For all intents and purposes, the spiritual practices that are going to be describe herein no longer exist in popular dominant forms of Christian denominationalism. And moreover, as we will see, the same statement is accurate regarding maligned agendas and the willful destruction of subjective divine-human experience within Judaism as well.

We hope for readers to gain the realization that certain aspects of this antecedent spirituality were deliberately attacked and destroyed, not only by leaders in the Orthodox Christian tradition, but also by their Jewish predecessors.

By raising awareness to these concerns, my goal is to rebuild a coherent intellectual path back to the first century way of understanding faith and spirituality which was the focus of the Gospels, so that all of us have something tangible and miraculous to offer as a blessing to the nations.

If we remain in ignorance regarding how it was that Jesus performed His miracles, how can we hope to replicate His ministry? Recovering knowledge of the spirituality of ancient Israel should be of the highest priority for those who consider themselves to walk in the faith discussed in Scripture.

It is with tremendous dependence upon Aristotle's rationalism that prominent leaders of churchianity have prided and credentialed themselves as astute teachers. And yet many could not move a pile of dirt with their gnostic intellectual religio-political counterfeit representations of faith. They have been deceived into thinking they are doing something that pleases God by converting the narratives of Scripture into doctrines that supposedly provide religious safety to the masses. And yet, with these fraudulent distortions, they actually deprive their impressionable followers from comprehending how they might otherwise tangibly walk in the miraculous *aionios* life of God.

Can an individual validly call himself or herself a disciple of Jesus if he or she does not walk in the actual spirituality of Jesus and teach what He taught? Such ones have replaced the instruction of Jesus with ideas that are foreign to the minds of the authors of Scripture. They adorn themselves with fancy impressive clothing but have no spiritual power. Instead, they rely upon empty rhetoric and the instruction of lifeless gnostic theological principles. Clever speech, theatrics, and eloquence have replaced the authority of God.

These ones seldom seat themselves at the table of fasting in the kingdom of God in order to await the bread of heaven. They do not even know what this is. Rather instead it appears as if Judeo-Christian spirituality in the western world today mainly revolves around pursuit of the American Dream. We seem to thrive on feeding our own self-interests by means of instant gratification.

I acknowledge that this is a temptation for many of us. All of us are human and have at least one foot in a fallen world. By contrast, Jesus taught that it was not possible to simultaneously pursue the kingdom of God and wealth. He said that our eye would either be focused on one or the other.

Rather instead, the Hebraic tradition offered a vibrant, prophetic, living spirituality—so much more than mere facts about God, Jesus, and sin, etc. These have all too often been used for intellectual manipulation or as armaments and weaponry to prove whose ideas are denominationally correct.

In so many ways, the prophetic miraculous life that characterized individuals from start to finish in the pages of Scripture was remarkably different than today's churchianity. We have to make a choice about what we will pursue in this life. The experience of the presence of the Lord is precisely what I hope for my readers to embrace!

For the record, I identify myself as a Christian, but I should warn readers that there are many different kinds of characters who use that label. Some of my brothers and sisters are very kind loving individuals. They are understood to be the children of Abraham—as is continually proven by their compassionate deeds and by the prayerful practice of their faith. As we will see, however, some of those who call themselves "Christian" are the most deceptive and ruthless individuals any of us would hope never to meet. Tragically, several of these maligned individuals have had the greatest influence upon contemporary Christendom.

It may be odd for anyone Jewish to think of me, a Gentile, as having anything of value or relevance to offer to their spirituality, but let me say with a smile, some of my closest friends have accused me of becoming Jewish! Nevertheless, I do not pretend to be Jewish. For those who are curious, I was raised in the Baptist tradition. However, it was two Roman Catholic brothers who led me to the Lord, teaching me how to worship, to read the Bible, and how to pray. For several years in college, I became part of an independent charismatic church. For most of my adult life I was a part of Reformed Presbyterian or Evangelical charismatic churches. While working through seminary, I read Timothy Ware, otherwise

known as Kallistos Ware, and absolutely fell in love with his presentation of the Eastern Orthodox Tradition. Much to my loss, somehow, I have never been privileged to have found fellowship with brothers and sisters in the Eastern Orthodox Institution. Most recently, pre-covid, my church life was in the Methodist denomination. Nevertheless, it is also possible that I just might be discovered sitting quietly in the Roman Catholic mass, sacredly seeking the presence of the Lord while the bread is being broken and listening for the voice of the Lord—tearfully remembering Jesus' sacrifice while passing through the cleansing water into life behind the veil.

I love many individuals and many aspects of all of these traditions. Having watched several videos on Karaite Judaism, I find some appeal to their devotion to the Bible. I have never yet had the opportunity to meet anyone personally from this stream of faith. I have often wondered if there still remains a present-day contingency of Judaism which stresses the importance of practicing the presence of the Lord and living life by the intimate direction of His mysterious subjective voice. If so, I wonder how similar their lives and worship styles are compared to those of Christians who walk in this kind of spirituality.

To be honest, spiritually speaking, I am not exactly sure where I belong with regard to denominationalism. Nevertheless, I have always gotten along well with those who find that the joy of the Lord is their strength, and who love to walk in the righteousness of the Scriptures and who love their walks of fellowship with the Lord Almighty—Creator of the heavens and the Earth. I enjoy gathering with others in prayer. I feel most comforted dwelling in an abiding place before the throne of God, wrapped in the LORD's Love, guidance, and protection, more than being anywhere else. Looking back, I reflect that my present spirituality has developed over a long journey through this earthly life. I love so many people from diverse faith traditions!

Therefore, by way of spiritual progeny, I consider myself to be a child of Abraham and endeavor to do the deeds of the Patriarch to bless the nations and to walk in the admonition of Isaiah, to raise up the ancient ruins, and moreover, to practice true

religion by caring for orphans and widows. I like to think of myself as a pilgrim on a three-day journey to a place of sojourn in the Word where my eyes will see a far and distant land. If anyone completes the reading of this book, they will precisely understand what is meant by this statement. Whatever or whoever I may be by blood line, theologically, or spiritually, my greatest hope in all the world is that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will always regard me as His sincere child.

At its heart, Hebraic spirituality is about practices and experiences. A divine-human relationship is rooted in two-way communication, intimacy, and in the meeting of needs. A religion that prescribes anything less is nothing but empty gnostic theories.

The history of the Bible is a collection of testimonies about individuals who encountered God. It is a witness to *Yehovah's* involvement in the lives of people and nations. The narratives tell the story of God Most High's restoration of His children into the fellowship of Eden.

My greatest desire is not merely to unveil compelling biblical insights, but moreover, to lead readers, who obtain a clearer understanding of the texts of Scripture, to embrace facets of the spirituality that ignited the passion of the first century faithful seekers of the Lord. The intellectual journey, presented herein, has been for me a treasure that redefines faith, theology, history, and all of who I am.

At the start, I challenge readers with these questions: "What kind of spirituality were we intended to have embraced, in the here and now, according to authors of the Scriptures?" How might we describe and characterize the covenant relationship that we walk in with God Most High? How does this change our lives each day? What actual reality did the Jewish people experience from the time of antiquity into the first century that caused them to identify themselves as being under the grace of God? How was it that they could claim that they were not under the Law, but instead under grace, when Jesus had affirmed that the Ten Commandments would endure as long as heaven and Earth?

Were they merely learning aspects of religious knowledge about theoretical concepts that could be compiled in a list of

supposedly correct facts about God and a set of intellectual religious doctrines? Or instead, was there something tangible that Jesus revealed to His faithful followers? Why did Jewish authors in the New Testament era associate the covenant they had received with Abraham and Moses?

I hope that you will follow ahead courageously outside the bubble in which you were trained to think and live in the inquisitive genius of Einstein! May you be granted eyes to see and ears to hear, and I pray that you are blessed!

The Lost and Forgotten series revolves around "entry into the kingdom of heaven"—which was equally described in the Scriptures as the "kingdom of God." When we read English translations of the Bible, we are naturally inclined to divide the cosmos into two realms which are the heavens and the Earth. However, there was a point of connection between these where humankind encountered the Holy One of Israel in the cloud. This is where they received the *davar* or the Word of *Yehovah*.

In the prologue, we called attention to the second power of heaven Who made His appearance in the cloud. He was the administrator of the Eternal Covenant of Peace with whom Jesus had repeatedly identified Himself in the Gospels of the New Testament.

Proverbs 25:2 makes the compelling statement, "It is the glory of God to conceal a Word, but it is the glory of kings to search out the Word." Where did the Israelites search and finally go when they sought and obtained the Word of God?

Those who would rule and reign with God on the Earth were those who entered behind the veil into the hidden realm of the holy of holies. Such ones as these sought after and had discovered the secret mysterious place of *Yehovah's* Word. Those who proved their identities by their deeds as being both the children of Abraham and the children of God were raised up to new life. They received eyes to see and ears to hear in order to tangibly behold the glory of God.

Our ultimate goal is to explain the pathway into that point of connection in order to participate in the Kingdom of God—empowered by the Lord, here and now, today.

In complete contrast to Orthodoxy's errant conclusion that the kingdom of heaven was mainly accessible only after death, Hebraic spirituality emphasized encounter with the Word in the present world for those who were under the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God—whereby celebrants of this ancient tradition found themselves abiding in the presence of the Lord or His Angelic host.

Jesus went to prepare a dwelling place in the holy realm of heaven for the children of God. It was never Jesus' intention for us to die before we experienced our intended inheritance in the spiritual realm. Yet the Rabbi warned "For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it." Our hope is to make a comprehensible presentation of the teachings of Jesus so that each of us understands the way into His kingdom in order to obtain our standing places before the throne of God.

By the time of Jesus' birth, the pathway, into the kingdom or the Word of God, for all intents and purposes had been lost. This was due to the murderous and maligned agendas of the Second Temple leaders. The daughter of Zion had forsaken *Yehovah*. After access had once again been provided by Jesus, this was later obscured by early Orthodoxy's imposition of Classical Greek understandings back over biblical references to grace. We discover the means back into the spiritual dwelling place prepared before the foundation of the world, not only by means of a historical survey of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Old Testaments, but moreover by learning how the way into the holy of holies was opened by the Old Testament sacrifices as well as by the offering of Jesus.

The loss of the Edenic life of the Garden was the result of partaking in a forbidden meal.

In John 10, Jesus spoke of Himself as the "gate." His torn sacrificial flesh provided the pathway for re-entry into the realm of the spirit. A tremendous feast of the Word of God was laid before those who would break bread in order to enter and to embrace the realm of God's holiness.

Although Jewish readers may not find any immediate coherence with the concept of Jesus' broken flesh substantiating a meal by which we enter into the realm of the spirit, pause to

consider the ancient celebration of *kiddush*. I am willing to wager that the vast majority of Christendom has never heard of this, however it was the label given to the action Jesus took at the last supper which opened the veil into the heavenly angelic spiritual realm of the *aiona*. The challah bread was broken to open the way into the Sabbath rest in the *qodesh* realm of God. Ahead we will further discuss this topic in a way that hopefully will make sense to Jews and Christians alike.

Moving forward we will initially cover ground setting the stage for understanding much of the Old Testament and realigning our minds with biblical concepts. After this, we are going to examine the agendas and understandings of individuals who gave rise to the Reformation and Evangelicalism. Because they built upon the flawed foundation of early Orthodoxy, their good intentions further obscured the ancient spirituality of Israel. It is by identifying their errors that we are able to remove these from our minds so that our reading of the Bible is not tainted by their mistakes. Finally, we will examine the lost and forgotten Hebraic motifs that span the pages of Scripture and that conditioned the lives of the faithful seekers of *Yehovah*. With all of this in mind, we will be able to re-read the Gospels and our eyes will be opened to the mysterious spirituality by which Jesus became empowered to perform miracles. Moreover, we will understand His intentions for His disciples to reduplicate signs and wonders in the world.

We have significant ground to cover.

As we make our way toward what may be several very challenging conclusions, it's time to put on our thinking caps
and it's time to buckle up.

A Note for Jewish Readers

Perhaps to the surprise of some, what is contained herein is not solely written for the benefit of the Christian community, but also for present-day Jewish seekers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus was a Jew. His disciples were all Jewish. Jesus was a rabbi. His teachings were intended to offer and to restore something very important to the nation of His heritage, which when this re-appeared, the term "grace" and the phrases "Eternal

Covenant" and "Covenant of Peace" were used to exclaim and extoll its re-appearing. Jesus came to re-enliven the ancient dynamic personal relationship with God Most High—the heritage that the spiritually minded among *Ish-raah-el* had long awaited.

Due in part to their collective contributions to the knowledge base of modern western society, present-day Judaism walks in some of the same interpretive errors as contemporary Christianity. Both contingencies have not comprehended the biblical concept of the "Word of God." My hope and prayer is to provide some of the necessary lost and forgotten historical background and biblical interpretation that will provide a sensible corrective to set us back on course.

Everything I unveil in this book belonged, first and foremost, to the ancient Jewish community of faith from the time of Noah, and it remains as the intended inheritance of faithful seekers of *Yehovah* to this very day.

Jesus, the Jewish Rabbi, sought to renew the marriage relationship of divine-human intimacy, which had been stripped from Israel during the rise of Second Temple Judaism. No matter the faith tradition in which we have been raised, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob longs for each of us to walk in His intended spiritual inheritance and to find the life, that was the ancient *aionios* life—known, accounted for, and experienced by individuals from start to finish in the pages of the Bible who had encountered the Word.

The *Chai* symbol so many Jews wear today to celebrate life, comprising the Hebrew letters *chet* and *yod*, has its foundation in all that will be presented here. Come, let us reason together and identify this life; rather than pursuing worldly riches, let us instead celebrate the authentic treasure of ancient Israel—*L'chaim*—that was our intended inheritance from Eden!

Herein, as we reach the point of recovering important aspects of the Hebraic knowledgebase, spirituality, and the intent of the biblical authors, we are reminded that all that returns into focus was initially intended first and foremost to have been the treasured inheritance of ardent Jewish seekers of the LORD; for thousands of

years prior to the establishment of the sect among them that was pejoratively labeled “Christians.”

Even as Jews and Christians have equally lost sight of many of these biblical concepts, perhaps in different ways, my hope is that both groups collectively will be restored to the heritage of the *aionios* life in God’s reign as it was intended for humankind from the foundation of the world.

With as much being said, this book has not been written with a hidden agenda to proselytize Jewish thinkers so that they might be tricked into converting to Christianity. Quite unfortunately, many Jews have condemned Jesus and His teachings—largely due to what its constituents have witnessed over the centuries, as they examined Christianity’s ignorant interpretation of the Bible and its not so nice presentation of itself.

Our purpose is to reveal how vital aspects of the ancient Hebraic faith became obscured and set out of reach. We hope to provide intellectual stepping stones toward maturity in spirituality for both Jew and Christian alike.

Still today, wolves masquerading in sheep’s clothing present themselves in the most congenial manner to foster popularity. Quite often, they use the constituency of the church as a means of achieving social status, in order to manipulate others, and for financial gain. Misinformed teachers lead the unwary into an anti-Christ spirituality—seeking pastoral approval rather than the blessing of God Most High.

Many well-intended pastors do not teach anything about entry into the Kingdom of God because they lack an understanding of how to get there themselves. They do not even know that the holy place exists. The ancient Hebraic concept of being raised up on the third day has been lost. Therefore, parishioners are seldom led into a priestly standing before the presence of the Lord. Instead, religious leaders offer theological doctrines and principles for living which usurp the voice of God.

What they teach becomes a deceptive balm and a captivating snare. A fallible human being becomes their leader and teacher instead of the Lord, and a pulpit replaces the throne of God. This is what I refer to as “churchianity.”

Oftentimes, churchianity passes along traditions of spirituality that have very little to do with the instruction of Jesus or entry into the miraculous kingdom reign of *Yehovah* that was manifest in the physical realm to the spiritual children of the Patriarch. Faithful individuals never realize their own priestly standing in the realm of the spirit, but instead are made to livve out lives of dependence upon earthly individuals who they highly esteem as mediators between themselves and God. The leaders of churchianity make themselves present-day Levitical priests who do not allow that those they presume to be laity might ever enter behind the veil. And many of these priests do not enter themselves, neither do they realize that such tangible entry into the Kingdom where they might visually see and audibly hear the concerns of the Lord is even possible.

Churchianity finds its identity mainly in sociocultural fellowship in communities that share agreement with religious doctrines—which they naively assume will allow them entry into heaven after death. Is this what Jesus taught?

No!

There is absolutely no record in the Bible of Jesus ever teaching anybody doctrines to intellectually believe in order to get into heaven after they die.

If this is the case, then perhaps we should ask, “Why has Christendom so strongly emphasized the primacy of doctrine since the fourth century A.D.?”

In order to make practical sense of what the Scriptures teach, in keeping with the interests of the Hebraic tradition, we have to identify concerns that we have unwittingly accepted as having come from the Bible which actually came from somewhere else. This will undoubtedly help many of us to further examine and to call into question facets of the religious intellectual bubble in which we have been raised.

At first glance, some of what has been included herein may seem to be irrelevant for Jewish audiences—especially when we come to discussions of the Reformation and Evangelicalism. However, shared false assumptions and conclusions have crept into both sides of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Left unidentified, these

inaccuracies continue to live on in both segments of the faith community—perpetrating ongoing error in thought. Moving forward, we hope to provide a corrective that will benefit the faithful today and that will guide our children tomorrow.

Our goal is not only to restore the ancient Hebraic knowledge base which preceded the rise of Second Temple Judaism and that has been lost and forgotten, but moreover to rejuvenate an understanding of the faith practices that spanned the vast era of time from Noah into the first century A.D.

Those who stay with our study to the end will realize, for the most part, that much of present-day Judaism and Christendom has neither understood nor conveyed an accurate understanding of Jesus, His teachings, or His intentions in accordance with the Eternal Covenant of Peace or the Hebraic background in which they were initially presented.

I also want to address my concern for Jews exploring Christendom. My hope is that none of you will get caught up and sucked into errant forms of Evangelical Christianity that focus on spiritualities that are foreign to the Hebraic tradition of the Bible. Several ill-conceived ideas strongly influenced development of the Evangelical Christian movement that have become popular and are highly influential today. I do not wish for any of us to be led astray or to waste our lives and resources pursuing ideas and endeavors that are proven to be contrary to those we are going to discover in the Scriptures. I will devote some time and effort to detailing these disastrous religio-philosophical snares later in the book.

One very important point to address is aimed more narrowly at certain respectful sects of Jews or Christians who live with a particularly high degree of reverence for the name of the LORD or who have strong inclinations that the name of the LORD or that even the title “God” should never be written or spoken. I want to say that I am sensitive to this concern, and that I in no way have intended to offend anyone with this presentation. Nevertheless, as a student of the Scriptures that employ all of these written names and titles and that offer many accounts of these names and titles being freely spoken and passionately worshiped in the original languages of the biblical texts, for the sake of clarity in each detail, I

have found it necessary to use the name of the LORD and these references to divinity to make a straightforward articulation. If I have in fact erred in any way so as to offend anyone in any matter of concern in this presentation on this particular topic or with respect to any other content, I humbly ask for your kind amenable patience. As I, perhaps, falter in the ignorance of a Gentile, I have endeavored only to present a responsible and comprehensive explanation which I hope a larger, collective, majority of the populace will be able to understand and embrace.

The Lord is sacred! His name is set apart in the realm of his holiness, and as King David admonished us, and the Psalms teach us, He and His name are worthy to be praised. What I offer in the presentation, has not been offered recklessly, but is spelled out with humble reverence by one who kneels before the Father. My hope is that nobody will let the presentation get in the way of what is being presented and that the heart and demeanor with which this is shared will be received with forbearance.

Although institutionalized forms of Judaism and Christianity alike offer wonderful opportunities for religious expression that hopefully draw constituents closer to the Lord, by differentiation we observe that Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Job, Joshua, Caleb, the former prophets, the Judges, Debra, Hannah, Samuel, Esther, David, the Latter Prophets, and many others remembered in the Hebrew Scriptures understood that they could enter into the very throne room of God.

Although Hezekiah, Josiah and others sought to destroy this spiritual practice, Jesus called His disciples back into their rightful spiritual inheritance of the Word. Those who gave themselves in matrimonial loyalty and in faithful relational commitment to their Father in heaven became entrants into the holy gateway. They were inheritors of spiritual habitations in the Word or the *davar* of *Yehovah* while they yet walked on Earth. Jesus encouraged His disciples that in the Father's mansion, many dwelling places could be found. He affirmed that His departure would open that gateway in order to prepare a place for each of them.

Many in this life will unwittingly settle for dead propositional forms of gnostic religion. Not all who lay claim to faith in God define

this with the same quality of spiritual practices. According to the Rabbi Jesus, few will count the cost or will make the difficult choices necessary to enter into the kingdom. The path that leads to destruction is wide, but the path that leads to the *aionios* life in the kingdom is narrow. There is a spiritual dwelling place before the throne of God waiting for each of us.

Early Orthodox Christian bishops errantly thought that entry into the holy dwelling of God was reserved for those who had already died. The great news is that nobody needs to die in order to get there!

To a large degree, Orthodoxy, the Reformers, and Protestant Evangelicalism mistakenly substituted and imposed the intellectual embrace of doctrine and legalistic rules in place of entry into the Kingdom, which had been the central concern of Jesus.

For innumerable generations, many have ignorantly settled for tremendously flawed teachings under the assumption that these came from the Bible. In many ways, the supposed heroes of the Reformation followed ignorantly in the errors of early Orthodoxy. The systematic theologies manufactured from their opinions, which steer churchianity today, are nearly worthless in helping anyone to interpret the Scriptures.

Although few individuals alive today even know his name, John Nelson Darby became the catalyst who set Christendom vastly off course—causing most of its adherents to embrace aberrant spiritualities that are completely foreign to the teachings of Jesus.

Before we injudiciously dismiss this man's relevance to spirituality today just because we have never heard his name, let us understand that Darby gave Evangelicalism the present-day concept of the rapture. As we will see, this humanly contrived theoretical error was embedded in the man-made interpretive construct known as dispensationalism which also taught that the teachings of Jesus were absolutely irrelevant to Christians.

As we proceed, let us keep in mind,

> *Yehovah* longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For *Yehovah* is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him. O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no

> longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, *He*, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. And your ears will hear [a *davar* or] a Word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right or to the left. And you will defile your graven images, overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing; *and* say to them, "Be gone!"[6]

Sometimes when prayers do not seem to be answered according to the request, people get bent out of shape and blame God. This is because we are weak in faith and cannot see the big picture from the perspective of heaven. However, if we had been trained to wait for His presence to fall upon us in order to hear His voice and to receive His help, the Judeo-Christian world would have demonstrated that they had properly carried out the earthly mission of God Most High.

This reflection makes me think of young Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. Later he became *Ish-raah-el* who fought violently to take hold of God's kingdom—thereby providing Israel with its namesake. The Patriarch's grandson was cleansed as he passed through the living waters of the Jabbok River. The title *Ish-raah-el*, or the man who sees God, foretold the mysterious legacy which would become the miraculous inheritance of those who would follow in his steps.

Jacob grew in faith toward maturity. Sometimes he learned the hard way that not everything in life was going to happen according to his individual wishes, but that was never any indication that the God of his grandfather had abandoned him.

Although various institutionalized forms of religion may in fact lead us toward a feast of the bread of heaven and a life wherein we are led by the multifaceted voice of the Father, none of us need settle for anything less than divine-human intimacy. As King

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[6] Isaiah 30:18-22

David exhorted, let us enter His gates with thanksgiving in our hearts, let us enter His courts with praise. I will say this is the day that the Lord has made! I will rejoice and be glad in this! For He has made me glad!

We desire to call forth His grace, to see the heavens rolled back like a scroll, and to experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. If you know in your heart of hearts that there is more to life than meets the physical eye, we hope you will join us in our journey to rebuild the ancient ruins and to embrace the lost and forgotten spirituality of ancient Israel.

An Axe Worth Grinding

Before we proceed, I want to admit that I have an axe to grind. I have a grievance against highly manipulative individuals in churchianity who change what Jesus was teaching in order to justify their intellectualization of the Gospel; while at the same time, they completely ignore and dismiss His obvious intention.

The scenario unfolds as follows: An innocent student of the Scriptures approaches his trusted pastor or religious teacher and asks, “It says here that Jesus said that His followers would do greater works than He did. Why do we not see the same kinds of miracles Jesus performed still at work in the church today?”

This is the question of the hour.

The esteemed and trusted leader ignorantly and patronizingly responds with an inflection of concern, “Well Junior, think about it for the moment. Jesus healed people and even raised them from the dead. But then one day, eventually, each and every one of them died. Am I right, Junior?” Junior replies, “Well, I guess so.” Then not missing a beat, Mr. Religious Expert jumps in and commandeers the topic into a completely different context of thought saying, “Well, Junior, today we offer salvation so that people can get into heaven after they die. Isn’t the eternal salvation we offer much more important than merely being healed, knowing that one day the person is just going to get sick again and die?

Junior has just had the rug pulled out from beneath him.

I have to say that Mr. Religious Expert seems to have committed several crimes. First, let’s just understand from the start

that this pastor, or whoever he or she is, lives as a demonstration of spiritual weakness. He or she has not been clothed with power by the Holy One of Israel to perform miracles, or the conversation would have taken a different path. Because the one who thinks he has figured everything out only knows how to walk according to his fleshly strength, while having embraced religious facts, and because of his cessationist mindset, he does not realize that miracles are even possible.

Second, this supposed authority has twisted Jesus' teachings. No argument can be made regarding John's use of the term "works" in his Gospel as these references pertained to miracles. So our benevolent sounding expert religious teacher has hidden himself behind the disguise of piety in order to hide his actual nakedness. He has done this by maligning the teaching of Jesus. You know what? Each of us is going to give an account before the throne of God. And those who have twisted the teachings of Jesus had better be really good talkers at the pearly gates because they just might be in trouble.

Do you notice how the teacher has subtly demonstrated that Jesus' teachings are irrelevant to present-day faith? As you listen to his response to the student of Scripture, do you see how individuals like this substitute a counterfeit replacement for what Jesus had to say? And with this, do you recall at the start of the book when I said that Christendom has not properly represented Jesus and that, in many cases, Christians cannot be trusted?

Deceit is subtle, or else it would not deceive. This self-confident supposed authority figure has been deceived, and now he lives to pass on misinformation to others. He calls himself a "Christian," not because he actually teaches what Jesus taught or because he replicates the actions of Jesus, but instead because he intellectually believes some religious facts supposedly extracted from the Scriptures and that have been prescribed by his religious tradition. And therefore, he lives out his life serving as an example of how much of historic Christianity became a new religion that was foreign to the teachings of Jesus.

We observe that people transition from Judaism into Christianity, and they assume that they are moving into a religion

that revolves around the teachings of Jesus. However, this is not always the case. Instead, their lives come to revolve around preaching the rapture and preparing for the end times or pride themselves in learning saving doctrine and confessing this to prove that they are supposedly among the elect.

My own contention is that both sides of the Judeo-Christian movement need to convert their lives to actively worshiping and tangibly embracing the Holy One of Israel. David had clean hands and a pure heart because he walked in the ways that were pleasing to the Lord. This was *Torah*—a set of divinely given instructions which were ultimately fulfilled by wholeheartedly loving God and ones neighbors. This included entry into the *qodesh* in order to see and hear the Lord.

A life spent pursuing interests which were never those of God is a wasted life. For example, everyone who ever invested time in trying to warn others about the rapture has wasted their time. This is demonstrated by the fact that nearly a billion people have boldly pronounced that the rapture was about to take place at any moment and even were able to identify the Antichrist. And yet, every last one of them died; and still, there is no rapture.

Many among humankind are the slaves to a tradition—just pawns on the game board. Are you just a pawn of someone else's lifeless ignorant philosophy? Seeking and hearing the voice of the Holy One can change that. It is possible to experience life that is truly Life. This does not require jumping through religious hoops or insist that you become a confessing theologian. Instead, it requires each of us to make a pledge of divine-human loyalty and to prove exactly who and what we are before the Lord when our loyalty is tested. This is a marriage vow of faithfulness. By this, God recognizes His children. And God opens the gates of heaven to His children. They gather together in His presence. This is the true synagogue—which literally means "to be gathered together." The second power of heaven longed to gather His chicks under His wings.

Becoming an actual *Ish-raah-el-ite* is the foundation of the *Berit Olam* or the *Aionios* Covenant.

And here is a challenge. Go visit any church service and perform a biopsy. Just observe with a notebook in hand and mark down each time that the leader actually reiterates a narrative from the teaching of Jesus. If they give you doctrinal facts about Jesus, those do not count. Those are invalid and cannot be included in the sample because these were not actually the teachings of Jesus. I tuned in a Baptist preacher on the radio and listened for 30 minutes or so. Start to finish, his entire sermon was a reiteration of the doctrines of his religious tradition. He never quoted Jesus or taught anything that was remotely close to Jesus' teachings. And if anyone makes a reference to a quote of Jesus, listen carefully to see if they actually teach what Jesus taught. Recently I listened to a sermon by a Presbyterian on John's Gospel referencing Jesus as "the good shepherd." However, the teacher never mentioned hearing God's voice or entry into a divine dwelling place. In the context of John, Jesus taught that He was the gate and that His sheep would be known as such because they could hear His voice. Therefore, religious talk that includes references to Jesus' teachings that are taken out of context do not count. While making my own assessment of what gets taught in church today, while visiting friends, I attended their Roman Catholic service. I was happily surprised to hear the priest actually teach a passage from the Gospels according to the context in which it was written. Among Christendom, this is quite rare. By and large, what we may find is that those who espouse something they label as "Christianity" have moved far away from the actual teachings of Jesus. My own opinion is that this happened because Christians have remained ignorant regarding Jesus' intention to raise up *Ish-raah-el-ites*. He taught that we should endeavor to enter into God's Kingdom and to pray that we would have ears to hear and eyes to see. Nevertheless, it seems that most of Christendom have never made sense that entry into the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven means that the followers of Jesus were intended to actually see and hear God.

For my Jewish audience, I would ask the similar question. Does your priest train you in how to become an *Ish-raah-el-ite* and to walk in the spirituality of the namesake of your ancient nation. Are you instructed in how to embrace God's voice as you encounter

the living Word, which Moses explained as your intended sustenance? Are the divine-human experiences of the prophets offered as examples for what you should also embrace during your own earthly lives?

Based upon the formative and guiding understandings of early Orthodoxy, such entry into God's Kingdom only takes place after death. And moreover, those who discuss or participate in these kinds of practices here now on Earth are probably deceived and are acting dangerously.

This is why historical Christendom has maligned, ostracized, caused bodily harm, and even murdered those who claimed to have encountered God. Fear is a cruel dictator.

It would be better for individuals, like our aforementioned supposed religious authority, to admit, "I really don't know why we don't have the same miracles in the church today," instead of relying upon Aristotle's rationalism and deceit.

That is right. This response is nothing less than deceit. It looks like Mr. Religious Expert is attempting to hide both his inability to perform miracles while at the same time egotistically making himself look smart in the eyes of the student of Scripture. There is no other way to describe this than to say that individuals who change what Jesus taught are being deceitful. And this is wrong. Each of us needs to take great care in judging what comes out of our mouths before we speak.

Moreover, this kind of blabbering dishonesty makes Christians sound stupid to critical thinkers who study the Bible in context and who expect real answers. If anyone asks you a question you can't honestly answer, maybe you should just try admitting the truth. God can honor people who make the courageous choice to humbly admit the truth. And we pray that He will help all of us in this regard.

So then, there is my dispute. The axe is fully ground. We have seen how John 14:12-14 should never be interpreted. And with this example, we have become aware of how many individuals malign the clear instruction of Jesus in order to hide their own weakness and to provide the basis to put forward objective

supremacist counterfeit replacement doctrine. I have gotten that out of my system and now we can move on.

Aristotelian Influences of Orthodox Christianity

In *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* we have already reviewed how third and fourth century Orthodoxy had divorced itself from all things Jewish and completely disregarded the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures. Its leaders attempted to make sense of the New Testament based upon western Aristotelian interpretive inclinations and ingrained Classical Greek terminological background knowledge. Consequently, well-intended early Orthodox bishops invented and perpetuated doctrinal schemas that were founded upon a paradigm of thought and philosophy that was foreign to the eastern Hebraic mindsets of the biblical authors who composed the *Koine* Greek New Testament centuries earlier.

Because they were Greek Gentile converts, the bishops were predisposed to failure. They set Christendom radically off course due to their upbringing and education rooted in Aristotle's assumptions.

Aristotle had been on a mission to develop what we know of today as western rationalism—particularly in order to determine facts and truth in legal cases. He fashioned the methodology of deductive logic, the law of noncontradiction, and hierarchical thinking with the western-minded perspective wherein the Greek term *pisteuo* referenced the action of intellectual "belief." For Aristotle, belief centered around the process of discovering correct knowledge. Therefore the Aristotelian concept of belief amounted to nothing more than gnostic acceptance of facts.

By stark contrast however, in the Old Testament Septuagint and in the New Testament *Koine* Greek writings, quite often "*pisteuo*" pertained to the action of pledging matrimonial faithfulness.

Under Aristotle's rubric, truth was correct information that was determined by rational deduction, whereas in Hebraic thought, Truth alluded to the Being of God. Those in the Earth whose lives were re-born into the Spirit of Truth, were divinely humbled and

reshaped to bear the image of God. This had been God's intention for His children from the time of Eden.

Since early Orthodox bishops followed in the mindset of their western educational upbringing, they assumed connections between ideas, such as with the example of *pisteuo*, that were completely foreign to Hebraic thought. As they carried these ideas into interpretation of the New Testament and in designing the mission of the church, they set about the deductive task of extracting supposed truths, or gnostic facts, from Scripture which were to be confessed and intellectually believed in order to get into heaven after death.

Further complicating preservation of the ancient Hebraic faith that spanned from the time of Abraham, the architects of Orthodoxy redefined the Greek terms "*soteria*" and "*sodzo*," which are "salvation" and the action of "being saved." The respective noun and verb forms in Hebrew are "*yeshuah*" and "*yasha*." Because of their ignorance of the context of these terms usages in the Greek Old Testament, they altered the meanings and introduced an entirely new rubric of thought. In the altered Orthodox construct, *soteria* and *sodzo* referenced people who had escaped hell, on the basis that they had learned and believed correct religious facts which comprised cognitive truth. Those who supposedly had been saved or who had received Orthodoxy's sterile theoretical version of salvation, had earned entry into the afterlife by their gnostic acquisition, agreement, and confession of doctrines. Nobody needed to have a personal relationship with God to make this happen.

By contrast, in the ancient Hebraic paradigm, Abraham pledged his *pisteuo* or faith in God Most High, and this gave him a standing place before the throne of God in a communal divine human relationship. Accordingly, he and his spiritual descendants, those who followed in the deeds of the Patriarch, were destined to walk in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace—initially made with Noah. Because individuals pledged loyalty to God Most High, they had entered into a relationship of mutual faithfulness with the Lord. Ultimately it was the goal of *Yehovah* to draw all of humankind into

a divine-human relationship of peace and back into the spiritual realm of His Presence in the *aiona*.

After banishment from the Garden, humankind tasted entry into the presence of the Lord through His impartation of the Word—which in Hebrew was most often explained using the term "*davar*" and was often prefigured with the concept of eating bread.

Because matrimony is a mutual relationship of faithfulness, God Most High would care for His people in the Earth by providing them with His help or deliverance (*soteria* or *yeshuah*).

Careful contextual study of the use of these terms demonstrates that they never have anything to do with getting into heaven after death.

When the faithful encountered the Word or the *davar*, they received God's *yeshuah*—which came in some form of miraculous provision, divine direction, healing, or deliverance.

"*Yeshuah*" was the Hebrew term from which "*soteria*" is translated into Greek. With this understanding, those who are familiar with Jesus' Hebrew name in the New Testament might make some interesting connections. During the timeframe of the Old Testament, those who called upon the name of *Yehovah*, received His *yeshuah*. Following the instruction of the angel Gabriel, Joseph gave this name to the Son Who was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit.

Later in His life when *Yeshuah* taught his disciples to pray, He instructed them to worship the name of their heavenly Father which was *Yehovah*. This would result in the calling forth of *Yeshuah*, Who, like a shepherd of sheep, would continue to provide personal tangible help, deliverance, and guidance, in the context of the ancient *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

Acting in accordance with the theologizing method of Plato and Aristotle, and due to their divorce from Hebraic and Jewish interpretation of the Scriptures, the Greek bishops of early Orthodoxy decided instead that "*soteria*" or "salvation" was deliverance from hell.

In further compounded error, early Orthodoxy equated the Greek phrase "*aionios zoe*" with "*soteria*," thereby equating salvation with the concept of "eternal life."

Problematically with this schema, neither the Jews, nor their Hebraic predecessors ever had a dominant understanding of life after death. We observe by inductive study that Old Testament Biblical references to *soteria*, *yeshuah*, and the *aionios* life never pertained to entry into heaven after life on Earth.

The Greek bishops of the Orthodox movement wholeheartedly rejected the theologian Origen's teachings in the third century—especially his instruction that comprehension of the Old Testament was the key to interpretation of the Gospels and the New Testament letters. The Orthodox bishops gathered and burned all of Origen's works they could find, which resulted in the destruction and loss of at least four differing extant Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures.

In so doing, they eliminated a possible means whereby future examination of those variants of Scripture might have been used to contradict Orthodoxy's absolutist creeds and doctrines.

In a demonstration of their ongoing absolute intolerance and intellectual insecurity, the Second Council of Constantinople anathematized Origen several hundred years after his death in 533 A.D. Orthodoxy's continuing survival was all but guaranteed by their unscrupulous activities aimed at marginalizing and silencing all competing voices.

Jesus and His disciples were Jewish. Jesus' teachings help students of the Scriptures who are familiar with the history of ancient Israel to understand that the Rabbi was restoring the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace—which God had established with Noah and into which Abraham, his descendants and Israel had been invited.

As they walked in loyalty with *Yehovah*, individuals from the time of Noah and well beyond the lifetime of King David, had encountered the *davar* or the Word of God. The Word was the means of finding God's help and deliverance—spoken of in the Hebrew and Greek Bibles as *yeshuah* and *soteria*.

Although there was a significant growing number of Jews who accepted the teachings of Jesus and their calling into the miraculous divine-human relationship of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace, the Second Temple Judaism that thrived at the start of the

first century A.D. was characterized by strict legalistic adherence to more than 600 rules of the elders. Many of the Jews who followed Jesus attempted to carry these mandates into the re-enlivened ancient faith of Abraham, even though Jesus had clearly rejected these regulations. This second *torah* is still revered by Orthodox Jews.

Many Christians today have no understanding that in present-day Judaism, there are two *t*/*Torahs* or two Laws. The first is comprised of the Ten Commandments and the second is made up of the traditional requirements and restrictions of the Jewish elders. The second *torah* has existed and extended in different forms back to the time of the Jewish release from Assyrian and Babylonian slavery—long before the Christian era.

As the Abrahamic Hebraic faith spread among the Gentiles, there was a split between the Jewish followers of Jesus over enforcement of the second *torah* in the growing non-Jewish community. During the first and second century A.D., the Jewish constituency died off and the spirituality of the *Aionios* Covenant was fully absorbed into the lives of the Gentile world. The divorce over these issues was recorded in the Luke–Acts narrative and in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

As Hebraic spirituality spread into the Pagan world, there were many problems.

From *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, we are reminded that Pagan eschatology included the fear of engendering the wrath of the gods should any have refused to express their subjection by holding back sacrifices. The Jewish and Gentile worshipers of the name of "*Yeshuah*," who both refused to make the prescribed Pagan sacrifices and to pay homage to the gods, accordingly were to blame for every poor harvest, plague, and catastrophe. The Pagans actually regarded the Christians as "atheists" because they refused to acknowledge the gods.

The frustrating problem had to be addressed for the sake of the wellbeing of society at large. The solution became evident, in accordance with the superstitious signs of the times. It was only reasonable for the Pagans to identify, capture and provide Christians with the merciful opportunity and means to make

sacrifices. However, in cases where Pagan coercive considerations of generosity and kindness were rejected, captives were literally torn limb from limb and exterminated for the good of all. And so those who became identified as "Christians," who refused to answer responsibly to pagan reason by actively repenting from their folly, were utterly wiped out *en masse* from the face of the Mediterranean world.

Dedicated Pagans put forth their best efforts to right what was wrong in order to abate divine wrath. In their own perspective, they were simply attempting to bring stability and wellbeing to society by appeasing their gods.

Prior to Emperor Constantine's victory in the Battle at Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D., the persecution of Christianity had been rampant for more than a century. It began with the deadly prosecution of its leaders by the Jews in the first century A.D. However, widespread bloody massacre occurred as religious oppression became sanctioned by Pagan-Gentile governmental authorities throughout the Middle-Eastern and Mediterranean world. Christians were mercilessly tortured and punished for their refusal to make sacrifices in order to mitigate the wrath of the gods.

The first major persecution had begun much earlier in 64 A.D. by Nero, who blamed the burning of Rome on Christians. That set the precedent for, and was followed by, two and a half centuries of innumerable local condemnations, violent assaults, and torturous exterminations of believers. Eventually, entire Christian communities were wiped out, thus forcing the religion into secrecy underground.

Nevertheless, *status quo* persecution and ongoing eradication of the greatly despised Christians that had prevailed for more than a hundred years was about to change. As Constantine prepared for battle at Milvian Bridge, he had a heavenly vision and heard the voice of the Christian God encouraging him that it would be by means of the well-known Christian *Chi Rho* symbol (☧) that he would destroy his enemies and prevail in victory.

The vision was an experience of the *davar* of *Yehovah*. Luke explained in the book of Acts that the Word of God was spreading. In the Hebraic context of interpretation, this meant that God Most

High was visiting His presence upon the ancient Near-Eastern and Mediterranean worlds through dreams, visions, and by angelic visitation, just as had been the case prior to the Jewish captivities.

By contrast, Orthodox thinkers who had altered Christianity, having reduced this largely to intellectual gnostic acquisition of supposedly correct religious facts, also mistakenly assumed that the spreading of the word meant that teachers and apostles were traveling around Israel telling people the verbal story of Jesus. They read their own religious assumptions and errors back over the pages of Scripture thinking that a message containing the facts about Jesus was being passed along so that the objective information could be believed—thereafter resulting in embrace of an afterlife with God. Despite the example of Cornelius in the book of Acts, they did not comprehend that references to the Word of God spreading was the result of ongoing manifestations of divine dreams, visions, angelic visitations and the continuance of miracles.

Rather instead, the Orthodox leaders should have correctly understood that the Word of God was none other than the Holy One of Israel. He was the Word of God Who had taken on human flesh and became incarnate in the earthly world. Following His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension back into the cloud, where He was known to have dwelt all throughout the Old Testament Era, accordingly, the Word continued in His active mission to manifest *Yeshuah* to those who desperately sought God Most High from the time of the events in the book of Acts and onward to this present day.

Jesus had made whole the life of *chen*, *charis* or grace, characterized by personal divine-human encounter with the Word. Encounter with the Word had been known as “the Gospel” from the time of Abraham up to the end of the first century A.D.

The Pagan emperor believed the message was indeed inspired by the Christian God. In accordance with the divine-human vision, in an act of faith, the symbol was painted on his armies’ shields. They triumphed. Six years later, after he issued the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D., the legal status of the Christian religion took a radical turn as it became sanctioned alongside Paganism.

Whereas the Pagans superstitiously worshiped distant, disdainful gods, the followers of Jesus understood God's Fatherly presence in a personal loving relational context in accordance with the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. They had learned how to feast on the bread of heaven, calling forth God's kingdom or *davar* and *yeshuah* each day—moment by moment as they needed His help.

Speaking on behalf of the Father, Jesus proclaimed, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."[7]

Under Constantine's rulership, it was the first time in roughly 250 years that Christians were substantially free to identify themselves publicly, practice their religion, and to own property within the Roman Empire. Believers could begin to discuss their faith openly. However, during more than two centuries of its underground existence, Christianity had diverged into a variety of streams of thought and experience. Resultantly, in this era, there was no single uniform understanding of what Christianity actually was. Were the Montanists, Ebionites, Marcionites, Docetists, Gnostics, or some other sect of Christianity really the authentic version?

Who would decide?

The Montanists celebrated a form of charismatic, prophetically oriented spirituality. They were also criticized for being legalistic. The Ebionites were influenced by Matthew's Gospel and believed that Jesus was not divine, but was sent by God to restore Moses' teachings.

The Marcionite Church, which grew quite large and endured for centuries, rejected Judaism and its Law entirely—and were convinced that the inferior wrathful God of the Old Testament was a different God than the benevolent God of Jesus.

The well-known Christian scholar Tertullian, who lived between 155 and 220 A.D., wrote five books against Marcion—arguing against his separation of the Gospel from the Ten Commandments. These extremely valuable books are still available today.

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[7] John 14:27

Marcion decided that only certain select portions of Luke and Paul's writings were inspired, which caused a reactionary movement of canonization of texts by the Orthodox Church.

More than a thousand years later, John Nelson Darby asserted that a smaller collection of Bible verses from Marcion's canon should comprise the mainstay of Evangelicalism's Bible.

Although early Orthodoxy rejected Marcion and his enormous church that spanned the length of the Mediterranean, they firmly embraced its style of worship and his perspective opposing the Gospel against the Law. Although Tertullian identified *Marcion's* ignorance in separating the Law from the Gospel, and condemned his error, Orthodoxy refused to listen to reason.

Therefore, with the firm establishment of Christian doctrine and because of its ever-increasing and unwavering intellectual momentum, the Gospel has always been set in opposition to *Torah*. And moreover, in a huge measure of compounded error, early Orthodoxy and even continuing Orthodoxy in the Reformation and beyond, did not distinguish between the inspired *Torah* of the Ten Commandments and the *takkanot* with its 600+ man-made traditions of the elders. The early bishops were grossly uninformed. Those through time who valued an easy embrace of the Orthodox tradition more than the costly investment of research have wholeheartedly proven their enduring destructive theological ignorance.

And this vast negligent theological ignorance is perpetuated today by proud biased systematic thinkers who present polished doctrines while at the same time being afraid to humbly pull their heads out of the sand lest they be proven wrong. While coddling their beloved traditions, they systematically condemn the Law as a whole—not having a clue that two very different versions of *t*/*Torah* existed for centuries even prior to the birth of Jesus.

Although these diverse forms of the Law were differentiated in the Greek and Hebrew writings of the New Testament, many theologians throughout the Christian Era have naively depended widely upon the untrustworthy theological heritage of Orthodoxy. They have ignored the costly work of wholistically and contextually consulting the original language writings of the Bible and have

lacked the courage to stand up and call into question the good ole boy club perpetuation of error.

Jesus affirmed His heavenly Father's benevolent instructions given to Moses from Mount Sinai, however He vehemently rejected the *takkanot*. Jesus loved and affirmed the Ten Commandments. In fact, in every instance in the Gospels when an individual came asking how they could inherit the *aionios* life, Jesus pointed each and every one to the instructions that had been engraved on tablets of stone. Still today, most Christians and even their leaders have no idea of the difference between both *t/Torahs* and arrogantly dismiss the Ten Commandments, thinking they are following the teaching of Jesus. In actuality, they are completely disregarding Jesus' teachings and proving that they are neither critical readers nor are they astute thinkers.

The bishops' stubborn refusal to listen to reason gave way to ignorance that has remained as the guide of the blind. And until today, the same small number of New Testament books comprised of Paul's writings that were prescribed by *Marcion* and Darby have remained as the mainstay of preaching by Reformed and Evangelical denominations. Without proper consideration of the entire context of Scripture, *Torah* continues to be condemned and doctrines of a revised form of an intellectualized theoretical Gospel and grace that are foreign to the intentions of the biblical authors are broadcast by most of Christendom.

Because the majority of Christian theologians never demonstrated any indication of a realization that Judaism had two *t/Torahs*, Christian spirituality has been set off course from its original trajectory. Ignorance in lumping together the Ten Commandments with the *takkanot* has not happened without a tremendous cost. If early Orthodoxy had not followed Marcion in his abhorrent hateful rejection of Judaism, and had they not dismissed the relevance of the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew which distinguished the second *torah* as the *takkanot*, and if they had instead listened to Tertullian's instruction, the trajectory of theological discussion and spirituality in the Christian Era would have been set upon an informed mature foundation.

The backstory of the early bishop's rejection of Tertullian's warnings revolved around his departure from their ranks in order to join Montanism. Because of his charismatic interests, and stringent moral values, he became *persona non grata*, and his writings were spurned. Some of his books, such as the Ecstasies of the Montanists, wherein he spoke favorably about Montanist embrace of personal divine-human subjectivity and participation in the gifts of grace, were gathered up and destroyed by early Orthodox bishops.

Until very recently, the concern of two *t*/*Torahs* has not seemed to have occupied significant discussion pertaining to New Testament interpretation. Moreover, the common student of Scripture in churchianity has remained largely unaware of the ancient existence and the violent attempt to eradicate the Old Testament Hebraic paradigm of faith. Instead, it has been naively assumed that the entirety of the Old Testament was all about Judaism. And so, the more ancient spirituality of Abraham that was celebrated by King David, has not been significantly contrasted to the subsequent rise of the man-made religion of the Second Temple. The combined assumptions that there was only one Law in Jewish antiquity and a single faith tradition presented in the Old Testament have led to ambiguity, speculation, and division, especially among different contingencies that attempted to make sense of references to the role of the Law in the New Testament.

Jesus and Paul confronted the murderous criminal history in the historic establishment and the rise of Second Temple Judaism along with Israel's illegitimate embrace of the second *torah*. Both men taught and performed signs and wonders validating and restoring Hebraic spirituality wherein adherents since the time of Noah experienced the miraculous life under the *charis* or the grace of God. Those who embraced the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace with God Most High participated in His miraculous life extending into the Earth from the realm of heaven. They were raised to new life and given spiritual standing-places before the throne of God.

Theological discussion from the fourth century onward errantly lumped together the Ten Commandments with the 600 laws of the elders. This error had contaminated Paul's distinction of

the Law and grace from the fourth century onward, thereby making theological discussion of these concepts irrelevant to the concerns of the Bible for more than seventeen hundred years.

Had early Orthodoxy not rejected the need for understanding the Old Testament and particularly its history in order to properly interpret the New Testament, this incredible travesty that invalidates most systematic theological discussion from being of use to interpret the Scriptures since the fourth century A.D. might have been avoided. To a large degree, Christendom has wasted its breath calculating, considering, and prescribing church doctrines, which although they might be correct, are inexpressibly irrelevant to the exegesis of Scripture.

Greek Orthodox bishops followed in the theological stepping-stones set in place for them by Marcion who lived between 85 and 160 A.D. Moreover, worship in the Great Church became an exact reproduction mirroring that of Marcion's ubiquitous design—which already spanned the length of the Mediterranean and that had been established nearly two hundred years earlier than the institution of Orthodoxy. Therefore, traveling bishops were warned to pay close attention and to ask questions lest they find themselves fellowshipping in the indistinguishable Marcionite fellowships.

Keeping these problems of biblical interpretation combined with matters of historical ignorance in mind, early Orthodoxy began dissecting the New Testament in order to derive supposedly correct doctrines according to Aristotle's method of determining intellectual truth.

Therefore, the faith of Orthodoxy was based upon the western-minded Classical Greek Aristotelian assumption that *pisteuo* referenced cognitive belief instead of a living relationship of loyal faithfulness. Rather than leading converts to pledge faithful loyalty to *Yehovah* and to announce their peaceful divine-human relationship to the world, the bishops expected converts to cognitively learn and to recite intellectual agreement with its doctrines.

Brief Corrective to the Biblical Knowledge Check

Most Jews and Christians do not realize that there were two faith traditions in the era of the Old Testament. The first identified was the faith of Abraham according to the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. This tradition was rooted in the spirituality of Noah, who made his way in life abiding by the voice of God. The second was the faith tradition of Moses with the appointment of the Aaronic Priesthood—perhaps five hundred or a thousand years after Abraham. These adherents known as the nation of Israel were admonished to seek and to obey the voice of God, however they were also given a list of ten kindly intended instructions as Fatherly guidance which would help them make their way through life more peacefully if they chose to obey. And as we will see, one of these instructions was designed to lead adherents into the holy realm of *Yehovah*.

Now let me remark, I can hear the objections already, You're saying that these two faith traditions were one and the same. Well, to some degree, you are correct. So maybe I need to concede half a star on this one. Okay. That's fine. Because I'm a nice guy, I'll give you a whole star. I should have specified a time period. By the lifetimes of the Latter Prophets of the Old Testament there was a sharp split. To a large degree, evil kings controlled the Jerusalem temple and the Aaronic Priesthood.

Abraham had sacrificed to God Most High by means of *Melchizedek*, known both as the King of Righteousness and also as the King of Peace. This priesthood became established in the lives of his family and had existed long before Moses led Israel. After Moses appointed his brother Aaron to consecrate the Levitical priesthood to oversee the Tent of Meeting, both priestly contingencies continued in harmony for more than a thousand years.

Nevertheless, over time, they became divided as the ancient kings of Israel departed from *Yehovah*.

Jethro, who had given refuge to Moses, was the priest of *Midian* who was a descendant of Abraham from his second wife, *Keturah*. Just as Abraham worshiped God Most High through the

Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*, we infer that Jethro offered mediation with God Most High according to the same tradition as the Patriarch. Jethro offered Moses advice in raising up the 70 elders of ancient Israel who were filled with the Holy Spirit—an event that foreshadowed the outpouring at Pentecost following the death and resurrection of Jesus thousands of years later. Herein, we discover a faint connection between the ancient Priesthood of *Melchizedek*—the King of Righteousness—and one of the most celebrated events of Christendom.

God had desired to raise up a nation of priests through Israel, however, the people were terrified when they encountered the divine manifestation of God's Word at Mount Sinai. They begged instead that Moses would be their priestly mediator with the Word. Resultantly, Moses chose his brother Aaron to establish and to lead the Levitical Priesthood.

Initially the Tent of Meeting or Tabernacle served the needs of Israel for sacrifice as they moved throughout the land. And later, under the rulership of King Solomon, the more permanent temple structure was built in Jerusalem.

During the lifetimes of Abraham's descendants, God Most High, or His Word, was encountered at various locations throughout the land. These sacred places were named accordingly, and individuals from subsequent generations revisited these sites as they sought the divine Word—hoping to find help and guidance. Local priests, like Jethro, arose to tend to the sites and to manage the sacrifices. As examples, we mention the "Plain of the Vision" in the Aramaic Bible and Bethel or *Peniel* in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Use of the term "holy" specifically referenced the concept that individuals encountered and stood in the heavenly realm before God, even as their feet may have still been on the Earth. Today, we commonly think of the term "holy" connecting this to all kinds of religious notions perhaps having to do with moral behavior or purity. However, in the biblical usage, the term "holy" referenced the realm that was set apart known as heaven or that was also referenced as the *aiona*.

Inhabitants of Earth sometimes were called into the holy realm of heaven or into the *aiona*, where they were raised up and

encountered the Holy One of Israel. In the Aramaic Scriptures this divine being was described as the Word of God or was given the title *Memra*. In the Hebrew Scriptures He was often spoken of as the Angel of the Lord. In some cases, this second power of heaven was even called *Yehovah* sharing the same name with God Most High.

There are several reasons that the Judeo-Christian Faith community today no longer have any knowledge of the second power or the second *Yehovah* who was likened as a Son to God Most High. As we unpack this concept, first I want to reference the work of Dr. Michael S. Heiser. With his Ph.D. in Biblical Hebrew, and with great clarity and talent, he unveiled this ancient understanding. Many of his books such as "Unseen Realm," "Supernatural," or his videos are available today for those who desire to dig deeper in study on this matter.

What you will discover is that quite often, the Hebrew Scriptures have not been translated literally. The term for God in Hebrew is "*Elohim*" —which is a plural term. Nevertheless, those of us among Orthodoxy have traditionally translated *Elohim* using the singular form "God."

From the Hebrew Scriptures, we understand that God Most High had sons in heaven who were also referenced as Gods. However, none of these beings was equal to God Most High. Nevertheless, God Most High was known to have One supremely unique Son Who was the Holy One of Israel. And this unique Son shared the name of *Yehovah* with His Father.

God Most High's intervention in the Earth was carried out by the Holy One—Whom scholars today reference as the second power of heaven.

Although members of humankind could not see God Most High and live, they could personally encounter His Holy One to receive help, healing, deliverance, and guidance in life. These impartations in the Hebrew texts of the Scriptures were noted as God's *yeshuah*. So then we understand that this second power from the holy realm of heaven stood as a priestly mediator between humankind and God.

This divine being, who was likened unto a Son, was more frequently referenced as *Melchizedek*, the King of Righteousness, the King of Salem or the King of Peace, as *Memra*, the Word of God, the Holy One, the Redeemer of Israel, the Helper, the Deliverer, the Angel of the LORD, or as the Angel of *Yehovah*. The first power of heaven was known of as the Ancient of Days, El Elyon, God Most High, the Creator, the Heavenly Father, etc. We should note, however, that the second power also played a role in creation.

This concept of the second power of heaven, pre-existing as the unique Son of God Most High, became problematic for Jews in the first century. Many among them were departing from the traditional faith to become followers of Jesus. The Jewish scholar, Dr. Alan F. Segal, in His Book, *Two Powers in Heaven*, explained how Judaism engaged in a pogrom to eliminate the entirety of the concept of the second power during the second century of the Christian era. This discussion was entirely vilified, banned from discussion, and any who persisted to bring up this prominent matter of ancient Israel would be labeled as heretics and made outcasts.

Herein, Judaism robbed its own people of their ancient tangible inheritance of faith. Actually, what took place was merely a continuation of Second Temple Judaism's agenda to remove the subjectivity of hearing God's voice from their religion—which had begun with the Deuteronomists in the days of Hezekiah and Josiah.

God Most High's intervention in the Earth was carried out by the Holy One—Who scholars today reference as the second power of heaven.

The Jews coerced and embraced silence on this matter, which had been clearly acknowledged by their forefathers, and is abundantly evident in the Aramaic Bible. None of the Jews wanted to be branded as heretics and made an outcast, so they complied. With this, a key component of Hebraic background knowledge died that had previously been essential for comprehending the Scriptures.

Noah was spoken of in the Hebrew texts of Scripture as hearing the voice of God and as being under God's divine *chen* or grace. These concepts go hand in hand. The term *chen* had to do

with divine-human interaction, and obedience which were the measures of proven Lordship.

The Hebrew term *chen* was translated into the Greek Septuagint and the New Testament as "*charis*." When we study the Scriptures inductively and contextually, *charis* or grace predominantly has to do with the tangible manifestation of God's presence. Simply put, those who were under grace could hear God's voice. Grace was the miraculous mysterious means by which divine-human intimacy took place. We can think of grace as the gift of God's manifest presence abiding with members of the faith community.

Noah listened for and obeyed the voice of God and therefore was understood to have been under God's grace. His obedience was accounted to him as righteousness.

God established a covenant with Noah which was the Eternal Covenant or the Covenant of Peace (which ahead will be referenced simply as the *Aionios* Covenant). In this covenant, the second power of heaven, Who was later more consistently known of as dwelling in the cloud, became his divine Helper. In Sunday School, we learned that God gave Noah the sign of the rainbow in the cloud as a symbol of peace. But of far greater importance, what we should actually apprehend, is that the radiance in the cloud was none other than the second power of heaven.

Because Noah vowed to obey God's voice and proved it with his actions, the Holy One guided, assisted, protected, and saved him.

We understand that those who walked in the ways of the LORD and who sought after and obeyed His voice not only enjoyed divine-human peace, but also became the ongoing recipients of God's *soteria* or *yeshuah*. They pursued the Word of *Yehovah* to sustain their lives in an adversarial world. In so doing, they feasted upon the bread of heaven. And although feasting on the bread of heaven may seem to be a metaphoric statement, ahead in the study of the *kiddush*, we are going to apprehend this in the literal sense of providing entry into the holy realm of God's Kingdom.

The reasons for using the Greek term "*Aionios*" to describe the covenant from which eternal has been translated will be

presented later on in greater detail. For now, however, suffice to understand that this usage will help to more easily make pertinent connections throughout the Bible as we move forward in our study.

Note that the term "*aionios*" is the adjective form of "*aiona*" that was known as a holy dwelling into which members of the faith community found places of standing in God's presence. In this realm they experienced something spoken of in the Bible as the *aionios zoe* or rather the *aionios* life. For those who may have previously read *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, we translated this as the "ancient life" and interpreted this as the life which was initially enjoyed by Adam and Eve in Eden.

As we will see in examination of the Hebraic Tradition, those who gathered together in this spiritual place of habitation in the *aiona* encountered the second power of heaven or the Word of God. In this holy place, they received guidance and empowerment from heaven so that they could carry out God's work or the will of His Word on Earth. Those having entered the *aiona* before God's throne, departed with power and authority to perform signs and wonders. Often these ones were spoken of as oracles, seers, and prophets.

Although Christendom has taught us that the text of the Bible comprised the "'word' of God," based upon its divine inspiration, in the biblical texts themselves, writings and words each fit into two completely different categories of discussion. Entirely different terms were used in the Scriptures to delineate each concept from the other. Extensive discussion with biblical examples on this topic were presented in The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the phrase "'Word' of God" or "'Word' of *Yehovah*" was used to specifically to denote divine-human encounter with the presence of the second power of heaven. In the Ancient Aramaic Bible, the Word of God was personified as the divine being of *Memra* Who came to the aid of those needing the help of God Most High. He acted in the fashion of a Son perfectly carrying out the will of His Father in the realm of Earth.

Early and continuing Orthodoxy have dismissed the relevance of the Aramaic Scriptures due to theological arguments to be addressed later. And because of Judaism's prohibition on discussion of the second power of heaven, the knowledge of the existence of *Memra* has never made its way prominently into Christianity. Nevertheless, this is quickly beginning to change with the grass-roots revolutionary study of Hebraic faith and spirituality.

In ancient Israel, and still today, the holy of holies was referenced as the "'Word' of God." This surviving attribution has been known of for thousands of years. In Hebrew, this is the term *da-var*—which is sometimes pronounced or transliterated as *dabar*. That is how I previously rendered the term in the first and second editions of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*. Herein, we understand that the *davar* or the Word of God provided a dwelling place in His presence.

As we will see later, some versions of the Aramaic Bible use the term *shekinta*, which in Hebrew is *Shekinah,* instead of *Memra* to describe the abiding Word. While the term *Memra* brings to mind the presence of God's Being and Voice, *Shekinta* can be translated as "dwelling" and is often associated with the manifestation of God's glory or radiance that was visually observed. *Ish-raah-el-ites* with ears to hear and eyes to see might speak of the Holy One using either term depending upon the kinds of auditory or visual encounters they experienced.

The Word or the *davar* came in many forms and in many ways, however most notably these included, dreams, visions, angelic encounter, or with other-worldish kinds of visitations. These took place with signs and wonders.

Essentially with the visitation of the Word, the heavens were opened so that individuals found themselves in the *aiona* or in the holy heavenly realm. We take note of these experiences many times in the writings of the Latter Prophets. And the Word of God continued to open the way into the spiritual realm, for example, in the transfiguration or when Saul encountered the blinding radiant light on the road to Damascus. In these instances, individuals witnessed the second power or heard His voice.

Encounter with the second power often took place as He became manifest in a cloud or a bright light. And the gift of His guiding presence as the Great Shepherd of Israel was recognized in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace that was established with Noah. The text explained that God set His Bow in the cloud.

Accordingly, in the Hebraic tradition of the Scriptures, individuals encountered the second power as a manifestation of light or by hearing his voice as they were raised up into the cloud or as the cloud descended from heaven as a pillar with fire.

Just as the clouds are up in the sky, high places were referenced in the Bible where individuals encountered *Yehovah*. Picture in your mind how clouds sometimes surround mountain tops. Mount Sinai is a prime example where the Holy One of the Israelites gave *Torah* to Moses. David spoke of those with clean hands and pure hearts who were able to ascend the hill of the LORD. In some cases, the cloud of the Holy dwelling of the second power descended down to the Earth and individuals found themselves in the presence of God's Son. And they found a resting place of peace in the *aiona*. They received wisdom and direction for life.

Most importantly, those who became faithful to *Yehovah* in matrimonial commitment were restored to life by partaking in a divinely blessed meal. Adam and Eve had departed from fellowship with God in Eden by partaking in a forbidden meal and had suffered the curse of death. However, by contrast, those who walked in the ways of Father Abraham, and encountered the Word, which was spoken of as "the bread of heaven" were restored to the *aionios* life in the heavenly *aionios* realm of the Spirit through a divine meal.

Both Moses and Jesus taught that members of humankind were not intended to live by earthly bread alone, but by every Word that proceeded from the mouth of God,

The Patriarch experienced a wide variety of encounters with the spiritual realm. And quite notably, his grandson Jacob, became the namesake of the nation of Israel as he encountered and wrestled with the second power of heaven. He and those who followed in this spirituality thereafter were known as *Ish-raah-el* or as the *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

Encounters with the "'Word' of God" were not all simple dreams or visions as we might think of these today. Jacob fought violently with the angel or the Holy One. And he suffered a broken hip while he embraced the Word. During the event, the holy *aionios* realm was opened and Jacob witnessed angels ascending and descending a ladder up into heaven.

Although Jacob's encounter with the second power of heaven began during the night on Earth after passing through the Jabbok River, he found himself birthed into the realm of the spirit with his passage through cleansing water. Jacob's feet were washed in order that he might stand upon holy ground.

Both priesthoods of *Melchizedek* and Aaron served the people by presenting their offerings to *Yehovah*. However, after the rulership of King David, the nation divided and the rulers of Israel and Judah gradually departed from the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. Having rejected the bread of the Word, they attended themselves to an adversarial meal. They fell into the deceptive lure of the voice of Satan and sought after the lusts of the idolatrous world around them.

The kings had been intended to lead the nation into carrying Abraham's blessing of the Covenant of Peace with *Yehovah* to the nations. God Most High desired for all to experience a return to the *aionios* life of the *aiona*. But they rejected His voice and departed from *Yehovah's chen*, *charis*, or grace. Due to their rejection of His Word, the abiding presence of the Holy One departed and they no longer were the recipients of His divine guidance, help, or *yeshuah*. Like Adam and Eve, they themselves departed from God Most High, rather instead choosing to serve other gods and to embrace the idols of the surrounding nations.

The kings increasingly despised the prophets who were raised up by the priesthoods because they did not want any accountability with God Most High. In his opposition to the prophets, Hezekiah tore down the altars that had been dedicated to the name of *Yehovah* all throughout the land. Worship of the actual name of *Yehovah* was also banned under the pretense that the name was too sacred for anyone to pronounce.

As the ancient Old Testament Kings of Israel separated themselves from *Yehovah*, they departed from the subjectivity of hearing the voice of the living God and ceased walking with Him. And so, they departed from the *chen*, *charis,* or grace of God.

These kings stood in contrast to those recognized as the daughter of Zion, a remnant that held fast to the more ancient order of subjective faith and spirituality of Noah and their father Abraham.

Because of its proximity to the kings, the Jerusalem temple and the Aaronic Priesthood fell under the control of the rulers of Israel. However the Order of *Melchizedek*, was more difficult to control and continued to thrive in subjection to *Yehovah* all throughout the land.

The temple in Jerusalem gradually and increasingly became a symbolic representation of the temples of other nations. Eventually, it was reduced to a factory churning out the smoke of sacrifices for a God they had ceased to know. The story unfolded in the narrative of the Prophet Isaiah. He told of the fall of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, all of whom were kings of Judah—"Sons reared and brought up by *Yehovah*," and who subsequently had revolted against Him. They were described as a people weighed down with iniquity, a sinful nation, the offspring of evildoers, and as sons who acted corruptly.

They had abandoned *Yehovah*, and they had scorned and had turned away from the Holy One of Israel. They had forsaken the commission given to Abraham and his descendants to bless the nations by helping the needy and by introducing them to the Word of the Lord. Instead, the evil kings sought dominance over the nations. And because of these kinds of selfish choices and actions, His cloud containing the divine manifestation of Light of the second power of heaven was no longer found among them. Just as they had desired separation from *Yehovah*, due to their murderous rebellion, they were on their own. They would no longer receive God's provision and protection—spoken of throughout the Hebrew Bible as *yeshuah*.

Resultantly, as Israel and Judah had been decimated by their enemies, God Most High observed, "Your land has been reduced to

a desolation—cities burned with fire, and fields that have been devoured by strangers as you watched." Depending upon their own strength alone, these evil kings had been unable to defend themselves.

However, *Yehovah* acknowledged a remnant addressed as "the daughter of Zion" who remained as survivors, figuratively hiding beneath a shelter in a vineyard. He compared them to a tiny watchman's hut in a cucumber field, that existed as a besieged city in a tormented land.

Were it not for these few who remained faithful to *Yehovah*, the nation would have suffered the plight of Sodom and Gomorrah in complete destruction and annihilation.

God warned the ignorant kings,

> Hear the Word of *Yehovah*, do you think for a moment that your multiplied sacrifices mean anything to me at all? You are greatly mistaken. I am sick of your vain burnt offerings of rams and cattle. I find no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats. Instead, give ear to the instruction of our God, you people of Sodom and Gomorrah.[8]

Noah, Abraham, his descendants, the Judges, and the former prophets, up through the reign of King David, had all listened to the voice of God. Accordingly, they were described as being under God's *chen*, *charis,* or grace. They had found peace with *Yehovah* in a covenant marriage relationship. God Most High longed for a nation who would walk with Him in loyal matrimonial faithfulness seeking His instruction and walking according to His voice. *Yehovah* greatly desired to pour out His *yeshuah* upon ones such as these.

> *Yehovah* lamented, over the rebellious kings who controlled the Jerusalem Temple, saying, "Bring your worthless offerings no longer. The way that you celebrate the Sabbath and your festivals has become an abomination to me. You trample the courts of my temple, and I am sick of all of it! Because you have turned away from Me, when you spread

[8] Isaiah 1:10–11

> out your hands and increase your prayers, I will hide My eyes from you, and I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood."[9]

King Ahab had overseen the mass execution of *Yehovah's* prophets[10] and was renowned as having shed so much blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end.[11]

The prophets were perceived as threats to the kings because they called the rulership's growing independence from the voice of *Yehovah* and their abuses of power into question. The increase of political authority became synonymous with apostasy. The kings who rejected *Yehovah* stole land from the people, accepted bribes, ignored the cries of the needy, participated in many other forms of oppression, and adopted religious practices of neighboring nations including Baal worship in their efforts to establish alliances. The once faithful city of Jerusalem which had been the refuge of righteousness and the foundation of peace had instead become a harlot and a lodging for murderers. Her rulers became rebels and the companions of thieves. The prophets viewed all of these as traitorous acts, warning that the kings were violating the Covenant of Peace with *Yehovah*.

Just as Noah had passed through the cleansing water, and Jacob had traversed the purging flow of the Jabbok River, God Most High admonished the kings:

> Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil and learn to do good. Seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphans, and help the widows. Come now, and let us reason together, although your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; although they are red like crimson, they will be like clean wool. If you choose what is right and obey, you will eat the best of the land.[12]

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[9] Isaiah 1:12–15

[10] Note 2 Kings 21:16.

[11] Note 1 Kings 18:4, as well as chapter 19:10-14.

[12] Isaiah 1:16–19 modified NASB

Yehovah had offered to restore His Word whereby *yeshuah* would have provided deliverance. However, the corrupt kings increasingly disregarded the needy amongst them—thereby rejecting God's compassion upon themselves.

> But if you refuse and rebel, you will most certainly be devoured by the sword. Truly, the mouth of *Yehovah* has spoken. All of you love bribes and you chase after the rewards of criminals. None of you defend orphans and you disregard the widows' pleas. Therefore, the Lord GOD of hosts, and The Mighty One of Israel, declares, you will suffer my vengeance at the hand of your enemies. I will turn my hand against you and your armor will melt. You will be ashamed of your treasures and will be embarrassed by your choices. You will become like an oak tree whose leaves all die and like a garden that has no water. The strong man will be as tinder as his work becomes the spark causing both to burn together—with no water to quench. Transgressors and sinners will be crushed together and those who forsake *Yehovah* will come to an end.[13]

For all of his love for the wellbeing of the nation, the Prophet Isaiah was captured and sawn in half.

The early judges and prophets of Israel had arisen in accordance with the framework of the Abrahamic faith tradition in the order of *Melchizedek*. They walked in the Eternal Covenant of Peace, seeking, listening, and following instructions from the mouth of *Yehovah*. This meant that they were under the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God Most High.

Although the wicked kings persisted in murdering the prophets, eventually they came to understand that the priesthood from whence these holy ones had arisen needed to be eliminated. Hezekiah tore down the altars constructed to *Yehovah* which had been built throughout the land. Later, Josiah, moved in troops and

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[13] Isaiah 1:20–31

killed the priests while destroying their high places. He acted under the deceptive assertion that he was ridding the land of false gods.

Moving forward, authorized worship would take place solely in the Jerusalem Temple. The mystical practices of the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek* were outlawed, and the people who wanted to livve were commanded simply to obey the Ten Commandments of *Torah*. The Aaronic priesthood was commissioned with managing the secret mysterious matters of the Lord. They were ordered to continue making offerings with the hopes of appeasing *Yehovah*—doing so in the same ways as the nations surrounding them were performing sacrifices to other gods.

In order to save their lives, innumerable refugees of the Abrahamic order fled to Arabia where they could continue worshiping with freedom of conscience. The abominable actions of Josiah proved to be the last straw and *Yehovah* allowed Babylon to invade and to take the crooked murderous whore as a slave. The divine retribution which began as the Assyrian captivity in the eighth century before the Christian Era, was completed by Babylon around 538 B.C.

Assyria and Babylon attacked and invaded—taking away captives as slaves for 200 years. Nevertheless, all hope was not lost. In a far distant future, the remnant who continued in faithfulness to *Yehovah*—known as Zion—would be redeemed with justice, and her repentant ones with righteousness.

God promised, "Then I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. After that you will be called the city of righteousness—a faithful city."[14] The fortunes of Jacob and the daughters of Zion's standing place before the throne of God would be set back in order along with the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

Once again, as had been the case with Noah, God's guiding voice among them would be heard. Those who obeyed and who were restored as His children would be under the *chen*, *charis,* or the grace of God. *Yehovah's* manifestation of divine radiant light amidst the cloud would be discovered again, and the *yeshuah* of

[14] Isaiah 1:26 NASB

God Most High would newly help, guide, and empower those restored as His sons and daughters.

During the reign of the Persian King Cyrus around 516 B.C., he allowed the Jews to return to Israel and to rebuild their temple. However, the leaders who took over proved themselves to have been no less corrupt than their forefathers who had been given up as slaves.

Second Temple Judaism swiftly established itself as an oppressive regime.

They added a second *torah* to Moses' Ten Commandments with more than 600 stringent rules and regulations including how and when to bathe, how to dress, prescribing which utensils to use for certain foods and the list went on and on. This second law was called the *takkanot* and was referenced as "the traditions of the elders."

Jewish religious leaders closely watched the people. Noncompliance was noted, and public reprimand or punishment was meted out as was deemed necessary.

These harsh legalists became renowned as the Whore of Babylon. They were the abomination in the temple, standing in the way of authentic seekers, making the heavenly dwelling-places desolate. Entry into the *aiona* had been intended for those like *Ish-raah-el* who desperately desired to see God and to receive His divine help. Ezekiel identified the whore as the Abomination of Desolation.

They stood accused by Jesus,

> But woe to you, so-called experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You keep locking people out of the kingdom of heaven! For neither do you enter nor do you allow those trying to enter God's kingdom to go in.[15]

These ones had gone so far as to forbid speaking the actual name of *Yehovah* because this had been the Hebraic means of entry into His presence. Because God was jealous for His holy name, He would run to those crying out to Him. Hallowing the name of

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[15] Matthew 23:13

Yehovah had been renowned as the key of David for entry into the spiritual realm where He received divine authority and empowerment to command the nation. The extolling of His name ascended into the heavens and was the means of calling forth His grace—which was the voice and the powerful manifest presence of the Holy One of Israel.

Because the Jewish religious leaders forbade worship of the name of *Yehovah*, celebrants of the faith tradition were not entering into the kingdom as had David.

Jesus cried out against the Second Temple leaders,

> Jerusalem, Jerusalem! She who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, yet you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate.[16]

The remnant of the daughter of Zion who practiced the prophetic faith and spirituality of Abraham did so quietly and secretively so as not to have drawn attention and to have brought persecution upon themselves. However, this was not the practice of the Rabbi Jesus as He publicly decried the worthless rules, regulations, and the traditions of the elders.

At times, the Holy One was witnessed as riding a chariot on the cloud. Some who were raised up having been drawn into the glory of the dwelling presence of the *Shekinah* also became radiant. Just as it was understood that no man could actually see God Most High and live, the ancient Israelite community that predated the Second Temple, understood that the Holy One of Israel, Who was seen riding in the cloud, was spoken of as the Son of God. This was the divine Son Who had repeatedly made His appearance known throughout biblical history whenever the faithful worshiped the name of *Yehovah*—God Most High. It was the second power of heaven Who had led Israel for forty years in the wilderness through His manifestation of the cloud. He provided daily help and deliverance to those counted among His *Ish-raah-el-ites* who later

[16] Matthew 23:37-38 HCSB

became renowned as the daughter of Zion. These were the ones who stood at the holy doorway or who ascended the ladder into the cloud and embraced God's heavenly presence.

The faithful who had sworn loyalty to God Most High, having proven their allegiance by their deeds, were the ones who were made to "mount up on wings like eagles" and who were caused to "ride over the heights of the land." Seekers of the Lord with clean hands and pure hearts ascended *Yehovah's* holy hill. These few, like David, "enjoyed the heritage of their father Jacob." Those who walked in the truth of *Yehovah's* guidance worshiped in the holy realm of the spirit.

Jesus promised Nathaniel that the disciples would also share in the experience of Jacob. "Very truly I testify, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."[17]

David had passionately worshiped *Yehovah* and exhorted the nation to follow in his example of extolling God's name. This practice was David's key into the gates of heaven and was the means by which individuals had experienced divine-human encounter from the most ancient times.

Due to the actions of the wicked kings, the doorway into the *Aionios* life of the Covenant of Peace with *Yehovah* in the *aiona* was gradually being cut off.

There was a growing rebellion from *Yehovah* as a religio-political uprising gradually coalesced among the kings following Solomon. They increasingly supported the Aaronic Priesthood which operated from the Jerusalem Temple because it was under their control. These leaders began calling into question the mysterious spiritual practices of the adherents of the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek* who paid homage at altars spread all throughout the land. It was through the Abrahamic priesthood that prophets had been raised up who criticized the wickedness of the kings. And so the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek* was hated for its existence as a thorn in the side of the unrighteous leaders.

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[17] Note the conclusion of John chapter 1.

According to the research of Dr. Margaret Barker, although Josiah was renowned as a good king, he resorted to murderous violence in order to destroy Hebraic celebrants who worshiped according to the Order of *Melchizedek*. Along with destroying altars which had allegedly been constructed to false Gods, Josiah also slaughtered the priests of the King of Righteousness. Many fled to Arabia where they carried on the more ancient spiritual practices of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

All actions of worshiping God's name or even verbalizing the phrase "*ha shem*" which is translated "the name" were outlawed. Worship became centralized in Jerusalem solely through the Aaronic Priesthood. The emerging order of Deuteronomic leaders instructed the people that worship of *Yehovah* and managing the secret or mysterious apparitions of the LORD were the duty of the Levitical priests alone. Moving forward, these activities would only take place in the temple by authorized priests. From that point onward, it was the people's responsibility to observe the Ten Commandments and other laws passed down by the religious leaders.

In all of this, the authority of the Prophets was destroyed. The kings were very much in charge of the Jerusalem temple. If the Aaronic priests hoped to live, they would not oppose or violate the wishes of the king.

Moses had warned the nation to choose life by seeking and obeying the Word. He explained that to have done so was to have chosen life. He warned that if they forsook God, however, that they would be cursed, conquered, and taken away as slaves by their enemies.

Eventually, shortly after the death of Josiah, the last remaining people of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah were invaded and taken away into captivity. Rather than choosing life by the voice of God under His *chen*, *charis*, or grace in a matrimonial relationship in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace, the nation turned away to whoredom with other gods.

However, there were still prophets who decried all of this and who told of a future day of the LORD, when the second power would return and would exact vengeance for the crimes of the

wicked kings. In that day, He would restore the fallen tent of David and the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. The priestly order of *Melchizedek* would be raised up once again. And of tremendous greater significance, *Yehovah's* unrealized desire from Mount Sinai would be fulfilled. A nation of priests would be filled with God's Spirit in similar manner to the 70 elders of ancient Israel—who had been raised up according to the advice of Jethro, the ancient priest of *Midian*. In a future day, the *aionios* life would be restored.

After several generations, the forlorn captives were allowed to return to Israel to rebuild their temple from the nations of Assyria and Babylon. Those who oversaw the reconstruction of the Second Temple were a corrupt group of priests. They were pejoratively labeled as "The Whore of Babylon" and as the "Abomination of Desolation" because they had adulterously departed from *Yehovah* and had shut the way into the *aiona* of the kingdom of heaven.

Just as the Latter Prophets had foretold their destruction, so also Jesus condemned these imposturous religious leaders, while also disregarding their man-made burdensome laws.

The Ten Commandments had been given to teach the *Ish-raah-el-ites* how to love God and their neighbors. If all acted in accordance with the Father's kind instruction, each man would dwell in peace with his neighbor. This guidance was foundational in ridding the nation of treachery and in preparing individuals to bless the nations in the commission given to Abraham.

Figuratively speaking, the commands also provided stepping stones—preparing individuals for entry into the holy realm of the *aiona*.

In this sense, those who originally received *Torah* did not view these as an oppressive set of rules. Instead, these were graciously received as *Yehovah's* kind instruction that would bring societal order. By contrast, the man-made lifeless *takkanot* that was later added as a second *torah* was legalistic and enforced by tyrannical leaders.

Today when we read of "lawyers" in the New Testament, we should understand that these were actually police who enforced behavioral compliance with the traditions of the elders. Nobody

could be regarded as a Jew and get away with ignoring the *takkanot*. Like Jesus' disciples, they would quickly fall under criticism, judgment, and make themselves culpable for punishment and ostracization.

For the common people, Judaism was reduced to a loathsome set of rules practiced by rote.

Although the Jews considered the *takkanot* to have been divinely inspired, Jesus condemned the traditions of the elders. By contrast, Jesus affirmed the *Torah* of the Ten Commandments. He taught that these were fulfilled when ones demonstrated with practicality that they loved *Yehovah* their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and when they loved their neighbors as themselves.

Even more scandalously, when Jesus' disciples asked for instruction regarding how they should pray, He told them to begin by hallowing the name of the Father which was *Yehovah*. This was a direct violation of the rule that had been embraced by Second Temple Judaism.

Not only were individuals in huge trouble if anyone knew they were worshiping the actual name of *Yehovah*, but moreover, nobody was even allowed to mention the phrase "the name" in reference to God without bringing down the wrath of the Second Temple leaders upon themselves.

By instructing the faithful to praise the name of the Father, Jesus was only reiterating the passionate instruction of King David which had been initiated and mandated by Moses. If we respect the teachings of Moses, calling upon the actual name of *Yehovah* was intended to have been a continuing practice for all generations. It was by worship of *Yehovah's* name rising up into heaven that celebrants of the *Ish-raah-el-ite* faith community called His attention to their needs.

This was in accordance with the promise made to Noah. After he and his family passed through the cleansing water, God promised to remember or to take action to protect those who sought and obeyed His voice. Noah and his descendants, who chose righteousness by obeying the voice of the Holy One, would recognize God's presence with them by the Bow in the cloud. And

so ones such as these were under the *chen*, *charis*, or the grace of God.

In light of the understanding that Jewish religious leaders had expressly forbidden calling on the name of *Yehovah*, Jesus turned the tables on them with the pronouncement, "You will never see Me again until you say, 'He who comes in the name of *Yehovah* is the blessed One.'"[18]

In other terms, the Second Temple leaders would remain forsaken by the Holy One of Israel unless they contradicted and violated their own man-made restriction and worshiped the name of the Father.

Jesus led his closest disciples into the cloud of the *aiona* where they witnessed Moses and Elijah.

Eventually, the malevolent Second Temple High Priests accused Jesus of Blasphemy because of His assertion of being the Holy One who had visited their forefathers in the cloud. 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended back into the cloud and the angels accompanying Him told those who witnessed the event that once again the cloud would be their future place of meeting.

Embedded in the Hebraic tradition there were several motifs that have been lost and forgotten. These included significance above the water, the three-day journey, as well as the breaking and eating of bread. These lost and forgotten motifs remembered in the Scriptures were handed down to posterity as reminders of how their ancient ancestors of faith in *Yehovah* would find the way into tangible divine-human fellowship before the throne in the *aiona* or in the Word. Ones having turned from wickedness, having confessed their sins, and having been rebirthed a second time passing through cleansing water, could experience the signs and wonders of the second power of heaven.

These ancient motifs that had been relegated to legend and myth were explained and renewed by Jesus. When the corrupt religious leaders came to Jesus looking for signs and wonders, He pointed them to the three-day journey of Jonah. This journey and other practices of their ancient ancestors of faith had been the

[18] Matthew 23:39.

secret concerns of the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. We can follow a broken trail of bread through the pages of Scripture to restore a revered pathway into the presence of the LORD.

The Judeo-Christian movement has been robbed of these understandings by the historical religio-political agendas of manipulative dictatorial Jewish and Christian leaders. Nevertheless, if we are able to have our eyes opened to a vast amount of historical error in interpreting the Scriptures, and if we can embrace Hebraic spirituality, we too can walk in a life characterized by the miracles of Jesus.

In the context of having performed many signs and wonders, Jesus admonished His hungry listeners:

> Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.[19]

The second power of heaven intended to resume His salvific activities with the restoration of *yeshuah* to those who had pledged matrimonial faithfulness to God Most High. Access to the throne of heaven in the *aiona* and the *aionios* life would be restored.

Our goal is to rebuild the knowledge base and the pathway back into this spirituality.

Without further ado, we invite you to join in the journey toward *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel* and to become Partakers in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace—walking in the grace of God.

From Eden Onward

In the Garden of Eden, humankind was created with volition. They were given choices, and most importantly, they were offered decision-making power to either listen and obey the Lord's voice, or to reject His kind protective instruction and to face the consequences. Had they not been given the will to choose for themselves, obedience would have meant nothing.

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[19] John 14:12-14 NIV

> And the LORD God instructed the man, saying, from any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you are not permitted to eat. In the day that you eat from it you will surely die.[20]

By choosing to listen to the adversarial voice of the serpent, and by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in unrighteousness, they disobeyed, and suffered the curse of death. Consequently, humankind had died with their trespass and were cast out of the protective angelic paradisical realm of Eden.

Due to the voice of the adversary, as the inhabitants of Earth multiplied, the world was filled with treachery and murder.

In an attempt to find their way back into the heavenly protective realm of God's dwelling, humankind began to work on a tower. Thwarting their effort, God confused the language of the people so that they could not continue.

If we accept the history of Enoch, God assigned angelic powers to oversee humankind as they spread out over the Earth. *Yehovah* would directly oversee the Hebrews in order to eventually bring His *yeshuah* into the other people groups.

Making matters worse, the angelic sons of heaven disobeyed the will of God Most High and took human wives for themselves. They bred a hybrid race of destructive giants known as the Nephilim.

The earthly wives of the host of heaven were not accepted in the spiritual realm of the *aiona*, and as a result of all of this, God reduced humankind's earthly life-span to 120 years.

The illicit tower construction and the angelic-human marriages were direct and inadvertent attempts of humankind to re-enter heaven. However, the only acceptable pathway of re-entry into God's presence and to be renewed to life was to turn away from the adversarial voice and his wickedness—which had only increased as the angelic sons of God betrayed the trust of God Most High.

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[20] Genesis 2:16-17

These fallen adversarial angels who continued to negatively influence members of humankind were understood as the heavenly geopolitical principalities and powers referenced by Paul in the New Testament. The bishops of early Orthodoxy did not sanction any of the texts of Enoch as having been divinely inspired, despite the fact that 1 Enoch was quoted by New Testament authors. Otherwise, the Orthodox church might have gained a more valuable understanding of the origin of spiritual powers of wickedness and perhaps an insightful perspective from which to make sense of the heavenly events described in the book of Revelation.

After the birth of Enosh, some on Earth began to call on the name of the Lord for help. However, the inhabitants of Earth became increasingly worse in their wickedness. A war was about to take place in the heavens to arrest the malevolent actions of the rebellious heavenly host. The world was about to be cleansed.

> Then *Yehovah* saw that the wickedness of man was great on the Earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And *Yehovah* was sorry that He had made man on the Earth, and He was grieved in His heart. And *Yehovah* said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.[21]

But Noah found *chen*, *charis*, or grace in the eyes of *Yehovah*.

It is essential to briefly interrupt the narrative in order to reiterate that Noah was under the grace of God. This simple understanding becomes a foundational key for interpretation of the rest of the Bible.

So then we ask, “What was the difference between Noah and those who perished under the water?” Genesis explained that “Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.”

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[21] Genesis 6:5–7 modified NASB

We understand that Noah made different choices based upon the call toward the Truth of God, Whose seeds were planted in his heart. Noah heard the voice of God and walked according to what he knew to be right. Because he could distinguish between good and evil, he rejected the voice of Satan and walked according to the voice of the Lord. And Noah's obedience captured the attention of God Most High. Resultantly, the *soteria* or *yeshuah* of heaven would be his inheritance. He reaped what he had sown and his family would receive salvation from the coming deluge.

As God established the *Aionios* Covenant with Noah, we realize that this was inseparable from the concept of being under His *chen*, *charis*, or grace. Those under grace, were seekers who listened, heard, and obeyed the voice of God Most High. They had faithfully committed themselves to walk in the Truth. Their faith or faithfulness was proven by their choices and deeds. They listened to the voice of God rather than to that of the adversary. With ones such as these, the Lord established His covenant of marriage. This meant that He would provide them with *yeshuah* or *soteria* in order to protect, provide, and help them through their daily lives.

In the Hebrew language, the term *shama* has two meanings which included listening and obeying. These concepts were one and the same in biblical Hebrew. If one had obeyed, it was only because they had truly listened. Noah listened to the voice of the Lord and obeyed. Whereas the rest of the world moved forward in corruption according to the voice of the adversary and rejected the kind intention of the voice of God, they were about to die a second death. Nevertheless, Noah's loyal commitment to listen and to obey ultimately saved his family.

Herein we make a logistical observation and a differentiation between those who attempted to construct the tower of Babel reaching into the skies in order to re-enter the presence of the Holy One. The inhabitants of Babel tried to gain entry into the heavenly realm by their own will despite their refusal to walk according to the voice of God Most High. By contrast, Noah had rejected the adversarial voice. Resultantly, he and his family were raised up into the heavens as they rode on the ark. They were

elevated up into life above the rising waters. Herein, Noah received that which had been sought by the builders of the tower of Babel.

> And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the Earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the Earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the Earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the Earth. Then God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the Earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the Earth.[22]

From the time of his birth according to his namesake, Noah was expected to be a deliverer from the curse humankind had inherited outside of Eden.

God was about to bring an end to the unchecked malicious evil that had overwhelmed humankind by allowing a great flood to cleanse wickedness from the world. However, Noah and his family were to receive God's protection as they obeyed the voice of God Most High. They would pass through and rise above the water.

It is especially important to take note of the fact that early Orthodoxy's bishops followed in the interpretive momentum of Classical Greek in defining *charis* as favor. This is how they were raised in their educations reading the literature of ancient Greece. And so therefore Biblical concepts were altered by Homeric, Platonic, and Aristotelian ideas. And so, conclusions that had been established during the timeframe of the Classical Greek writers became the basis of Christianity's historic creeds and doctrines. The great church had no idea of the Old Testament origins of the concept of *chen*, *charis* or grace, and so it superimposed a new foreign idea over the reading of the Scriptures.

While in some cases, "favor" may fit contextually, it is only by inductive investigation of the larger body of a passage by which ancient biblical terms should be defined.

In Hebrew, careful contextual analysis of the term "*chen*," which was translated as "*charis*" in the Septuagint, reveals a context

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[22] Genesis 6:5-13 NASB

of the occurrence of divine miraculous manifestations. Those who participated in *chen*, *charis*, or grace, experienced the signs and the wonders of God Most High. And this was the case with Noah and his descendants in the Abrahamic tradition all the way to the time of Jesus and the apostles of the New Testament. Those who received *chen*, *charis*, or grace encountered God or the Word of God by many mysterious means. Those who obeyed, later would become renowned by Luke as eyewitnesses and servants of the Word.

Participants in the Hebraic tradition under the *chen* of God were promised a new dwelling place in the presence of God Most High. As was stated in the covenant made with Noah, it was by passage through cleansing water and by being raised into the cloud, that the faithful would experience the bright glory or the incomparable radiance of *Yehovah*. Inhabiting a dwelling of light, they would hear and distinguish His voice.

Looking at the trajectory ahead, Second Temple Judaism anathematized divine-human subjectivity, instead substituting rote obedience to the *takkanot*. With this second *torah*, they had essentially removed the allowability for Jews to lay claim to hearing the voice of God. These mysterious divine-human encounters had been given over to the Aaronic priesthood who entered into the holy of holies. However, Jesus restored the Hebraic faith initiated with Noah and that was passed down through Abraham and the *Ish-raah-el-ites*—wherein the faithful were once again understood to have become the subjects of divine *chen*, *charis*, or grace.

Essentially, we understand that Jesus restored encounter with the Word, Who we also identify as the second power of heaven Who had formerly met with the *Ish-raah-el-ites* and their prophets in the cloud. And it was precisely because Jesus claimed to be the Holy One of Israel, whose glory abode in the heavenly *aionios* cloud, that He was accused of blasphemy by the high Priests of the Second Temple and was crucified.

Nevertheless, even as a seed dies and passes into the ground, it also grows up bearing much fruit.

With the benefit of almost a thousand years hindsight in the biblical record, the early progenitors of Second Temple Judaism, including Hezekiah and Josiah, sought to violently eliminate those

who continued in the spirituality of Abraham and who offered sacrifices according to the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. Leaders of the Aaronic Priesthood, who were growing in power, were disturbed by the miraculous testimonies, signs, and wonders of the celebrants of Hebraic faith. The latter kings chose to ignore the significance of thousands of years of divine-human miraculous encounter and instead positioned themselves to establish the Jerusalem temple as the only sanctioned institution of the Jewish religion. Acting in accordance with their agenda to end all suspiciously questionable talk regarding supposed divine-human interactions, leaders rejected the *chen* or the grace of God—relegating the reported miraculous history of *Yehovah's* interactions with Israel to myth and legend.

Rulers like Hezekiah only sought after the prophets of the Hebraic tradition when they had gotten themselves into trouble. Otherwise, they considered adherents to the Abrahamic tradition as a bothersome nuisance and a problem that needed to be eliminated. These kings loved independence and did not want to admit their need for *Yehovah's davar* or His *yeshuah*. They attempted to hide themselves from personal accountability before God Most High. The entirety of the concept of hearing God's voice and entering into a personal faithful marriage covenant with *Yehovah* meant nothing to any of them.

In all of this, their actions proved that they were listening to the voice of the adversary instead of hearing and responding to the voice of God. They were murderers, and their descendants in the time of Jesus were condemned for the same actions—being identified, not as the children of the Patriarch, but instead as the children of Satan. Jesus taught that the authentic children of Abraham were known as such because they continued in his deeds.

Figuratively speaking, these evil kings shoved *Yehovah* into the back corner of the Temple in the holy of holies for the Aaronic priests to ritualistically appease by means of sacrifices. A formulistic religion that pushed God far out of tangible reach would better serve their overwhelming desire to walk in the lustful selfish ways of the nations around them.

Although the wicked kings were able to exert control over the Aaronic Priesthood in the city of Jerusalem, they were unable to fully control the prophets who were raised up according to the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek* and who were spread out even beyond the borders of Israel.

Insofar as it was possible to do so, religio-politically motivated leaders moved the foundation of Judaism toward a lifeless ceremonial religion. This did not offer its adherent's potential for transformation by walking according to the voice of God—thereby being humbled by communion with the Truth of God's Being.

Accordingly, rote adherence to the two *t*/*Torahs* would not result in reception of the *chen* of God. Ones could not find their ways into the spiritual realm by means of rules and regulations. Although we stressed the validity of the inspired *Torah* earlier, recall that we also stated that these kind instructions were stepping-stones. The Ten Commandments helped the nation of Israel to comprehend that ultimately, *Yehovah* desired for a change in character. He desired for each one to turn away from evil and to embrace respect and love of their neighbors. Reverence for *Torah*, which had been given to Moses in an encounter with the second power or the Word of God amidst the cloud atop Mount Sinai, was entirely different than jumping through the toilsome hoops of the *takkanot*.

The repeated warnings of the Hebraic Prophets fell upon deaf ears. The prophet asked,

> Do you think that *Yehovah* greatly delights in your burnt offerings and sacrifices, instead of obeying His voice? Behold, to obey *Yehovah's* voice is better than sacrifice, than to offer the fat of rams.[23]

When the Jews returned from captivity, spiritual descendants, who wanted nothing to do with the prophetic Hebraic life, sought to reimpose the centralized Jerusalem worship. By that time, this included a more stringently developed *takkanot*. These

[23] 1 Samuel 15:22 modified NASB

ones no longer walked in a matrimonial life of mutual divine-human faithfulness with prophetic accountability. And accordingly, they became renowned as the "Whore of Babylon," who Jesus condemned in Revelation.

Whereas Hebraic spirituality offered instruction in seeking and listening to the voice of God, Second Temple Judaism enforced public adherence to humanly contrived daily regulations that were never taught in the Scriptures. The faith and calling of Abraham involved the faithful in *Yehovah's* mysterious signs and wonders whereby they gained provision and empowerment to reach out and bless their neighbors. By contrast, the Second Temple placed a heavy yoke upon their countrymen under the pretentious charade that the traditions of the elders had been the will of *Yehovah*. And they used the *takkanot* to justify separating themselves from their Gentile neighbors—lest they become unclean through social interaction.

Herein, those released from captivity firmly established the imposturous, fraudulent, lifeless Second Temple Judaism; the foundation of which had been initiated hundreds of years earlier by the insolent kings of Israel including Hezekiah and Josiah. Not only had their sacrifices been rejected by *Yehovah*, but the Latter Prophets had foreseen this regime's future destruction at a time that would correspond with the restoration of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

The Apostle Paul, who formerly served the misleading traditions of the elders and the agendas of the Second Temple, miraculously encountered the Word of God on the road to Damascus as an incomparable light from heaven. He testified repeatedly that it was brighter than the sun, flashing all around him and his traveling companions.

In the encounter, the Word identified Himself as Jesus. The Holy One of Israel had become manifest to adherents of the Hebraic tradition throughout the Scriptures. Those traveling with Saul saw the light but could not make sense of the heavenly voice.

It is helpful to once again emphasize the manifestation of God's voice in the apparition of the Word which was accompanied by light. Recall that composers of the Aramaic Bible had spoken of

the Word of God either as *Memra*, stressing His voice or as the glory of the *Shekinta*, emphasizing one's standing place in the presence of God's light. Saul was confronted by the divine manifestation and was given eyes to see and ears to hear. He was instantly transformed from being a Second Temple persecutor of those who followed the Jewish path laid by Jesus, into an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Noah and the spiritual descendants of Abraham shared the commonality of experiencing diverse forms of divine-human encounter. Jesus taught that those belonging to Him, as the Shepherd of the sheep, would hear His voice and that He would become their gateway into the realm of the spirit. Those who listened and obeyed were walking in the *chen*, *charis* or grace of God.

Shortly after being miraculously healed from blindness, Paul departed for a three-year sojourn in Arabia where the refugees fleeing the genocide of Josiah had resettled. These ones had continued in the faith and spirituality of Abraham that was centered around living encounter with the mysterious Word and the reception of *yeshuah*. Their forefathers had walked in the *chen* of the *Aionios* Covenant.

In Israel, there were two essentially Jewish, competing paradigms of faith. There was the non-miraculous, legalistic Second Temple Judaism in contrast to that which was taught by Jesus which had confronted Saul—who was renamed thereafter as Paul.

When we read articulations regarding being under grace instead of being under the law, which were written perhaps a decade or so after Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus, we are able to interpret his intentions using the context of his life.

Those coming to the faith of Abraham, which was celebrated by King David, and that was restored by Jesus were not under the rulership and bondage of Second Temple Judaism. They were under the miraculous divine *chen*, *charis,* or grace of the *Aionios* Covenant. They had been born again into the realm of the *aiona* and walked in the *aionios* life.

It is noteworthy to realize that three sermons were offered in Luke's narrative of Acts. Each one began with Abraham, moved on to David, and was completed with Jesus.

Jesus greatly affirmed the first *Torah* of Moses' Ten Commandments but explained that these were lived out by ones who loved the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength by ones who cared for their neighbors in the same way as they loved-themselves.

In continuity, Paul condemned, envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice reiterating, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of *the* Law."[24]

Although it is plain to see by these verses from Romans that Paul affirmed the *Torah* of Jesus which originated with Moses, the Law that he had rejected with all of his being was the *takkanot* of the Second Temple. The tradition of the elders would never result in the experience of *yeshuah* that had been realized by Abraham's descendants, King David, and the prophets.

Orthodoxy re-cast all of Paul's practical narratives regarding divine-human practices of spirituality into theological concepts and intellectual doctrines that throughout the Christian Era presumably held the gnostic power to save humankind from hell. This was tremendously amplified by both Calvinism and the Protestant Evangelical movement. Theologized Bible verses, especially from the letters to the Romans and to the Ephesians became the heart-throb of both John Calvin and John Nelson Darby.

However, absolutely none of Orthodoxy's foundations, the Reformers revisions, or Protestant Evangelicalism's conclusions that have been so arrogantly lauded as being "correct" regarding election, predestination, or being saved from hell, have anything to do with the miraculous *chen*, *charis,* or grace which re-shaped Paul's life.

Biblical terms have been grossly redefined by well-intended individuals during the progression of Christendom. These newly created ideas were foreign to the minds of the authors of Scripture. However, these became the foundations of Orthodoxy's creeds and

[24] Romans 13:9-10 NASB

doctrines. As theological discussion continued over the centuries, multiplied layers of error upon error have resulted. When these mistakes are further superimposed over the Scripture, as was done by John Calvin and many others, concepts in the Bible became unacceptably distorted. Furthermore, trajectories of thought were interrupted. Important statements in the texts of Scripture that were included to reinforce the vitality of divine-human encounter have been removed from the texts of translations.

A primary example is the transposition of the concept of the Word, Whom the original authors understood to have been the Holy One of Israel. He became manifest through dreams, visions, by angelic visitations, and through other mysterious and miraculous apparitions. In today's churches, it is the preached message or the text of the Bible that is referenced as the word of God. Resultantly, the course of interpretation has been sidetracked in an entirely different direction away from the Hebraic paradigm that instead emphasizes the dominance of theologized doctrinal knowledge. These losses and changes have resulted in confusion and the rise of a plethora of counterfeit spiritualities. In churchianity, individuals are no longer encouraged to pursue mystical encounters with the Word. Many leaders teach that to do so would be extremely dangerous. Instead, parishioners are trained to listen to sermons, and to glean doctrinal principles from the Bible. Jesus confronted the identical error in John chapter 5, which will be discussed later.

Elucidation of the *Aionios* Covenant included that *pisteuo* was a pledge of actionable mutual divine-human faithfulness, which resulted in *Yehovah* remembering His part of the bargain. He would keep an eye on the *Ish-raah-el-ites* and provide them with *yeshuah* or *soteria* when they needed help and give them places of standing before His heavenly throne in the *aiona* where they could state their needs. He would cause them to ride upon the heights in the inheritance of their father Jacob, and would guide them by His voice. Sometimes *Yehovah* would even empower them with miraculous gifts of grace. Moreover, He would manifest His presence in a cloud and speak through dreams and visions. All of these facets combined together were understood as the *aionios* life or a life under the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God.

Suffice to understand that all those who walked in the ways of the Lord found standing places in the *aiona* as they celebrated peace with God in the *Aionios* Covenant. They had turned from wickedness and had given themselves to the guidance and Lordship of *Yehovah*. At times, the sky might be rolled back like a scroll and the faithful would be gathered with Him, finding themselves surrounded by His bright radiant glory.

In a broad sense, *chen* or *charis*, translated as grace, can be understood in the context of Scripture as the Hebraic life of divine-human encounter. This was entered into by a pledge of loyal faithful commitment to God Most High and was proven by obedience to His voice—as was characterized by the biblical term *pisteuo*. The lives of those who embraced the Hebraic paradigm of faith and spirituality were reshaped by signs and wonders. The Holy One, or the Word, manifested His help, deliverance, provision, guidance and healing which was described in the texts of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures with the terms y*eshuah* and *soteria*. This was salvation. Those who walked with the Lord, hearing and obeying His voice were also given standing-places before His throne in the spiritual realm of the *aiona*. Such ones had found peace with God. All of this was availed through the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace that had been established with Noah, and that continued to be extended to the descendants of Abraham all throughout the entirety of the bible and up to this present day. When individuals came to Jesus asking how they too might inherit the *aionios* life, they were seeking all of this as their intended ancient inheritance from the time of Eden.

Early Orthodoxy never understood any of this because of their hardline hateful rejection of Jewish and Old Testament understandings. They anathematized ancient biblical texts that had been widely accepted hundreds of years earlier because these contained statements that contradicted their doctrines. Due to their blinding disposition, they translated *aionios zoe* as “eternal life”—equating this with going to heaven after death. This error further informed and shaped Orthodoxy’s mission to provide the means into a heavenly afterlife.

Those who came to Jesus asking how they might inherit the *aionios zoe*, were not asking what doctrines to believe so they could prevent being consumed by the fires of hell after they died. As mentioned before, at the time of the writing of the Gospels and even to this very day, Judaism has never embraced any dominant concept of life after death in heaven.

The author of Hebrews explained the identity of Jesus as the Word of God. According to His namesake, He was and remained the Source of the ancient *soteria* or *yeshuah* for all who would obey His voice. Furthermore, the sacrificial blood of the Great Shepherd of the sheep renewed the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace and opened the gateway into His presence.[25]

And so today we can understand that those who were supposedly damned to hell throughout history by churchianity for not believing or confessing Orthodoxy's doctrines may simply have been individuals who refused to submit themselves to powerless earthly priests hawking lifeless gnostic religion. The wonderful news is that despite anyone's inability to comprehend theological jargon, or their refusal to pander to religio-political agendas, those who encountered the Word of God and were born of the Truth of the Being of God were not so lost after all.

In the foundation of Noah's relationship with God Most High, we recall the establishment of peace with humankind:

> "I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the Earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the Earth. I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the Earth…This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My Bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me

[25] Note Hebrews 5:9 and 13:20; in light of the larger context of the book of Hebrews.

> and the Earth. It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the Earth, that the Bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the Bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the *Aionios* Covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the Earth." And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the Earth."[26]

Herein, we note the repeated emphasis that the *Aionios* Covenant was intended for all generations of humankind and even applied to animals. It would be characterized by the phenomena of a cloud, the bright radiance of a light like a rainbow, and by hearing God's voice.

Imagine seeing a person whose figure was somewhat visible but behind a veil and perhaps surrounded by a rainbow. Now then, if you have access to the internet, take a moment to search for the image, or preferably for a video, of a Brocken Spectre, a Brocken Bow, or a Mountain Spectre. You're going to see what may be a chilling example of how this could possibly have appeared.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time. Noah walked with God Who was in the cloud, listening to His voice. And Noah became the earthly progenitor of finding *chen*, *charis*, or grace in the eyes of the Lord—passing this legacy to all of humankind. This covenant, according to the namesake of Noah would provide the means of deliverance from the toilsome curse suffered on Earth by humankind as they were ejected from Eden.

Taking particular note of the term "remember" from the Hebrew term *zachar*, this Hebraic concept was not merely a cerebral exercise of recollection. One's pledge of faithfulness to *Yehovah* and commitment to His calling and Lordship provided entry into the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. Such individuals had turned from wickedness and therefore found peace with God Most

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[26] Genesis 9:9-17 modified NASB

High. Now they were counted as His children, and as such, they were under His protection. They would be guided by His voice which came through various kinds of manifestations of His Word or by His Holy One.

For *Yehovah* to have remembered His earthly children, according to the concept of *zachar* meant that He would take action when they were in need. The means of obtaining His help was by calling upon His Name. And so "*Yehovah*" was the "memorial name" and it was given for all generations of humankind who would dwell upon the Earth. And it is ever so important to stress that specifically calling upon the sacred name of *Yehovah* was never intended to have been taken away from any inhabitant of Earth.

Therefore, when the Deuteronomists and Second Temple Judaism forbade calling upon the name of *Yehovah*, they set themselves up in direct opposition to God Most High.

And so we understand that God's remembrance was a call to take action in the future based upon the pledge of His faithfulness. Divine help was available to those who called upon His name. Those who had pledged loyalty to *Yehovah* were no longer alone in the world or left to be crushed by the wiles of its wickedness. The Holy One or the Word of God would rush to worshipers who sought to enter His presence.

Two memorials were given to those who would become *Ish-raah-el-ites.* The first was the name of "*Yehovah*." The second memorial was the blood sacrifice. When a pure and spotless lamb was sacrificed, this allowed for entry into God's presence. We might also understand the inference of the concept of making a payment. The freedom to enter into the realm of the Holy One or the Word came at a cost. It was through the broken flesh of the sacrifice that a price was paid to redeem individuals who had sought entry into God's presence. The sacrifice and this redemption was re-enlivened through the breaking of bread.

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The freedom to enter into the realm of the Holy One or the Word came at a cost. It was through the broken flesh of the sacrifice that a price was paid to redeem individuals who had sought entry into God's presence. The sacrifice and this redemption was re-enlivened through the breaking of bread. The mistake of much of Christendom however was not apprehending that in the breaking of bread, the gateway was opened into the holy realm. And so, what churchianity references as communion, commonly is simply a ritual of intellectual remembrance and acknowledgment of Jesus' sacrifice. Instead, feet were to have been washed in preparation to stand on holy ground.

Today, in Judaism, in celebration of the *kiddush* at the start of the Sabbath, challah bread is broken, and it is eaten with wine. Although contemporary Jewish celebration has probably lost all context of its origination and its design to allow entry into the holy realm, and feet are no longer washed, Jesus re-identified this as a second means of re-enlivening and calling forth His presence for future generations. With the breaking of the bread, the sacrifice was re-enlivened, the gateway was opened, feet were washed, and supplicants would wait for the presence of God to fall upon them during the Sabbath. This sacred day was designed for entry into the Word and for divine-human encounter with the Holy One.

And so we understand that by worship of the name of *Yehovah* at any time and in any place in the world, or on the Sabbath through the breaking of bread, seekers could pass through the veil separating heaven from Earth into the *aiona*. These remembrances or memorials provided the tangible means of opening the gates of heaven.

It is noteworthy to point out a Hebraic motif resultant from this passage which was identified in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* as "significance above the water." This concept slipped away from the collective mind of Judaism and Christendom over time, but later we will examine how being raised above the water was related to being raised into the cloud as these components of the physical world were separated on the third day of creation.

Aionios Covenant—God's Dwelling in the Cloud

Readers are introduced to the divine Being of *Memra* at the start of Genesis in the Aramaic Bible: "In the beginning with wisdom the *Memra* of the Lord created and perfected the heavens and the Earth." And from this point, *Memra* was presented as the divine intermediary between humankind and God Most High Who rendered salvation or God's intervening deliverance to those who faithfully walked with Him.

Ahead, as we quote the Targums, it is important to offer several interpretive notes. These Scriptures included invaluable facets of the oral tradition of ancient Israel that predated the written composition of the Hebrew Old Testament. In earlier understandings, the Word of the LORD, or the *davar*, was at one time personified as the divine being of *Memra*. Although this is not stated explicitly, some passages lead us to the understanding that *Memra* was the unique Son of God Who was above all of the heavenly host.

Accordingly, John introduced his Gospel stating, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" "…and He took on human flesh and dwelt among us." The more familiar we become with John's Gospel, it is increasingly evident that he was very familiar with the Aramaic Bible.

Although humankind could not survive seeing the actual Being of God, *Memra* came into the Earth to provide divine-human fellowship, whereby the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures respectively explained the provision of *yeshuah* or *soteria*—through His miraculous intervention in the affairs of humankind. Although the Hebrew narrative explained that Jacob encountered the Word and that he wrestled with the Angel of the Lord, in the Aramaic Scriptures, He is remembered as having wrestled with *Memra*. Furthermore, the glory or the radiance of *Memra* was witnessed in manifestation of the heavenly *Shekinah*.

Therefore, the seeming contradiction of not being able to see God and live, was explained by the ancient concept of the second power of heaven. Acknowledgement of a second divine being, having been repeatedly referenced as the Word of God or

with other titles, had been a vital component of Hebraic faith from the beginning of time. However, this understanding was banned and stricken from the theological record by the Jews in the second century A.D. Building upon the earlier work of R. Travers Herford, the Jewish scholar Alan F. Segal researched and wrote about the history of Judaism's condemnation and abolishment of this understanding that spanned the pages of Scripture. For all of time, it was understood that this second divine entity was the agent through which God Most High interacted with individuals on Earth. The second power was a representation of *Yehovah* Who provided a subjective, miraculous, interactive divine-human relationship.[27]

Note that most materials available or historical references to the second power are going to be castigated as heresy.

The Council of *Yavneh* was founded around year 90 of the Christian Era in order to reorganize Judaism after the destruction of the Second Temple about 20 years earlier. They established the *Birkat HaMinim*, which was actually a curse placed upon heretics who refused to abandon their commitment and affirmation to the second power. Among other interests revolving around the reestablishment of Judaism, they sought to eliminate the stream of Christian Jews who had arisen in the first century A.D. Much later in the twelfth century A.D., once again, the renowned Jewish thinker Moses Maimonides said anyone upholding the two powers idea was categorized as "*minim*" or as a heretic. The very fact that any such discussion had continued among the Jews for such a lengthy period, more than a thousand years, testifies of the longstanding and deep-rooted existence of the two powers concept. Furthermore, its historical anathematization indicates that it was once a solid widespread ancient understanding that had continued among Jews at least into the 12th century A.D.

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[27] Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977),
Also see: Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986) R. Herford, R. Travers. *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*. 1903. Reprint, Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2006

Both Alan F. Segal and Robert Travers Herford were seminal writers concerning the two powers controversy, each referencing the Council of *Yavneh* and the Jews' agenda to eliminate what they understood to have been a harmful interpretive stance regarding the abiding presence of the Holy One of Israel.

Just as many Fundamentalist Reformed Christians today despise the notion of personal mystical encounter with the Lord, so also, the same dynamic to eliminate intimate subjectivity was at the forefront of the Jewish agenda at the end of the first century. Nevertheless, rules contrived in fear and error will never stop the Word of God from visiting Himself upon members of humankind. Be they Jews, Christians, or peoples who have never heard of either religion, the Holy One searches throughout the world seeking and providing His *yeshuah* to those who forsake evil and are guided by their love of righteousness. Ones such as these will hear God's voice in encounter with His Word. Cornelius serves posterity as a prime example in the New Testament book of Acts.

The shortcoming of the *Yavneh* agenda was that although they were able to silence the ongoing discussion in the Jewish community, thankfully, they were not able to change the Scriptures. And they could not change history. The devout Jewish author, Philo of Alexandria, who lived between 20 and 50 A.D., wrote extensively regarding the two powers. He was not labeled as a heretic because in his view, the second power was subordinate and not independent.

In Philo's work, *Questions and Answers on Genesis*, Book II, Section 62, he explained why God made man in the image of "God" rather than "His own image"—based upon Genesis 9:6. He explained:

> Why does [Genesis] say, as if speaking of another God, "in the image of God I made man" and not "in His own image?" Very excellently and wisely is this oracle expressed. For nothing mortal could be made in the likeness of the

> supreme Father of the universe, but only after the pattern of the second God, who is His Word."[28]

In his work, *On the Cherubim*, Philo stated:

> In the one true God there are two chief powers, the Creative Power and the Royal Power. By His Creative Power, He made the universe, and by His Royal Power, He governs what He has made.[29]

These two powers he described respectively with the labels *theos*, which means "God," and *kyrios*, which means "Lord." (Note that in John 20:28, in continuity, Thomas identified Jesus both as, "my Lord and my God," using the same Greek terms.

Although he was rejected by Orthodoxy as a Platonist, Justin Martyr, who lived from 100 to 165 A.D., also spoke about the second power (note *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 56). Justin conversed with a Jew who denied the second power and remarked:

> I shall attempt to persuade you, since you have understood the Scriptures, [of the truth] of what I say, that there is, and that there is said to be, another God and Lord subject to the Maker of all things; who is also called an Angel, because He announces to men whatsoever the Maker of all things—above whom there is no other God—wishes to announce to them.[30]

Justin continued to extensively debate the two powers question with Trypho. If only Orthodoxy had not rejected the writings of Justin Martyr, perhaps they would have been forced to contend with this concept in Scripture.

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[28] Philo, "Questions and Answers on Genesis (*Quaestiones in Genesim*)," in *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 2.62. Philo's works are available in public domain formats online.

[29] Philo, "On the Life of Moses, I & II (De Vita Mosis," in *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 27-28.

[30] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 56.

Daniel 7:13-14 makes the distinction between two divine powers.

> I saw in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an *aionios* dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.[31]

We take note of the second power Who was with Jacob and was described as an angel in Exodus 23:20-22.

> Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him. But if you carefully obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.[32]

Once the second power concept is understood, the dichotomy becomes increasingly clear in the reading of the Scriptures. In the Aramaic Bible, this is as plain as day with the personification of the Word of God as *Memra*.

In Genesis 19:24, we are told, "Then *Yehovah* rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from *Yehovah* out of heaven." Herein we recognize two distinct *Yehovahs*.

In Psalm 110:1, "*Yehovah* says to my Lord (*Adoni*): 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

In Zechariah 2, the speaker and the sender are both *Yehovah*.

> For *Yehovah* of hosts says this: "After glory He has sent me against the nations that plunder you, for the one who touches you, touches the apple of His eye. For behold, I am

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[31] Daniel 7:13-14 ESV, note that "everlasting" was changed to *aionios.*

[32] Exodus 23:20-22

> going to wave My hand over them so that they will be plunder for their slaves. Then you will know that the *Yehovah* of armies has sent Me. Shout for joy and rejoice, daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares *Yehovah*. "And many nations will join themselves to *Yehovah* on that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that *Yehovah* of hosts has sent Me to you.[33]

It should be noted that the modification made in the rendition was only that of changing the term "LORD" to more literally be red as "*Yehovah*"—as is the case in the Hebrew text. This same modification will continue throughout this book in order to allow readers to see for themselves what translators of the scriptures have obscured in their renderings. When it is noted that the text of any translation has been modified, this has been done solely for the purpose of clarifying the Greek or Hebrew manuscripts. Otherwise, we have endeavored to preserve what was stated by the biblical author.

In fact, there may be better samples to convey the extant concept of the two powers in the first century A.D. and beyond. My goal has not been to provide an exhaustive study, but instead to firmly establish the existence of said understanding.

Keeping all of this in mind, for the composers of the Gospels, the concept of the second power was a basic immutable component of their background understanding. This had not yet been anathematized and forbidden by the Jews. Therefore, when we read the New Testament, we also should add this to our consideration as we interpret the biblical texts.

Whatever the case might have been in destruction of the two powers concept in history, the fact is that this was common knowledge both prior to 90 A.D. when the Council of *Yavneh* was established and formulated the *Birkat HaMinim*. And this understanding continued so that it remained as a poignant discussion well into the second century. And the Jews could not

[33] Zechariah 2:8–11 modified NASB

possibly erase every incidence of the two powers from the Bible. So this concept was bound to be unveiled again at some time along with the dubious plot to wipe this understanding from the knowledge base of history. And here we are.

Although it should perhaps go without saying, we want to remark that everything stated in this book is verifiable by historical study. The concepts being unveiled were common understandings in the first century A D. However, individuals on both sides of the Judeo-Christian world who were fraught with religio-political agendas shamefully attempted to alter what would be passed down to posterity.

After the birth, life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, asserted by Jews who followed the way of *Yeshuah* as His having been a fleshly incarnation of the Word of God, the ancient concept of the second power made it understandable and easy for Jews to depart from the legalism of the continuing lesser enduring form of Second Temple Judaism in order to instead seek and follow the Word. Of course, rampant attrition created a dilemma for mainline Judaism. And so they determined that this stream of faith that was rapidly growing within Judaism had to be brought to an end.

Accordingly, they banned all discussion of the historical existence of the second power. The leaders of Judaism successfully managed to anathematize this understanding and declared it to be heretical. By this means they were able to eradicate the concept from the mindfulness of their own Jewish constituency.

Herford and Segal provided seminal historical narratives in their respective books—*Two Powers in Heaven*, *and Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*—elucidating the ancient understanding of the second power. Their research demonstrates that the second power concept was not invented after the earthly life of Jesus. Others such as Margaret Barker and Michael Heiser have written on the same topic.

Several decades before I had heard of any of these individuals or their work, in the composition of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, my own thesis was that the Gospel could not have been the spreading of the message of Jesus' life, crucifixion and resurrection based upon the logical incongruity

that Jesus preached the Gospel at the very start of His ministry long before He openly disclosed that He intended to go to the cross. Further complicating Orthodoxy's intellectual Gospel was the fact that John the Baptist preached the Gospel prior to baptizing Jesus. How could John have possibly preached Orthodoxy's message of the Gospel if he was killed years before Jesus went to the cross? Due to this historical fact, it was not possible that the Gospel preached by John the Baptist or Jesus could have possibly been the story of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection that is ubiquitously preached by churchianity today.

Concerns that further dismiss the accuracy of Orthodoxy's Gospel include that the Apostle Paul asserted that the Gospel had first come to Abraham, and the author of Hebrews stated that the Gospel had come to ancient Israel when Moses ruled because they witnessed the same Word. In *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, I made the case that the Gospel that John the Baptist, Jesus, and His disciples proclaimed was the restoration of the Word of God. The Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites* had returned and the grace of God had been restored. Once again individuals were seeing and hearing the voice of the Holy One-Whom scholars in our own century describe as the second power of heaven or as Israel's second God.

The concept of the second power would be far more distinguishable in Scripture, however Orthodox minded translators have not made literal translations of the Hebrew texts. In an effort to protect the concept of monotheism, many verses are twisted and rendered in English in ways that conceal the existence of the second divine power.

Due to Judaism's banishment of the concept prior to the rise of early Orthodoxy, and especially because the bishops chose to ignore the Aramaic Bible, the second divine power of heaven Who dwelt in the cloud never became part of the knowledge base of the Great Church.

Today, largely due to the work of Segal, Barker, and Heiser, this understanding once again provides essential insight for interpretation of the Scriptures.

Although we read the Bible and perceive that there are two realms which are the heavens and the Earth, more or less, there was an intermediary realm called the firmament or the expanse from which the Holy One of Israel or *Memra* watched over the Earth. This is supported by Genesis 1:7-8.

> God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. And God called the expanse heaven.[34]

Note that in Hebrew, the term for heaven is the same as the word for sky—which is *shamayim*. Those who are familiar with Hebrew will recognize the suffix and note that this term is plural. There is more than one heaven. Keeping this in mind, in some contexts, the term references the spiritual realm, and in other contexts the term speaks of the skies. Consider that the second power of heaven ruled over the Earth from the expanse or the firmament. In the Scriptures, the Holy One is mentioned as dwelling in or as riding upon the cloud. These could be understood as literal clouds in the skies or as a cloud or a veil that separated the physical realm of Earth from the spiritual realm of heaven.

Following the pattern of what existed in creation, the holy of holies where the Holy One was known to have made His abode was separated in the Temple by a veil. The Tent of Meeting or later the Temple only mirrored what had previously been established in the heavenly realm or the skies. Although the edifices of the Tabernacle and the Temple were understood to have been the house of God, the prophets encountered Him in the cloud. Not only do we observe this in the Scriptures, but also this understanding has been well preserved by the *Merkavah* Tradition.

Once again, we reference Noah, who was raised above the mountaintops on the water where he was protected by God Most High. Similarly, God spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai. In continuity, all throughout the Scriptures we take note of the concept of the “high-place.”

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[34] Genesis 1:7-8 NASB

Keeping in mind that in the Hebraic context, the term "holy" pertained to a heavenly location, the expression, "holy, holy, holy" could possibly be understood to represent the three realms of the cosmos which also may have corresponded to the three sections of the Tent of Meeting. Therefore, there is the Earth, the sky, and the Holy realm. In this perspective, the phrase "holy, holy, holy" signified God's dominion over all three realms.

So then, if we want to get technical, it would seem that the domain of the *aiona*, to which we will devote a great deal of attention ahead, was identifiable as either the second or the third heaven.

Editors of the Hebrew Bible, among the contingency of Second Temple Judaism, in the likes of Hezekiah and Josiah, exercised great bias in what they passed down to posterity. Wicked kings who ignored *Yehovah* were commemorated as having been good. And to be fair, religious leaders thought that they were actually performing a virtuous act by removing subjective worship of *Yehovah* that took place apart from the Aaronic Priesthood. However, the actions of the Deuteronomists and Second Temple Judaism were neither set in motion by the wisdom of God nor by the Word of the Lord. In their quest for un-checked power and control, they were motivated by maligned religio-political agendas. In this, they sought to rid Israel of the earlier faith and spirituality of Abraham, and the unrestrainable personal subjectivity that had been celebrated by the faithful for enduring millennia. Accordingly, biblical references to *Memra* were altered. Rather than conveying any sense of direct personal divine encounter, phrases such as "the *Memra* of the Lord said…" were changed in the Hebrew Bible to more generically read, "the Word of the Lord came to."

What we take note of was a deliberate attempt to diminish the relevance of divine-human personal encounter. The concept of actually becoming an *Ish-raah-el-ite* was changed so that the faith community instead became known as separatists who observed daily legalistic religious rules.

For its own part, early Christian Orthodoxy committed a similar crime, robbing posterity of divine-human encounter. As much is plainly evident by Bishop Epiphanius' condemnation and

active participation in an agenda to destroy the Montanists who practiced the gifts of grace. The architect of Christian Orthodoxy bragged about this in his treatise, *The Panarion*. This was also accomplished through the intellectualization of the Gospel. The bishops were convinced that the Gospel was the message of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. If this was understood and believed, it ensured the reception of theoretical salvation that guaranteed entry into heaven after death. Cognitive comprehension and verbal confession of religious facts supposedly saved participants from going to hell.

Note that in both of these evolutions of Judaism and Christianity, encounter with God became decreasingly necessary. Religious actions practiced by rote and mental acquisition of knowledge became all that was necessary to become counted among the elect.

Fellowships of individuals gathered together on a weekly basis with constituents going through religio-sociocultural motions—all the while thinking about the value of time and hurrying to complete religious matters so that they could get on with the daily business of life.

In both the case of Judaism and Christianity, adherents of these religions were set far off course from the spirituality of ancient Israel that Jesus sought to restore.

Despite all of the historically biased agendas of ignorant men and their vain attempts to leverage the Bible and religion in their insipient desires to control the actions of others, ultimately, institutions cannot contain the Holy One of *Ish-raah-el*. Neither can they prevent Him from moving among the lives of humankind.

The different versions of the Targums were composed after Israel had been taken into captivity by Assyria and Babylon. The faithful hoped for their children, who would be born into slavery in foreign lands, to continue walking with God Most High as *Ish-raah-el-ites* who would see His glory and hear His voice being guided by the Holy One—walking in the *chen*, *charis* or grace of God. Along with this concern, they also understood that future generations would grow up learning to speak and read Aramaic. Therefore, they

rendered tremendously valuable information from the ancient Oral tradition in the Aramaic Bible.

Although it should be common knowledge that the oral tradition long predated the writing of the Scriptures in any language, today the dominant opinion of scholars is that those who composed the Aramaic Bible were merely making *Midrashic* additions. In other terms, they were using a story to explain the body of a particular text. This immature and unfounded argument has been conveniently used to dismiss the authority of the Aramaic Bible and to prevent these texts from having any relevance to theological discussion, faith, or spirituality.

Agendized theologians suppose that if they relegate the differences between the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures as inventions of the translators, these supposed additions can summarily be dismissed. What drives their opinion, however, is a religio-political agenda. They are actually driven by fear, and are merely attempting to preserve the doctrinal party-line of the Orthodox tradition. The fact of the matter is, Orthodox Christendom does not want anybody to read the Targums for fear that these call into question religious understandings that were invented in the fourth century. I should add, that it is not as if there has been any conspiracy at work. Nonetheless, those who have been sincerely dedicated to their religious traditions have been unwilling to exercise the genius of Einstein and to have a look outside of the intellectual bubble that provides a sense of security—even if that is a false sense of security.

As a brief aside on the topic of conspiracy, it is my opinion that naïve individuals, sometimes with damaged minds, gravitate toward conspiracy. I admit that earlier in life I was also predisposed to the same dynamic. I feel compassion because I was once sucked into Constance Cumbey's supposed Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow—which in retrospect turned out to be nothing more than a giant load of foolishness.[35] Be careful whose evangelistic pawn

[35] Constance E. Cumbey, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow: The New Age Movement and Our Coming Age of Barbarism* (Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, 1983).

you become by swallowing the bait of their contrived deception. Don't become somebody else's fool. Unrecognized misguided philosophies will enslave you. These are fleshly, enticing, and will subtly take control of your life. If it sounds like conspiracy and if it stinks like conspiracy, walk away and maintain your freedom. You belong to the Lord and should live only by His voice.

By relegating every single difference to *midrash*, scholars have licensed themselves to throw out the baby with the bathwater. They rely upon this concept to invalidate the Targums rather than plainly admitting their bias and agenda to support Orthodox creeds and doctrines.

We ask the reasonable question, "Is it possible that every single solitary difference between the Aramaic and Hebrew Bibles was a *Midrashic* addition? I am willing to wager that anyone who answers "yes" has probably never read the Targums. *Midrash* may be evident in these texts. However, it is extremely doubtful that all of the differences were merely fabricated stories.

Furthermore, there are several different versions of the Targums which were written in different locations at different times, yet curiously, the contents of these stand in harmony with one another. It seems very unlikely that individuals living in slavery who were hundreds of miles from one another and existing in the world at different times might have fabricated narratives that sound as if they came from the same source. If we are going to be honest, it seems more apparent that they shared an identical origin—which was the oral tradition.

The earliest copies we have of the Targums date to the second century of the Christian Era, which is another reason thinkers attempt to dismiss their relevance. By contrast, the completed Masoretic Hebrew text of the Bible dates between the sixth and tenth century A.D., and yet the work of the Masoretes has been used as the literary basis for nearly every major translation of the English Old Testament.

If antiquity is used as a determining factor of authenticity, the Aramaic Bible has the Masoretic text beat by hundreds of years.

There can be no argument of whether or not the oral tradition preceded the actual writing of the Scriptures. Although a

majority of Christian theologians have dismissed the relevance of the Targums, perhaps hoping these will just be forgotten, in the 1980s and 1990's these began to be translated into English and a flood-gate of realization is still bursting forth.

A problem for traditional Orthodoxy is that its doctrinal theological construct is very fragile. Each and every doctrinal concept depends upon the continued enduring stability of other conceptualizations. Therefore, validating and realistically including ancient understandings from the Aramaic Bible fills the minds of some with tremendous reactionary fear. This is the real motivation for dismissing the Targums.

Memra was not a vague intangible concept as was conveyed by the term "Word" in the Hebrew Scriptures. He was personified and relational, which was also understood to have been a threatening concept for Jewish and Christian thinkers according to the human doctrine of anthropomorphism—wherein human qualities might be attributed to God.

Again, this doctrinal argument has been used to dismiss the relevance of the Targums. It is rooted in fear that other pet Orthodox doctrines might also be endangered.

When we give priority to human opinions and philosophies intended to condition how we read the Bible, what are we really doing? Are we not giving way to fear? Is it proper to let others think for us? Was the doctrine of anthropomorphism divinely inspired?

No. Obviously, it was not.

I would wager that more than 99% of Christian theologians, pastors, and so-called experts have never even read the Targums. And yet many stand firm in their support of doctrinal churchianity speaking from the perspective of arrogant hardened ignorance.

Just because religious gatherings of the uninformed blindly hold fast in agreement, this will not change the facts.

We can spend years trying to reconcile dogmatic precedents that prescribe what we should realize from the Bible until the flesh evaporates from our bones, or we can simply decide to read the Aramaic Scriptures, study, learn, and then decide for ourselves.

Walking in the Genius of Einstein, we may even come to courageously question the absolutes of Orthodoxy, and maturely

step outside of the theological bubble that has contained and conditioned our minds. And if we do so, let this be done with humility, honor, and respect.

Memra, along with other similar references to the Angel of the Lord, and to the Holy One of Israel, including the Hebrew *davar* and the Greek *logos* have been described historically as the second power of heaven. Further complicating the discussion of validating the Targums, Judaism banned all discussion of this topic in the second century of the Christian Era, due to its usage in converting Jews to Christianity.

Moreover, even in the present-day, in order to protect the minds of their people, Jewish Orthodoxy has forbidden the reading of certain Old Testament Scriptures in the synagogues. Parts of Ezekiel were banned because of the perceived dangers of mysticism regarding divine-human encounter with the Word.

In contrast to the faith and spirituality of Abraham, Second Temple Judaism stood firmly against the concept that individuals could seek and hear the voice of God. This was grace, *charis,* or *chen* and was the basis of the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. Assertions of hearing the voice of God became taboo after the reign of Josiah—just as is the case today among many segments of Reformed Christian religion.

In Second Temple Judaism's effort to erase the practice of relational subjectivity with God Most High, the Deuteronomists taught that the secret or mystical things of the Lord were only for the Aaronic priests.

It is essential to understand the basic premise that hearing the voice of God was replaced by the legalistic requirement to adhere to the second *torah*. Religion practiced by rote commandeered personal interactivity with God. Those who rebelled against the harsh imposition of the tradition of the elders and especially those who were so bold as to have laid claim to hearing the voice of God, put their very lives at risk.

Jesus was perceived as such a tremendous threat because He was raising up the more ancient order of spirituality celebrated prior to the captivities—a faith and interactive covenant that the

abominable forefathers of Second Temple Judaism had sought vigilantly to destroy.

When Jesus was questioned by the priests regarding His messianic identity, and He instead responded that He was the second power of heaven Who made His abode in the cloud, it was on this basis that ignorant corrupt individuals condemned Him as a blasphemer.

The second power of heaven, was understood to have been the divine mediator between God and humankind—entitled *Memra* in the Aramaic Bible or often referenced as the Holy One of Israel or the Word of *Yehovah* in the Hebrew Scriptures. He came to members of the faith community in the manifestation of a cloud. He was understood to have been both the voice of God and to have provided the gateway into God's *aionios* presence. Jesus' laying claim to the identity of this divine Being was absolutely astounding. The history of ancient Israel included innumerable testimonies of those who had encountered the Holy One of Israel in the cloud. The *Ish-raah-el-ites* had been led by the cloud, as the voice of the Lord led them. Many had been raised into the heavenly realm and had witnessed Him riding in a chariot on the cloud.

Jesus' bold identification of Himself as the Holy One of *Ish-raah-el*, was a categorically unpardonable atrocity according to the high priests. Jesus' profession ensured imposition of the death penalty. Moreover, this assertion was the equivalent of identifying Himself as the Root of the problem which Hezekiah, Josiah, and Second Temple Judaism had desperately fought to eliminate.

They had decried the practice of seeking encounter with the Holy One of Israel, and therefore Isaiah accused them:

> They have rejected the teaching of *Yehovah* of the heavenly host, and have despised the Word of the Holy One of Israel.[36]
>
> For these are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to *Yehovah's* instruction. They say to the seers, "See no more visions!" and to the prophets, "Give us

[36] Isaiah 5:24

no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!"[37]

In the context of the Old Testament, when God spoke, this miraculous event was understood as *chen*, *charis*, or grace.

Even in the Old Testament, the term *charis* was used to convey divine human encounter. For example, when David went before the Lord seeking to build the temple, its design was given to him in an encounter with *chen*, *charis*, or grace. It was not that the king had received favor from God, but instead, David was able to divinely discern matters conveyed to him from heaven that included every minute detail necessary for construction of the Temple. David had received all of this as he listened to the voice of God.

Individuals, such as Saul of Tarsus, were sent throughout Israel to clean up the mess created by Jesus and His followers. Many were persecuted, jailed, and put to death for their testimonies as participants in the reviled spirituality of the ancient prophets and for their claims of divine-human experience—all of which had been strictly forbidden by the Second Temple establishment.

Herein we emphasize the contrast between *chen*, *charis* or grace and the *takkanot*. The followers of Jesus refused to become subjects of the traditions of the elders. Instead, they opposed the establishment and chose to become the subjects servants of divine grace. These desperate seekers of the voice of God discovered His gateway into the holy realm. They heard and saw manifestations of the Word as *Ish-raah-el-ites*, and embraced the treasure of Jacob.

Those having become faithful to God Most High, like their forefathers in the Old Testament, were rebuilding the ancient ruins that Hezekiah, Josiah and others had futilely sought to destroy. Once again, they found themselves seated with Messiah in the high places.

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[37] Isaiah 30:9-11 NIV

Because of their shared efforts to erase history, Christian and Jewish Orthodoxy have shared culpability for libelous censorship in an effort to maliciously reset the trajectory of the intellectual future.

In the context of acknowledgment of enormous bias and historical controversy we enter the discussion of the *Aionios* Covenant and the identity of Jesus as the divine Being who made His abode in the cloud.

> And the *Memra* of the Lord said to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: "And as for me, behold, I establish my covenant with you and with your sons after you, and [with] every living being that is with you," the birds and the cattle and with any wild beasts of the Earth with you from all that come out from the ark, to every living being of the Earth. And I will establish my covenant with you, and never again shall all flesh be blotted out by the waters of the flood, and there shall never again be a flood to destroy the Earth. And the *Memra* of the Lord said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I place between my *Memra* and you, and every living being that is with you, for the generations of the Earth. I shall place my Bow in the cloud and it will be a covenant sign between my *Memra* and the Earth. And when the clouds are spread over the Earth, the Bow will be seen in the cloud. And I will recall my covenant between my *Memra* and you, and every living soul in all flesh; and never again will there be waters of a flood to destroy all flesh."[38]

Protestant Evangelicals have emphasized that there were a series of different covenants made with various individuals throughout the history of the Old Testament. However, in this perspective there is an enormous error, which came from the interpretive lens of dispensationalism. In the 1800s, John Nelson Darby further particularized and differentiated these identifying them with Noah, Abraham, and David, etc., succinctly dividing these

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[38] Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis, trans. Martin McNamara, The Aramaic Bible, vol. 1A (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), Gen. 9:8–15.

into a series of separate covenants. In a convoluted attempt to construct a model of what had previously been labeled as “salvation history,”

Darby taught that God had made a mistake in Eden by making rules that could cause guilt. He thought that each supposed covenant in Old Testament history represented God’s progressive failed attempts to provide salvation that would free humankind from feelings of shame and that would provide healing of the soul.

Personally, my own opinion is that anyone ever stating that God made a mistake has committed blasphemy. They need their mouths washed out with a bar of soap.

We are going to delve into this subject later, because still today, even though nobody really even remembers who Darby was, his virulent dispensationalist confusion remains as a guiding voice obscuring Bible interpretation around the world.

Suffice to understand that Darby’s ideas splintered the Bible into various parts, utterly destroying a trajectory of thought which began with the grace Noah found with God Most High, and the coming of the Son of God Most High in the New Testament. The Son was restoring the grace of personally and individually hearing the voice of *Yehovah*, which the Deuteronomists following Josiah and Second Temple Judaism had outlawed and abandoned.

Darby’s dispensations followed the pattern of early Orthodoxy’s embrace of Marcion’s dichotomy of the Old and New Testaments. The fourth century model set the stage for the perspective that there were two dispensations or two covenants. Although in a very simplistic sense, it was intuitive to think of the Bible as teaching about an Old and a New Covenant, it is impossible to deny when looking at the context of the Old Testament that God intended to restore the initial marriage covenant He had initiated with Noah and that He continued to extend to Abraham and to his descendants in the nation of Israel.

So then, when we remove the man-made dispensationalist lens, the entirety of the covenantal picture comes back together.

Therefore, even though the covenant of the Christian era was understood as being “new,” in reality, this was a renewal of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. Later we will examine Psalm 133,

wherein according to David's understanding, the anointing of the priests with oil prepared them to experience the life of the *aiona*.

Suffice to understand that the Scriptures teach that individuals either participated in a covenant relationship with God or they did not. There was a single covenant, initiated with Noah, which was and remained as the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. This was celebrated by the descendants of Abraham, who walked in righteousness seeking the voice of the Lord. They discovered the pathway into His presence. The covenant was a marriage vow of faithfulness. Israel became married to *Yehovah* in the covenant. However, Israel acted like a whore and did not remain faithful. They departed from the guiding voice of *Yehovah*, and the covenant was severed. Because Israel no longer lived under the protection of *Yehovah*, the nation was ravaged by the Assyrians and Babylonians and were led away into captivity and slavery. The Latter Prophets foretold a coming day when the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace that had formerly been extended to humankind would be restored. Jesus was identified as the Bridegroom and the reestablishment of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace was a dominant message in the New Testament.

Problematically, however, from the time of early Orthodoxy onward, few if any have ever made a compelling connection between the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace extended to Noah and the *aionios* life offered by Jesus.

Those who turned back to *Yehovah* would once again walk in the *aionios* life and rediscover His presence. Just as Noah was raised above the waters that cleansed the Earth of wickedness, so also the faithful in the New Testament Era would confess their sins, be washed in water, and then would be raised up to life above the water. By this they were prepared to stand in God's presence, to encounter His Spirit, to live by His voice, and to receive His help and protection. This was understood as the life of *chen* or *charis* or grace.

In an encounter with the Word, after passing through the cleansing waters of the Jabbok River, Jacob fought violently with the second power of heaven in order to take hold of God's presence. For this, his name was changed to *Ish-raah-el*, and his

namesake as the man who fought to see and embrace God became the legacy of ongoing generations of those entering the *chen*, *charis* or grace of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

What differed in this covenant relationship, which should be understood as divine-human marriage, is that God agreed to help different individuals throughout the ages according to their diverse needs. Abraham was offered a son. Others were promised deliverance from their enemies or land upon which to settle. Hannah received the ability to conceive. The list would be longer than the Bible. According to John's testimony, all the books in the world could not tell how God has helped everyone among humankind in unique ways.

In the writings of the New Testament, the covenant was explained as being "new" primarily due to Jesus having become the final sacrifice—thereby ending the need for earthly altars. For no earthly sacrificial offering could ever possibly measure up to that provided by the Holy One of Israel. With this change, faithful approach to the Father had been greatly simplified. Thereafter, personal entry into the *aiona* would be accomplished by re-enlivening the sacrifice through worship of *Yehovah* or *Yeshuah*, by breaking the bread, and by washing one's feet—all as preparatory events in order to enter and stand in the *aiona* amidst the angels of God. Although these practices seem to have been instituted by Jesus, in reality, this spirituality had been celebrated in the *kiddush,* long before the Rabbi walked the earth. One pastor personally commented that the practice dates back to Abraham. And as we will see later, the apostle Paul held to the identical understanding—all of this having been made possible by sacrifices made by faithful individuals in the pages of the Old Testament. Much has been lost. Much has been forgotten. And there is need for much to be restored.

When we remove the deceptive dispensationalist lens which so many individuals throughout the Christian Era have used to interpret the Scriptures, it is apparent that it was through the matrimonial pledge of loyalty that multitudes have entered into the protective love and care of *Yehovah*. Each one entered into the covenant with Him. Qualitatively, everyone has come to the Lord

with differing hardships and difficulties. Quantitatively, God Most High has offered a single divine-human relationship.

Simply put, a marriage relationship of faithfulness is a marriage relationship of faithfulness. Just as *Yehovah* counted Himself as having been married to the *Ish-raah-el-ites* of the Old Testament before their rebellion, exile, and captivity, so also Jesus was identified as the Bridegroom—offering betrothal to those who would confess their acts of wickedness, be raised up above cleansing water, and forsake the evil ways of their forefathers. Jesus offered peace between God Most High and humankind. Once again, those who walked with the Lord would receive divine *yeshuah*, *soteria*, or help as they made their way through life on Earth. The *aionios* life repeatedly discussed in the New Testament was a renewal of matrimony. It is the story that was embedded in the text of Hosea. *Yehovah* sent His son to redeem the whore who had forsaken Him.

In their mutual faithfulness, *Yehovah* Most High established peace between Himself and His wayward children. This was the same offering of peace that was initiated with Noah—placing him under the *chen, charis,* or grace of God.

Jesus offered the same, saying:

> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.[39]

The peace established with *Yehovah* Most High was facilitated in the world by the second power of heaven. And the Holy One of Israel, also sometimes spoken of identically as *Yehovah*, Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born into earth through Mary, asserted that He and the Father were One.

The second power was mentioned with a variety of labels in the pages of the Bible. When we read terms and phrases such as the angel of the Lord, the Redeemer, the Mighty One, *Memra*, the Word of God, etc., suffice to understand that different authors

[39] John 14:27 RSV

living in different eras of time had their individual ways of describing Him.

Despite differences in how the divine Emissary was described, the peace He offered was that of *Yehovah* to remove enmity between Himself and members of humankind.

Take note of the delineation of God Most High from the second power of heaven in the following verse:

> Your Husband is your Maker, Whose name is *Yehovah* of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the Earth.[40]

God Most High ruled in the highest realm of heaven over the angelic host, whereas the Holy One of Israel ruled over the Earth from the firmament and was understood to have made appearances, quite literally, in the clouds.

In a similar dichotomy we read,

> The fear of *Yehovah* is the beginning of wisdom—and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.[41]

Once we become aware of the existence of the second power of heaven, these kinds of verses which differentiate between Him and God Most High become more apparent. This need not invalidate the doctrinal concept of the Trinity. However, we want to be careful not to superimpose Orthodoxy's fourth century formulas upon interpretation of unrelated narratives taking place in the Bible.

Where the Spirit is explicitly poured out such as with the 70 elders of ancient Israel or at Pentecost, inference of the Trinity is completely appropriate. Otherwise, where God Most High has been differentiated from the Holy One who ruled over the Earth, we need to let these texts simply be interpreted according to the Father-Son Hebraic paradigm in which they were written.

What is most important is that students of the Scriptures realize that God was reaching out to humankind by the Word, or

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[40] Isaiah 54:4 modified NASB

[41] Proverbs 9:10

through the second power of heaven, in order to draw all of humankind to Himself.

The divided nation of Israel and Judah forsook their marriage with *Yehovah*, figuratively described in the original languages by fornicating or by playing the harlot. They hardened themselves against any change in character by rejecting the stepping-stones laid in place by *Yehovah* in the Ten Commandments—which were designed to provide earthly protection against spiritual forces of wickedness and that led to an abiding place in His presence. In so doing, they departed from the *aionios* life of the covenant that had been characterized by seeking and embracing the presence of the Holy One of Israel through participation in the *kiddush* meal and entry into the holy realm on the Sabbath. Therefore, they lost their intended inheritance of *Yehovah's* divine deliverance, spiritual guidance, and daily help. In their choice to embrace the ways of the world, they gave license to the enemy of humankind to infect their souls with evil resulting in blindness and deafness with regard to *Yehovah's* Word. They forsook the treasure of Jacob.

God's people became blindly deceived—thinking that their acquired land, wealth, and that their earthly strength was the result of their own efforts. Because of this, generations of kings departed from the ways of *Yehovah* Most High and dismissed need of a divine-human relationship with the Holy-One from heaven.

The backstory to the *Aionios* Covenant was that humankind experienced the consequence of death when they rejected the voice of God and disobeyed. They were cast out of the paradisical Garden where they had been made alive. However, by purification with living water, turning from wickedness, and by seeking and obeying His voice, they were given a standing place in the presence of God and were renewed to life. By being born of the spirit or by being born into the realm of the spirit in the *aiona*, they received the *aionios* life and were recognized as participants in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. They were born again.

The second power of heaven, or the Holy One of Israel would become their divine mediator and their miraculous Helper throughout life on Earth. They were no longer at enmity with God.

Signs and wonders would characterize their lives. All of this was described by the Hebrew and Greek terms *chen*, or *charis*. These are sometimes translated as "grace," but more often in accordance with Classical Greek understandings of the early bishops and their influences upon translation, they are rendered as "favor."

When Nicodemus came to Jesus to inquire how it was that He and His disciples performed signs and wonders, Jesus explained that they had been born again into the realm of the spirit. Thereafter in the Gospels, seekers sought the Rabbi Jesus in order to discover how they too could inherit Jacob's treasure which was labeled the *aionios* life. More specifically in John's Gospel, Jesus set the example and provided precise instruction for entry into the *aiona* could occur on the last day or third day, following the pattern of the ancient motif of the three-day journey.

This teaching has been greatly obscured today by worthless dispensationalism passed down by tradition that many of us unwittingly superimpose over the biblical texts. However, as we move forward, we are going to clarify matters to elucidate the lost and forgotten ancient understanding. Moses, Isaiah, Jesus, and many others shared in the agenda of leading hungry seekers in the steps to becoming *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

Although the motif has long been lost and forgotten, those who embarked on this journey were raised up or were resurrected to life in the *aiona* and encountered the Word of God on the third or the last day of the three-day journey. Calling their attention to this lost legacy of ancient Israel experienced by Abraham, Moses, and the nation, and even Jonah, Hosea cried out to the whoremongering people,

> Come, let us return to *Yehovah*. For He has torn *us*, but He will heal us; He has wounded *us*, but He will bandage us. After two days, He will revive us; on the third day, He will raise us up; and we will live in His presence.[42]

Whereas ancient Israel and Judah played the harlot and departed from life in the *Aionios* Covenant, the Latter Prophets

[42] Hosea 6:1–2 modified NASB

spoke of the future day of its renewal. The second power of heaven, referenced respectively in the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures as the *davar*, or as *Memra,* took on human flesh—being born of Mary. Zachariah, Simeon, and Anna, each prophesied that Jesus, Who in Hebrew was named *Yeshuah*, would restore the covenant of ancient Israel. However, a price would have to be paid to allow re-entry into the *aiona*. *Yeshuah* would provide the qualitative redemption that could never possibly be accomplished by any earthly sacrifice so that the inhabitants of Earth could once again find their way into this spiritual dwelling. *Yehovah's* incomparable offering had been foretold by Ezekiel in chapter 39.

During the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, participants in the life of *chen*, *charis*, or grace according to the ancient Priestly Order of *Melchizedek* were persecuted and eventually suffered merciless genocidal elimination. Their high places, where innumerable previous generations of participants in this vibrant prophetic spirituality had encountered the *davar*, or *Memra*, were destroyed. Many who had discovered the *aionios* life and who practiced the spirituality of Abraham fled for their lives to Arabia. Almost immediately thereafter, the remainder of Judah was taken into captivity by Babylon.

Wicked kings set the stage for the rise of Second Temple Judaism and its second fraudulent *torah*. Strict legalistic adherence was imposed upon the Jews by Priestly leaders and lawyers disparagingly decried as the Whore of Babylon." Descendants of Josiah's temple who had forsaken their matrimonial faithfulness to *Yehovah*, having played the harlot, became Jerusalem's religious rulers—legislating a dead, man-made religion practiced by rote.

Nevertheless, through the redemptive price paid by the Holy One of Israel, the Order of *Melchizedek*, the *Aionios* Covenant, and the concept of the worship in high places were all restored.

As an aside, the apprehension of the high-place only seems to have been remembered in the negative context of the worship of false Gods. And certainly, that was the case in many instances. However, David commented on the necessity of good character for those who would be permitted to ascend the hill of the Lord and who would personally encounter *Yehovah* on Mount Moriah. Moses

encountered God on Mount Sinai. It was evident by Jesus' discussion with the woman at the well that these kinds of divine-human meeting were again to be expected throughout the land as a normal part of faith and spirituality for those seeking the Kingdom of God.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd of the sheep, explained that His sheep would hear His voice and that He would become their gateway into the presence of God. Jerusalem would no longer be the sole location of worship, but true worshipers, those having been born of the Truth of God, would worship in spirit and in truth in any location. The practice of seeking God Most High would, once again, be as it was in the time of the Patriarch and his children.

Saul of Tarsus served the Second Temple, persecuting, jailing, and killing those who proclaimed the faith of Jesus—known as the Way. However, after his encounter with the Word, he traveled to Arabia where the spiritual descendants of Abraham had fled. Three years later he returned to what could have been thought of as a high-place on the road to Damascus wherein He had formerly encountered Jesus—the second power of heaven.

Afterward, in accordance with the teaching of the Scriptures, Saul whose name had been changed to Paul, proclaimed the faith that was established with Abraham, that was celebrated by King David, and that had been made alive again by Jesus.

Ish-raah-el, or those who saw God, were no longer under the *takkanot* of the Second Temple, but instead were under the *chen*, *charis* or the grace of the *Aionios* Covenant that had been initiated thousands of years earlier with Noah by God Most High.

From this point, the commission given to Abraham to good-Word or to bless the nations would continue. Jesus explained, "If I be lifted up from the Earth, I will draw all men to Myself."[43] The second power of heaven, the Word of God, the Holy One of *Ish-raah-el* was going back into the spiritual realm of the *aiona* to watch over and to search the world for those seeking His voice, desiring to walk with Him and hoping for His *yeshuah*.

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[43] Excerpted from John 12:32.

Isaiah foresaw the ultimate goal of *Yehovah* to draw all of humankind into His presence through a people who would listen to Him and who would be willing to call forth the nations and to show them the way into the *aiona*. Herein, the peace of the covenant would prevail on the Earth.

> Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of *Yehovah* has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the Earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but *Yehovah* will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light; and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see. They all gather together; they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be carried in their arms. Then you will see and be radiant.[44]

Note the reference to "*Ish-raah-el*" in the comment "You will see and be radiant." Those drawn into the presence of the Lord would be baptized into His glory.

> And [you] will bear good news of the praises of *Yehovah*…And I shall glorify My glorious house…Who are these who fly like a cloud, and like the doves to their lattices? Surely the coastlands will wait for Me. The ships of Tarshish *will* bring your sons from afar, for the name of *Yehovah* your God, and for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you…And your gates will be open continually. They will not be closed day or night, so that *men* may bring to you the wealth of the nations…The glory of Lebanon will come to you…to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I shall make the place of My feet glorious… And the sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you. All who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet; And they will call you the city of *Yehovah*, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated with no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, A joy from generation to

[44] Isaiah 60:1–5 modified NASB

> generation. You will also suck the milk of nations, and will suck the breast of kings. Then you will know that I, *Yehovah*, am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. Instead of bronze I will bring gold, and instead of iron, I will bring silver, and instead of wood, bronze, and instead of stones, iron. I will make peace your administrators, and righteousness your overseers. Violence will not be heard again in your land, Nor devastation or destruction within your borders. Instead, you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise.[45]

Ultimately, the covenant of divine-human peace would result in peace among all of humankind. Subtly embedded within this passage from Isaiah, note the reference to *Melchizedek* as the administrator of peace and the overseer of righteousness.

As individuals agreed upon and settled into lives that respected the Fatherly guidance of the inspired *Torah*, neighbors would learn to get along with one another. This would be the start of a new beginning. The prophetic name of Jerusalem or *Yeru-shalem*, meaning "they will see peace," would be accomplished.

> No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light. Instead, you will have *Yehovah* for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. Your sun will set no more, neither will your moon wane; for you will have *Yehovah* for an *aionios* light, and the days of your mourning will be finished. Then all your people *will be* righteous; They will possess the land of the *aiona*, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. The smallest one will become a clan, and the least one a mighty nation. I, *Yehovah*, will hasten it in its time.[46]

The eternal or the *aionios* light was the same ancient light referenced on Day-One in the creation narrative of Genesis. This

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[45] Isaiah 60:6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18, modified NASB.

[46] Isaiah 60:19–22 modified NASB.

was God's presence. Note that the luminaries of the sun, moon, and stars were not created until the fourth day.

Revelation closed with an identical narrative. The concept of God's name being on the foreheads of his holy-ones might be interpretable as radiance, as was explained at the start of Isaiah 60. This tangible radiance of the Lord would be witnessed by their neighbors.

> There will no longer be any curse, and the throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city. His servants will worship Him, and they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. Night will be no more, and they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will shine on them, and they will reign forever and ever [or alternately, in the *aiona* of the *aiona*].[47]

When the term "name" was used to speak of God in the context of a passage of Scripture, this was understood as the equivalent of actually saying the term "God" or of pronouncing the name *Yehovah*. The radiant glow on Moses' face when he came down from the presence of God was the Lord's continuing abiding radiance. Whether the biblical text mentions the name, God's glory, brightness, or other terms that relate to similar concepts, the phenomenon was the result of intense divine-human encounter. Ones having displayed the glory of God upon themselves evidenced walking in a matrimonial relationship with *Yehovah*.

In what is commonly described as the vow and blessing of the *Nazirite* in Numbers 6, consummation happened with the placement of *Yehovah's* name on the head of the ones who drew near.

> Speak to the Israelites, and tell them, "When either a man or a woman takes a special vow, to take a vow as a *Nazirite*, to separate himself to *Yehovah*, he must separate himself from wine and strong drink, he must drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from strong drink, nor may he drink any juice of grapes, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. All

[47] Revelation 22:3–5 modified NET

> the days of his separation he must not eat anything that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. All the days of the vow of his separation no razor may be used on his head until the time is fulfilled for which he separated himself to *Yehovah*. He will be holy, and he must let the locks of hair on his head grow long. All the days that he separates himself to *Yehovah* he must not contact a dead body. He must not defile himself even for his father or his mother or his brother or his sister if they die, because the separation for his God is on his head. All the days of his separation he must be holy to *Yehovah*."[48]

Skipping past part of the procedures, the *Nazirite* was confirmed with the following blessing:

> *Yehovah* bless you and keep you; *Yehovah* make His countenance to shine upon you, and be *chennan* [gracious] to you; *Yehovah* lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace. So they will have put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.[49]

Translating the three-fold repetition of the name *Yehovah* simply as "the LORD" hides the passage's true meaning. The blessing itself placed God's name directly upon those drawing near to Him. Through this blessing, worshipers entered into God's *chennan* and the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. The context of Numbers 6 described all of the preparations that preceded pronouncement of the blessing.

Speaking as the second power, Jesus explained that He was leaving to prepare an abiding place for His faithful ones. He intended to return to dwell in them, just as He dwelt in the Father and the Father had also dwelt in Him.

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[48] Numbers 6:2-8 NET

[49] Numbers 6:24–27

Section Two

God's Bow in the Cloud

With the *Aionios* Covenant, God Most High made peace as an offering to all earthly creatures. We are going to focus on the specifics of this verse.

> And the Bow will be seen in the cloud and I will see it, recalling the *Aionios* Covenant between the *Memra* of the Lord and every living soul in all the flesh that is upon the Earth.[50]

As we are about to understand, the cloud was the realm of the *aiona* and the radiance of the Bow was the glory of the Holy One of Israel, or the light of the Word of God, Who dwelt in the heavenly realm—into which members of humankind were sometimes invited.

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[50] Targum Neofiti 1, Genesis 9:16.

God's recall or remembrance of "every living soul in all flesh that is upon the Earth"—in the context of the Hebraic understanding of *zachar*—meant that He would be watching over and intervening to care for each of them.

Although common translations of the Hebrew text of Genesis characterize this as a meteorological phenomenon, which has been understood as a rainbow that appeared after a rainy day, there was far more to understand in this model regarding the embodiment of *Yehovah's* faithfulness to Israel.

The presence of the second power of heaven would become manifest in the cloud, speaking, leading, and delivering His people. Ahead we are going to work our way through a significant collection of passages which tie this manifestation to the *Aionios* Covenant.

There were a variety of representations of the *aiona* in the texts of Scripture. Entry into the *aiona* might have been characterized by simple mention of heavenly apparitions including angels, dreams, visions, or with references to a heavenly dwelling place. Several seemingly meteorological phenomena are important to observe in the text which include manifestation of a cloud, light or brightness, radiance, glory, along with the manifestation of God's voice.

Divine impartations were made from the heavenly realm to the human recipient, sometimes referenced as the "son of man."

Moreover, as is the case with literature in any language, there is continuity between diverse terms or phrases used in the composition of the Scriptures. Mention of a storm, sudden darkness, or thunder and lightning, or a whirlwind might be found in the biblical texts—each figuratively speaking of God's abiding presence in the cloud extending into the Earth from heaven. Moreover, clouds created from smoke and fire wherein the presence of God was experienced should also be acknowledged as manifestations of His presence.

Through the offering of sacrifices, the burning of fat could be understood as a means of calling forth *Yehovah's* intervention.

By and large, the understanding that God related to His children in a cloud was lost and forgotten during or shortly after the first century A.D.—perhaps with one notable exception.

A Jewish mystical sect existed between the first century B.C. and the tenth century of the Christian Era that is referenced today as the *Merkabah* or the *Merkavah* tradition. Jewish seekers of *Yehovah* actually sought encounter and testified of seeing the Lord riding in a chariot on the cloud—as had been the experience of some Old Testament prophets. This tradition dates back at least to the lifetime of Ezekiel and may have persisted up to about 1,000 A.D.

In Hebrew, the term "*rekeb*," can be understood either as the noun "chariot" or as the verb "to be raised up." By the tenth century A.D., the *Masoretes* obscured the inherent connection of being "raised up" and of witnessing the divine chariot in the cloud. This sect of the Jews added vowel markings that differentiated between ascending into the cloud and the object known as a chariot.

The *Merkavah* Tradition was preserved in what is known as *Hekhalot* literature. These writings were produced between late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, providing techniques for mystics to visualize the divine chariot described in Ezekiel 1.

With the addition of the vowel pointing, a layer of interpretation was placed over the texts of the Scriptures so that what had been clearly understood in ancient times became lost and forgotten.

Whether or not the *Masoretes* were intentionally pursuing the effort of erasing elements of divine-human subjectivity from the texts of the Bible is debatable. Nevertheless, they lived in an entirely different religio-sociocultural era than those in the Scriptures who ascended into the *aionios* realm and witnessed the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. No researcher is probably ever going to find evidence that signs and wonders took place in the lives of these scribes. Without knowing all of their agendas, the case has

been made that they were simply attempting to preserve Hebrew by adding vowel sounds to the texts. Nevertheless, with the dissemination of their revised Bible, and its ongoing embrace around the world, more ancient understandings in the texts of Scripture were essentially erased from the knowledge base of humankind.

It is important to realize that because Hebrew terms had more than one meaning, single sentences were designed to convey several different significances simultaneously. However, the Masoretes confined the language so that each statement had only a single interpretive significance.

Case in point, use of the term *rekeb* within a passage carried with it several different implications as readers acknowledged the chariot, ascension into the cloud, and the activity of seeing God or experiencing the treasure of Jacob as an *Ish-raah-el-ite*.

So then, another layer of interpretation was placed over the Scriptures when the Masoretic Hebrew Text was translated into French, German, English and every other language.

Gradually, the intentions of the authors were hidden from the minds of contemporary readers.

We are going to work our way through a collection of these kinds of occurrences as they pertain to the covenant *Yehovah* extended to the righteous who would seek and obey His voice—walking in righteousness under *chen*, *charis*, or grace.

We learn from Isaiah in the era of the Latter Prophets when most of the nation had been taken into captivity that the *Aionios* Covenant initiated with Noah, was not only reserved for him and his family. This had been extended to the faithful throughout all generations.

Translating Isaiah 55:3 we read: “Follow after the pathway of hearing. Hear [so that your] good soul will live! I will grant the *Aionios* Covenant of righteous David’s faith.” Isaiah labeled the covenant with the same name as had described Noah’s. And yet Isaiah announced this to be the covenant which was to be sought

after in his own day and in the future as well. Herein, we find evidence affirming the existence of a single covenantal relationship that would continue to be availed throughout time.

David's life was characterized by seeking and listening to the voice of *Yehovah*. He walked in a living relationship of divine-human faithfulness. In many ways at different points in his life, he found himself in peril and depended upon God's *yeshuah* to save him. In 2 Samuel 23, David identified himself as "the man who was raised on high," and declared for himself, that he had been a partaker in the *Aionios* Covenant.

We might observe that the king who chose righteousness, was led by *Melchizedek*—the divine King of Righteousness.

One chapter later, in verses 9-10, the prophet plainly established that this covenant had begun with Noah.

> "For this is like the days of Noah to Me; when I swore that the waters of Noah should not flood the Earth again. So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, nor will I rebuke you. The mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you. And My covenant of peace will not be shaken," says *Yehovah* Who has compassion on you.[51]

In the context of chapter 55, Isaiah was also speaking of a future day of the restoration of the covenant.

Isaiah wrote during the time when Israel had already violated the marriage vow of faithfulness and had departed from the presence of *Yehovah*. Long before, God had warned Moses this would happen.

> *Yehovah* appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud was at the doorway of the tent. As Moses was about to die, *Yehovah* warned, "These people will rise up and play the harlot with strange gods of the land where they

[51] Isaiah 54:9-10 modified NASB

> are going and they will forsake me and break My covenant which I have made with them. My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My presence from them. They will be consumed, as many evils and troubles come upon them. They will ask, 'Is it because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?' I will certainly hide My presence in that day because of the evil they will do; and they will turn to other gods."[52]

In Psalm 105:10, Jacob was lauded for his walk in the *Aionios* Covenant promising the same for Israel.

David also told posterity that he walked in the divine-human covenant which was founded upon the flood in the time of Noah—as was recorded in Psalm 24.

> The Earth is *Yehovah's*, and the fulness thereof; The world, and they that dwell therein. For He founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.[53]

Here again we take notice of the position of being raised above the waters.

This covenant allowed access into the heavenly realm of the *aiona* for those, like Noah, who would choose to walk in righteousness:

> Who shall ascend into the hill of *Yehovah*? And who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands, and a pure heart; one who has not lifted up his soul unto falsehood, and who has not sworn deceitfully.[54]

In the presence of the Lord, participants in the *Aionios* Covenant would receive the good-Word and *yeshuah*.

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[52] Deuteronomy 31:16-18 modified NASB

[53] Psalm 24:1–2 KJV

[54] Psalm 24:3–4 JPS

> He shall receive a blessing from *Yehovah*, and righteousness from the God of his *yeshuah*.[55]

And this would be the inheritance of all generations who would follow in the same pathway of faithfulness to *Yehovah*; seeking and obeying His voice.

> This is the generation of them that seek after Him, who seek Your presence, *like* Jacob.[56]
>
> *Selah*

Not only would they ascend to the high place of heaven, but moreover, they would invite *Yehovah's* presence into themselves.

> Lift up your heads, O you gates; And be lifted up, you *aionios* doors: And the King of glory will come in. Who is the King of glory? *Yehovah* strong and mighty, *Yehovah* mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates; Yes, lift them up, you doors of the *aiona*: And the King of glory will come in. Who is this King of glory? *Yehovah* of hosts, He is the King of glory.[57]
>
> *Selah*

Importantly, from the Psalms, we understand that by praising the name of *Yehovah*, David entered into the *aiona*. It was His joyful experience to enter into the presence of God Most High and to call forth *Yehovah* into his life. His songs provided a witness and a testimony for divine-human encounter with the Lord.

Speaking as the second power of heaven, Jesus used the parable of the Vine and its fruit to explain the *aionios* life of walking in the presence of the Father and His mutual dwelling among faithful participants in the Covenant. Within this parable He contrasted the worth and destiny of the rulers of the Second Temple.

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[55] Psalm 24:5

[56] Psalm 24:6

[57] Psalm 24:7-10

> I am the true vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit, He takes it away: and every *branch* that produces fruit, He cleans it, that it may bear more fruit. Already, you are clean because of the Word which I have manifest before you.[58]

We license this translation referencing the ancient Hebraic concept that the term "word" or its verb form, that in English pertains to speaking, could serve as a generalization for any and every kind of action. This was explained extensively using many examples in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*. This well-established literary and linguistic construct in the Hebrew Old Testament is of exceeding importance to interpretation and translation of the New Testament. This single key understanding of the ancient Hebrew Bible provides reason enough for development of a new revised English Hebraic translation. So then we understand that in this context, Jesus was not necessarily referencing having spoken any actual words. Instead it is likely that He was referencing His action of just having washed the disciples' feet.

> Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot produce fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine; so then neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in Me, and I in him, these ones produce much fruit. Apart from Me, you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a dead branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and throw these into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, ask whatsoever you will, and it will be done unto you.[59]

Once again, in the Hebraic sense of understanding, Jesus was making a conditional statement about actions. Those calling

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[58] John 15:1–3

[59] John 15:4-7

themselves His followers were expected to repeat the same actions. In other terms, they would wash one another's feet—preparing the brethren to stand in the presence of God, feed the poor, heal the sick, clothe the naked, and manifest the good-Word of God to others in any and every way that they were specifically directed in the Word. However, to do all of these words, required abiding in the vine or becoming an *Ish-raah-el-ite* who continuously was finding his or her place in the *aiona* before the throne of God. Such ones were empowered to do the words or to work the works of God.

> Herein my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; and you will be My disciples. Even as the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you. You abide in My love. If you treasure My commandments, you will abide in My love; in just the same way as I have treasured My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and so that your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. No man has greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant does not know the plans and actions of his master. But I have called you friends. All things that I heard from My Father, I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and produce fruit, and *that* your fruit should abide: that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you. These things I command you, that you may love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me first. If you were of the world, the world would love you because you were its possession: but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world,

therefore the world hates you. Remember the Word that I have manifest to you.[60]

We are interrupting the passage here in order to elucidate a point that many readers are going to miss. Was Jesus merely telling His audience to recollect the statement that "a servant is not greater than his master?" That seems obvious, but that might not be the only matter of concern that was being conveyed.

Recall that in the Hebrew language in which the Gospels were originally presented before having been written down in Greek—in the Hebraic world—a single statement could convey more than one idea. It is valid to say that Jesus wanted His audience to merely recall the simple and perhaps pedantic dynamic that servants are not greater than masters. We can agree on that apparent point. Nevertheless, Jesus was also asserting something far more important regarding the Word of God.

If we consider the Hebraic concept of remembrance with respect to *zachar* that meant to re-enliven, Jesus was comparing the figurative example of abiding in the vine to their actual continuing activity of seeking and abiding in the Word of God, or the holy of holies. As *Ish-raah-el-ites* they received privileged entry and could see and hear what took place in the *aiona*.

It is evident from the passage that Jesus desired for His disciples to replicate His works, but the only way they could do this was by becoming empowered with spiritual authority in the presence of the Holy One by entry into the Word.

In a practical sense, the gates of heaven had to be opened and the faithful had to seek entry into the *aiona*—just as Jesus had done.

It is with this milestone of understanding having been established, that listeners next moved ahead to the statement "A servant is not greater than his master," which simply facilitated the continuing discussion:

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[60] John 15:8–20 modified NASB

> If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they treasure My Word, they will also treasure yours.[61]

And here again, the point is reiterated that Jesus was using the parable of the vine in order to clarify the necessity of embracing God's presence like Jacob. The one who was appropriately renamed "*Ish-raah-el*" had seized hold of the Word and fought violently to hang on. And so Jesus' disciples must also enter, find, see, hear, perceive, accept, embrace, and become bearers of the good-Word of *Yehovah.*

It was by standing in His presence or by having been gathered together in His name that they could ask and receive.

We must not read so fast that we miss the point that seekers entered into the Word, embraced the Word, and carried the good-Word back into the realm of Earth to offer to others.

> If they treasure My Word, they will also treasure yours. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the Father Who sent Me. If I had not come and performed the actions of God before them, they would not have had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me, hates My Father also. If I had not done the miraculous works among them which nobody else did, they would not have had culpability: but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.[62]

The concept of having become separated or *nazir* to the Lord or having become a *Nazirite* is also conveyed by the contrast of Jesus' disciples no longer being possessed by the world. These ones had set themselves apart for the works of the holy realm of heaven.

Critically examining the rendition above, recall from *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* in the lengthy study of *davar*, that the term "word" was frequently used as a generalization for

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[61] John 15:20

[62] John 15:1-24

actions. Therefore, we understand from the entire context of the Gospels that Jesus had not merely spoken to the religious leaders; He performed the works of God before their eyes. Although the *davar* study pertained to the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures, we have to keep the point in mind that references to "having spoken" in the Greek New Testament were written down from narratives which were originally conveyed in the Hebrew or Aramaic languages. If we accept that those writing and transmitting the Scriptures through the ages were as literal as possible, this literary mechanism regarding the term word or the action of speaking the word having been a generalization for nonverbal actions, was also carried into Jesus' original teachings in the Gospels.

Today we no longer use the term word or its verb forms as a connotation for any and every kind of action. So it is important for us to recover this ancient linguistic device when we interpret the teachings of Jesus and His disciples.

In the context of the biblical texts, "sin" can be defined as "missing the target." The target or goal that members of humankind were intended to have hit from the time of their disobedience and death in Eden was re-entry into the *Aionios* Covenant and therefore into the kingdom of God, into the Word, or into the *aiona*—where they would be born of the Spirit and also become resurrected back to life.

Jesus' point in the lesson of mutual abiding was that the hatred of the Second Temple religious leaders, embodied in their rejection of the Word, disqualified them from entry into the *aiona*. They could not be raised up or resurrected because of their choices and behavior. Speaking the Word of *Yehovah*, David exclaimed, "He who works deceit will not dwell within My house. He who tells lies will not tarry in My presence."[63]

It is important to pause here to clarify the ancient concept of resurrection. Humankind suffered death through disobedience in

[63] Psalm 101:7

Eden. They were ejected from the Garden as ones having died. It was by being raised back up into the *aiona* that they were once again made alive—while they yet walked upon the Earth. So then, resurrection began in the course of becoming engaged with God Most High. Those who were resurrected into the *aiona*, or as can be phrased similarly, those who experienced the *aionios* life, would be alive, after their mortal bodies had expired.

By contrast, churchianity has commonly identified resurrection as an event that takes place only after earthly death. If early Orthodoxy had not rejected all concerns of Jewish history, the Hebraic tradition, and the Hebrew Bible, they might have recognized from the study of *rekeb*, that ones living in prophetic relationships with *Yehovah* were mentioned as having been raised up into the heavenly holy realm during their earthly lives. Furthermore, if Orthodoxy had made the association of God's presence coming in the cloud, with Jesus' assertion of having been the son of God who had appeared in the cloud to ancient Israel and the prophets, perhaps Christians throughout history and even in our own time who claim to have encountered God in mystical experiences would not have been so readily disparaged, ridiculed, and dismissed.

New Testament witnesses observed Jesus ascending back into the cloud where He had been before. He reassumed His identity as the second power of heaven who had taken dominion over the geopolitical principalities and powers. Moreover, those watching His ascension were instructed by angels that they would thereafter encounter Him coming once again in the cloud as an apparition of God's glory.

Those who sneered at such matters demonstrated their own arrogance and proved their unfitness to enter into the miraculous presence of God. Some would rather settle for sterile lifeless, cold, dead, ceremonial religion. And throughout the time of humankind's dwelling upon the Earth, God Most High has sadly obliged those

Who have vehemently rejected tangible encounter with His presence.

He will forebear—allowing us to stand, sit, kneel, pray, recite, and sing at the direction of a teacher if this is all that we know. But there is a great deal more to finding life in the *aiona* than following the well-intended instructions of worship that are replicated and practiced by rote. He delights in what He sees emanating from our hearts. David passionately cast off all restraint and danced before *Yehovah* in the streets of Jerusalem—welcoming the Ark of God.[64]

Jesus identified Himself as the Resurrection before raising Lazarus. Those who sought after and found the second power of heaven during their lives on Earth were intended to have experienced the *aiona* in the historical present.

At Lazarus' tomb, Mary expected that her brother would be raised up on the last day in a chronological literal sense. However, Jesus identified Himself as the Resurrection at that very moment. In what Jesus conveyed, an action and a seeming day of importance merged together into a single *aionios* concept. Once again, more than one significance was intended to have been ascertained from this statement and Jesus' response.

Recall Hosea's reflection, "He will revive us after two days. He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him."

We understand that the ancient Hebraic concept of *rekeb* was pregnant with meaning. The concepts of resurrection, ascension or the activity of being raised up were all synonymous ways of describing being brought back to life as ones who encountered God's presence riding in the chariot in the cloud. *Rekeb* had much to do with describing the tangibility of receiving the *aionios* life.

Jesus identified Himself as the Resurrection. And readers should also understand that the last day had already arrived.

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[64] Note 2 Samuel 6:14–22 and the parallel passage 1 Chronicles 15:27–29.

However it was the "last day" in a very different sense of understanding.

Later, we fully intend to explain this concept at much greater length. And so with acknowledgment that we are getting ahead of the discussion, it is pertinent to clarify that when Lazarus became ill and Jesus was informed of the man's life-threatening condition, Jesus had tarried where He was for three-days in order to pray before going to His friend. It was on the last-day of Jesus' three-day journey and ascension into the holy realm of the spirit that He was empowered to raise Lazarus to life. This is why He had not come to Martha, Mary and Lazarus at Bethany several days earlier when they had called for His help.

There are several concerns being related in the text all together that must be delineated in order to be apprehended.

Even as it was the desire of the Father to raise Lazarus, so also, for the same purpose, Jesus became empowered by the Word. In the spiritual realm, He Himself became the resurrection. He brought this identity and authority back into the realm of Earth in order for Lazarus to receive this Word. Jesus was given the ability to perform that which had been revealed to Him in the *aiona*.

The third day was the last day of the three-day journey that included consecration, fasting, and prayer—wherein individuals were raised up into the presence of God to experience the *aionios* life. They found entry by hallowing the name of the Father and asked that His will would be done on earth as He had deemed it to be so in heaven. As authentic *Ish-raah-el-ites*, they saw and heard the will of God in the angelic realm of the *aiona* which each one was to have performed back on earth.

After receiving authority, He returned to manifest the Word of resurrection to Lazarus.

And He shouted, "Lazarus come forth!" releasing the life-giving Word into the man. And Lazarus came forth from the tomb on the last day of Jesus' three-day journey.

We have to keep in mind that John and the other authors had not written in order to provide fanciful bedtime stories. These concerns were written down so that posterity would be able to replicate miraculous signs and wonders. However, the entirety of the Hebraic three-day journey was lost and forgotten—a concern that is attributable to ancient Jewish agendas to crush the subjectivity of Abraham and David—that had been fostered by their shared understanding of the divine Priestly order of *Melchizedek*. This erosion of subjective divine-human encounter continued with Christian Orthodoxy as humanly controlled participation in sacraments replaced the spirituality of the Scriptures. Moreover, this was further impacted by the early bishops' refusal to consult the Jews and to investigate Hebraic background knowledge of the Bible. The loss was perpetuated through the Reformation because their primary concern was that of refining intellectual doctrines. To be straight forward, in both yester-year and today, Reformed thinkers have squelched the voice and actions of parishioners who discussed and actively pursued divine-human encounter. By the time of the rise of Evangelicalism, the knowledgebase of Hebraic spirituality had been erased. And when Pentecostalism arose, those who encountered the Lord did not always comprehend how their experiences should have been connected to the narratives of Scripture. Essentially, Pentecostalism became polluted by Evangelical error, that was conditioned by Reformed and early Orthodox ignorance. And the same intellectual and eschatological errors contaminated the Charismatic Movement. From the time of Jesus until now, there has been a tremendous loss of background understandings which would have helped us to make sense of the Gospels. With good intentions, the wrong things, such as emphases on doctrinal formation, theological training, development of sacraments, and creedal confessions practiced by rote, and baseless end-times eschatological theories have preoccupied churchianity. While some good might have come from all of this, in some ways, pursuit of these concerns mirrored the Israelites offering sacrifices

to a God they had ceased to know. Churchianity has kept itself very busy—but in many cases they have been busy with activities having little or nothing to do with Jesus' instruction.

Undoubtedly, some of my friends may scoff at these observations. Be that as it may, if all they want are religious bedtime stories, they are misunderstanding and misusing the Scriptures. There are actual individuals on Earth who hunger and thirst for righteousness and for entry into the kingdom of God. If any of us settles for less than God intended, then that is between each of us and God. But don't forget, if individuals refuse to enter and in their ignorant stubbornness they scoffingly block the way of others from entering, woe to them who make themselves culpable for the same judgement as the arrogant religious leaders of Jesus' day. It should be obvious to those who assert themselves to be the teachers and followers of Jesus that He would not have continually stressed entry into the kingdom if actual entry—as we see throughout the pages of the Bible—was not possible. The proof is in the actual tasting of the Word.

Jesus reprimanded the ignorant Pharisees, "You study the Scriptures thinking that in these you will find the *aionios* life, and it is these writings that make reference to Me. Nevertheless, you refuse to come to Me so that you would actually have life." There is a place in the presence of the Holy One referenced as the "Word of God" where entry and participation in the kingdom as an *Ish-raah-el-ite* awaits occupancy. This is the only place and the only One Who can raise any of us up into life. And we find the *aionios* life in the presence of God. The way into life is the Word of God and Jesus made it crystal clear that the Scriptures are something completely different than the Word.

Highbrow literacy, religious agendas, and biased knowledge about doctrinal facts are far different than the humbling dynamics of a divine-human relationship and two-way communication. It is easy to act pious in front of men, but it is very challenging to walk obediently with the Word of God. Jesus admonished His followers

to pray that they would have eyes to see and ears to hear. From my own experience admittedly as one hindered by cowardice, I would also recommend that we cry out for courage and endurance.

Just imagine the humble endurance of Jesus as He fasted and prayed three-days in order to gain entry into the *aiona* and then His tremendous courage as He expectantly shouted, "Lazarus, come forth."

Jesus was carrying out what He had seen and heard in the *aiona*—just as should we.

In the case of many individuals in the Bible to be discussed, the third or the last day of the three-day journey was an occurrence of entry into the manifest presence of God. Or we might reflect correspondingly, that the third or last day of the three-day journey was when God would baptize individuals into His presence.

The second power of heaven was both the destination and the habitation of those embarking on the Hebraic three-day journey. He existed living in the *aiona,* waiting for any and all who approached with clean hands and a pure heart ascending the hill of the Lord to be raised up to new life.

Jesus was not the only individual in Scripture Who gained authority and power to perform signs and wonders by this means.

The *Ish-raah-el-ites* repeatedly watched Moses enter into the Tent of Meeting with the pillar of cloud at the doorway. Because of the signs and wonders they witnessed for themselves; they could not deny that the Holy One Who dwelt in the cloud was with Moses. Witnessing the sign made them accountable.

Therefore, the concept of sin should be elucidated as choices and behavior leading to stubborn refusal. It was *willfully* chosen blindness rooted in murderous hatred that prevented entry into the *aiona*. Birth into the angelic realm was reserved for those who were desperate for *Yehovah* and His *yeshuah*.

The ancient progenitors of legalistic Deuteronomistic dead religion had closed their eyes to the miraculous history of *Ish-raah-el*. They turned away from the Holy One, thereby missing their

intended target. Even worse, they marginalized, persecuted, and murdered the faithful. With sweeping genocide, they had attempted to annihilate celebrants of the Hebraic Tradition.

Although Josiah was remembered in the Scriptures as having been a good ruler.

> Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles and idols. Under his direction the altars of the Baals were torn down; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them, and smashed the Asherah poles and the idols. These he broke to pieces and scattered over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and so he purged Judah and Jerusalem. In the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim and Simeon, as far as Naphtali, and in the ruins around them, he tore down the altars and the Asherah poles and crushed the idols to powder and cut to pieces all the incense altars throughout Israel. Then he went back to Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, to purify the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the ruler of the city, with Joah son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the temple of the Lord his God.[65]

We understand from the passage the gruesome reality that the priests who were burned upon the altars had been murdered. The Chronicler wanted his audience to know that the work of

[65] 2 Chronicles 34:1-8 NIV

Josiah's army covered a great deal of land and that the effort took a significant amount of time.

Using the present-day location of Naphtali as a baseline measurement, which admittedly may not be accurate, Josiah's purge may have encompassed a 45 mile radius around Jerusalem. If that was the case, then the locations where Jacob encountered the presence of the Lord which he named *Peniel* and where he had repeatedly sought *Yehovah* at Bethel would have been inside of that general circumference.

Although these were sacred places where individuals continued to seek *Yehovah*, Jerusalem was newly deemed as the sole location where sanctioned worship could take place. By killing the local priests, Josiah made sure that there would be no more domestic establishments available for sacrifice.

Posterity is left to wonder and to ask the question, "Were all of the high places Josiah destroyed and every single one of the worshipers he killed actually seeking false Gods?" We will address that answer ahead.

The record of history has taught that those who are the subjects of narrow objective religious practice cannot abide with or tolerate those who lay claim to subjective divine-human experience.

Josiah was a Deuteronomist whose life revolved around obedience to the Law and perhaps to the beginnings of the *takkanot*. There is no record of encounter with the Word or prophetic participation in his life. There can be little doubt, because of his youth and inexperience, that he was guided and manipulated as a pawn by religious leaders who adamantly held to the uncompromising precepts of objective religion. Such rigid idealistic individuals would not have been sympathetic to those with testimonies of actually seeing and hearing God. Contemptuous ones such as these acted according to the nefariously deceptive word of the adversary to commit murder—while this was possible, acting

under the auspices of a twelve year old ruler. It is doubtful that Josiah had thought up all of this on his own.

Rather instead, it was those who had capitalized on his naivety that also memorialized him as a king who did what was right in the sight of God. Essentially, he seems to have done what was right in the sight of his Deuteronomistic tutors who were fed up with the subjective spirituality which pertained to the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. Historical records uncovered by Dr. Margaret Barker help us to understand that Josiah may have in fact acted with a religio-political agenda to eradicate the more ancient priestly order of worship.

Although I am going to reiterate some of her discoveries, those who are interested should consult her research, writings, and videos.

We understand that Josiah's effort was a continuation of Hezekiah's earlier action of tearing down altars that had been constructed to *Yehovah* throughout the land. With the reappropriation of the Jerusalem Temple as the only allowable place to conduct sacrifices, Josiah had eliminated long established places of worship. In order to rid the land of what may have in some cases been false worship, he seems to have thrown out the good with the bad.

From Barker's research, we learn that in addition to stopping some forms of false worship, that the young king Josiah also mercilessly and loathsomely eliminated those who sought God Most High or *El Elyon* according to the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. His genocidal actions were the climactic destruction following decades of prejudice, marginalization, victimization, and violence committed by former kings and their own wicked religious puppets.

Those who experienced authentic dynamic manifestations of the angel or the *malakh* (מַלְאָךְ) of *Yehovah* at worship sites such as the one managed by Jethro, the priest of *Midian*, seem to have been killed right along with those who may have offered sacrifices

to false Gods. We cannot expect that Josiah would even have known the difference.

We learn from the Qumran Scrolls that *Melchizedek* was highly revered as the ruler, leader, and as a judge of God's angels in the presence of the *Elohim*. He was a liberator of those controlled by Belial and other spirits like him. This King of Righteousness was understood as the deliverer providing atonement for the sons of Light, the proclaimer of the year of Jubilee declaring freedom to the captives, and as a divine being. Moreover, *Melchizedek* was identified by the Essenes to have been the one referenced by Isaiah the prophet in 52:7, which reads:

> How delightful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, the messenger of good who announces salvation, saying to Zion, your God reigns.[66]

Those who are familiar with the New Testament will recognize that these same characteristics along with this verse and many others were used to identify Jesus.

What this tells us is that the Essenes had been keeping alive an eschatological tradition expecting the future return of *Melchizedek*. Margaret Barker reached the conclusion that information regarding *Melchizedek* seemed to have been edited out of the Hebrew Bible. It is difficult to disagree. However, with the understanding that the name "*Melchizedek*" is literally translated King of Righteousness, it may be that the eschatological tradition of the priestly order was actually preserved simply through references to a coming righteous king. Whereas some might have read these verses hoping for a restoration of a powerful monarchy, instead, the spiritually minded would have thought in terms of a prophetic leader who would restore righteousness to Israel.

Isaiah foretold:

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[66] Note 11Q13, also referenced as 11QMelec.

> A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.[67]

Essentially, Messiah was indistinguishable from *Melchizedek*. The two were one and the same. Of course, the Jewish text of 11Q*Melchizedek* from the Dead Sea Scrolls presented the King of Righteousness as an eschatological Savior.

Later in chapter 32, Isaiah declared, "Behold, a king will rule righteously."

Later he continued writing about the expectation for the coming of a king who would rule in righteousness.

Similarly, in chapter 23:5, Jeremiah explained,

> Look and see, the days are coming, declares *Yehovah*, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He will reign wisely as King and will administer justice and righteousness in the land.

In continuity, the New Testament writers had been very familiar with these understandings. Therefore, when they discussed Jesus, they used the same or similar references.

After condemning Israel for its wickedness earlier in his book, Micah provided hope in 5:2 announcing a future day:

> But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.[68]

Assuredly, Micah was speaking of a divine being with an enduring existence from before creation of the physical world.

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[67] Isaiah 9:6 NASB

[68] Micah 5:2 NIV

Note that in the Greek Old Testament, the phrase “from the ancient times” is more literally from the days of the *aiona*.[69] And of notable interest, the genitive plural term for days was pronounced somewhat like “*hēmerōn*.” This was suspiciously close to the reference to the life from the *aiona* that was compared to the dew from Hermon which David somewhat cryptically said fell from the mountains of Zion. He identified this high-place as the location from which God commanded His blessing in Psalm 133. David may not have been speaking of Mount Hermon as interpreters and translators might have assumed. But instead, he may have been referencing hēmerōn as the location of Day-One in creation wherein the heavenly angelic host had also been created. The anointing oil flowing down the beard of Aaron was symbolic of the dew of hēmerōn flowing from Zion existing in Day-One where life was received from the *aiona*.

Recall that in Genesis, humankind fellowshipped with the “Spirit of Day”—a phrase that is commonly mistranslated in meteorological terms as “the cool of the day.”

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He instructed them to ask of the Father, “Give us this day our daily bread.” While it seems that most people only comprehend this in a literal sense with regard to the provision of food, we more appropriately understand in context that Jesus was teaching them to ask for the Word of God or the bread of heaven. Jesus had reiterated Moses’ instruction that humankind was not intended to have lived by bread alone, but by every Word that was sent forth from the mouth of God. Appropriate to this understanding, Jesus continued in the prayer asking the Father to let His will become manifest on Earth as it was in heaven.

Therefore, the mention of seeking bread “today”—along with the sending forth of “our daily bread”—ties together the

[69] ἐξ ἡμερῶν αἰῶνος

concept of impartation of the Word or the kingdom with the concept of Day-One or the Spirit of Day.

In other terms, Day-One was the heavenly location of God's throne which Micah referenced as the *hēmerōn* of the *aiona*. There are other instances in Scripture which we will touch upon that seem to signify that finding life in the *aiona* referenced Day-One of creation. While identifying hēmerōn with Hermon could be conjecture, we have to give credence to the fact that the Scriptures began as oral recitations that were later written down. It is not possible that every scribe spelled what was spoken using the exact same alphabetic renderings. In fact, there are innumerable terms that are spelled differently in ancient texts. For example, the divine title *Memra* has at least three different spellings.

These examples and other enigmatic language regarding this king's ancient origin seem to play a role in identifying Micah's expected king with *Melchizedek* along with the place of His enduring existence.

It is probable that we are missing valuable information and that other passages which might corroborate similar ideas have been obscured by mistranslation.

Along with this reference to *hēmerōn* and David's unimaginably similar reference to Hermon, Micah understood the restoration of the high place of standing that would again be found in the presence of *Yehovah*.

> But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of *Yehovah* shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of *Yehovah*, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for *Torah* shall go forth from Zion, and the Word of *Yehovah* from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations that are far off; and they shall beat their swords into

> plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But every man will sit [peacefully] under his vine and under his fig tree; with nobody who can make them afraid: for the mouth of *Yehovah* of hosts has spoken it. Behold, everyone of all people will walk in the name of His God, and we will walk in the name of *Yehovah* our God on the other side in the *aiona*.[70]

The eschatological dwelling would be established on the mountain of *Yehovah*. By implication, the location might have been thought of as being up in a cloud. This would be the heavenly dwelling acquired by the faithful that existed on the other side of what could be seen in the temporal world from the perspective of the *aiona*.

The Greek phrase underlying the King James rendering "forever and ever" is literally "*eis ton aiona kai epekeina*" (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ ἐπέκεινα). The final term, *epekeina*, can be translated as "over yonder" or "on the other side," leading to the rendering "on the other side in the *aiona*." Although translators have commonly rendered the phrase in chronological terms with the idiom "forever and ever," at the time the text was written, the *aiona* was understood as the divine dwelling place of *Yehovah*—hidden outside the purview of the physical world. Therefore, to be as accurate as possible in our translation work, "*eis ton aiona*" (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) should not be thought of as a duration of time, but rather as a direct reference to this heavenly sanctuary.

At times, individuals who were participants in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace found themselves standing before the throne of God in the *aiona*—looking back upon the temporal world. They received instruction to be enacted upon their return. Ones such as these had experienced the *aionios zoe* or the *aionios* life. While we may observe that ones to whom the spiritual realm was unveiled

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[70] Micah 4:1–5

were standing in “eternity,” use of that term typically causes us to associate the *aiona* with chronology rather than perceiving this more accurately as the holy realm where individuals obtained authority and power from *Yehovah*.

Understanding this concept is essential to grasping Jesus’ core teaching. When people asked Him how to inherit *aionios zoe*—commonly rendered in English as “eternal life”—His response was consistent: He pointed them back to the Ten Commandments. A critical reading of these passages makes it clear that Jesus was not speaking of “eternal life” in the contemporary sense of understanding. Yet despite His explicit teaching, it would be difficult to find any Christians today who argue that one attains “eternal life” through obedience to the *Torah*. In the following sections, we will explore how ancient Israel understood the Fourth Commandment not merely as a rule, but as a gateway into the holy realm of the *aiona*—where individuals experienced the *aionios* life and encountered the second power in heaven.

All of the people would walk in the name of the second power of heaven’s God, or the Father, which again was reiterated with the statement that the people would walk in the name of *Yehovah*.

Note that in the aforementioned quote, King James translators had no understanding of the second power of heaven. Therefore they used lower-case lettering to make it seem as if in that same eschatological day, people who did not worship *Yehovah* would instead walk in the name of another god. That would be absurd since the continual point of the Latter Prophets was that in a future day all would worship *Yehovah*.

Zechariah also foretold the coming of a righteous king in 9:9,

> Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and

having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.[71]

This prophecy was attributed to Jesus by Matthew 25:5 and by John 12:15. When we understand that the name *Melchizedek* meant King of Righteousness, essentially the Gospel writers were telling posterity that Jesus was *Melchizedek*—which could be equally stated—the King of Righteousness.

So often, important facets of the eschatological record are obscured and hidden from the eyes of students of the Scriptures. We do not know exactly what we are looking for and consequently we do not make relevant connections in order to fully comprehend what biblical authors were attempting to convey. Moreover, our reading pattern and infrequency of Bible study may not perfectly align Old and New Testament prophetic eschatological passages. And of course, another problem is that even in the same Bible, a different person translated Micah than several other individuals who may have each translated a different Gospel. Or in other cases, the group of translators producing Old Testament books never do any New Testament work. Resultantly, identical concepts such as the alignment of a coming righteous king is not easily perceivable due to each translator's individual terminological and grammatical preferences. Therefore, each of us has to prayerfully seek the Lord to help us make relevant connections within the Scriptures.

I tend to agree with Barker regarding the seeming likelihood that the proper name *Melchizedek* was removed from the testimony of the Old Testament by the opposing religio-political factions of the Deuteronomists, and or by Second Temple leaders. Nevertheless, the entirety of the witness for the expectation of *Melchizedek*'s return could not be erased because there are too many references to the expectation for a future righteous king.

A further contributing problem that tremendously affected, not only the understandings of early and continuing Orthodoxy, but

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[71] Zechariah 9:9

also that of the Reformers, Evangelicals, and our own understanding today—took place in the convening of the Jewish Council of *Yavneh* in 90 A.D.—wherein the continuance of the concept of the second power of heaven was banned. Those who continued adherence to the understanding that there were two divine powers—the Father as well as His intermediary spoken of as the Holy One, the Word, *Memra*, the Angel of *Yehovah*, or as the Priestly Emissary of *Melchizedek*—were cursed and labeled as heretics. All of this was done in reaction to Jews converting to Christianity with the understanding that the second power or the Holy One of Israel had taken on human flesh and had provided the penultimate sacrifice making way for continued access to the *aiona* from any place on earth.

Recall that Jesus instructed the woman at Jacob's well in John chapter 4 that the time was coming when individuals would neither travel to Mount Gerizim in Samaria, nor to Mount Moriah Jerusalem, in order to worship. Those born of the Truth would be able to enter the realm of the Spirit in any location. Moving forward in John we understand that He would become the gateway through His sacrifice which could be re-enlivened by the faithful—either through the *kiddush* or through the three-day journey. Those who proved themselves as His authentic sheep would enter through the gate of the sheep-pen and hear His voice.

The Hebrew term for king is "*melek*" (מלך) The Hebrew term for righteousness is "*tsedeq*" (צֶדֶק) and was derived from the root *tsadaq* (צָדַק), meaning to be just, righteous, or upright. Note that prior to the addition of vowel pointing by the *Masoretes*, *tsadaq* and *tsedeq* were the same term.

Many centuries into the Christian Era, the *Masoretes* added the small pronunciation marks around the letters and divided these concepts into different terms. Along with this, the *Masoretes* imposed their own understandings upon the Hebrew biblical texts and decided for posterity—using their own inclinations—what they thought authors of the Scriptures had been attempting to explain.

Herein, an enormous layer of interpretation was spread over the text of the Hebrew Bible. Because some scholars think that the *Masoretes* made mistakes, these ones depend upon the Greek translation of the Septuagint for their research.

Melek combined with *tsedeq* formed the name or title which we transliterate into English as *Melchizedek*.

The root term *melek*—which was also rendered similarly as "*Mal'ach*" (מַלְאָךְ)—also meant angel or messenger. Note the addition of the Hebrew letter Aleph "א." As was the case with priests and prophets, angels were divine mediators between heaven and humankind. Kings were also intended to have been divine mediators. However, God's intention for the nation did not work out so well for ancient Israel—largely due to the lustful desires of those who became leaders. Looking at history in the Scriptures, the Word or the *davar*, or the presence of *Yehovah*, came through each of these and other kinds of agency. From the time of Eden, governance of the world was intended to have been directed by God Most High. After the fall, *Yehovah* used different means of agency to manifest His rulership in the world.

What we should understand is that the terms *melek* or *mal'ach*, which share the same root, each convey the concept of rulership. Divine agency was worked out through a variety of forms of mediation. In the heavenly realm angelic beings exist within a structure of divine authority. Angels or messengers that make up the heavenly host are sometimes referenced in Hebrew as the "sons" of God. However, they are overseen by One unique Son of God—Who has been identified throughout the Scriptures and the Qumran Scrolls as a Righteous King in association with *Melchizedek*. And in the writings of the Essenes, who identified themselves as the *Yahad*, *Melchizedek* was expected to return.

For those who may be unfamiliar with the history of the *Yahad*—whom today we reference as Essenes—they were the spiritual descendants of the *Zadokite* priests referenced by Ezekiel as the only legitimate servants of the Temple. Keep in mind that

Zadokite comes from the Hebrew term *tsedeq* which means righteous. Later, when the Second Temple was re-established, the *Yahad* separated themselves under the direction of a leader known as the Teacher of Righteousness. They departed to the wilderness in order to practice spirituality according to freedom of conscience. They understood themselves to have been the authentic *Ish-raah-el-ites*, labeling themselves as the "sons of *Zadok*." These so-called sons of righteousness awaited the return of the legitimate *Zadokite* priest or *Melchizedek* who would restore and rule the Temple.

Because of their understanding that the Second Temple had been defiled, in worship, they understood that they could call forth God's temple where they lived in the wilderness. They consecrated themselves before every meal, washing themselves in pools called *mikvah's*. The *Yahad* believed that prayer, study of the *Torah*, and the "sacrifice of the lips" (*terumat sefatayim*) offered community atonement for sin.[72]

Note the footnoted references to the *Rule of the Community* and the *Damascus Document* in the context of Psalm 141:1-4:

> I call upon thee, O Lord; make haste to me! Give ear to my voice, when I call to thee! Let my prayer be counted as incense before thee, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice! Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips! Incline not my heart to any evil, to busy myself with wicked deeds in company with men who work iniquity; and let me not eat of their delicacies! Quoted from the Revised Standard Version.[73]

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[72] Esther G. Chazon, "The Origin of Fixed Communal Prayer: Evidence from Qumran," *TheTorah.com*, accessed September 5, 2026, https://www.thetorah.com/article/the-origin-of-fixed-communal-prayer-evidence-from-qumran.
Note the *Rule of the Community* (1QS 9:4–5, 10:6 & partially restored 1QS 9:26), the *Damascus Document* (CD 11:20–21 & 16:13) in the context of Psalm 141:2.

[73] Note that the term "dainties" was updated to read "delicacies."

The *Yahad* understood themselves to become transformed into angelic spiritual beings through worship so that they could enter the true heavenly temple of the *da-var*.

The second power of heaven, Who served as the divine Viceroy of the Father, was understood to have been different than created angels—wielding authority over the *Mal'achim* of heaven and the *Melachim* of earth. Although there were rebellious angels who disobeyed, those serving God Most High were sent into the world to act or to speak according to the instruction they received from *Yehovah*. They were His servants. Michael Heiser has devoted considerable discussion to the structure and the workings of the angelic realm. Because of his P-h-D in Biblical Hebrew, he is far more qualified to explain the nuances of the heavenly host. Therefore, I respectfully defer listeners and readers who desire greater understanding to his expertise.

Our take-away from this topic is that in the ancient eastern Hebraic mindset, individuals who encountered the Word of God through an angelic manifestation had encountered God Himself.

Today, because of Aristotle's dominant influence on the way western Europeans have been trained to think, we categorize angels as being in a different category than God. However, rationalism did not exist as a philosophical construct when much of the Bible was written, and so in the first century A.D., nobody was concerned about hierarchical categorization of divine beings. It did not matter if the biblical text explained that someone encountered an angel, or if they had a divine dream or vision. Everyone understood that these manifestations had been sent by God, and therefore, according to eastern reason, the receiving individual had encountered God. Although the Word appeared in many diverse forms, all of these were considered equally to have been divine manifestations.

Now take care in understanding this point; we are not saying that God and angels were the same. However, in the historical context from the time of Genesis into the first century of the

Christian Era, there was no conflict between saying that an individual encountered an angel or alternately describing this event as an encounter with the Word or as an encounter with God.

Angels were the vehicle of God's Word; therefore to the ancient reader, encounter with an angel was the same as encounter with God Himself.

This may be very difficult for western-European minded readers of this book to grasp, because we have been raised in the mindset of western rationalism which came from the philosophy of Aristotle. By contrast to Aristotle's form of thinking, the Scriptures were written according to the ancient eastern Hebraic mindset that was based on the affirmation of information that was reasonable.

The eastern-mindset did not see any conflict in the notion that angels, dreams, visions, miracles or other manifestations encountered by humankind actually constituted encounter with the presence of God Himself. Although the angel himself was not God, encounter with the angel sent by God was still considered to have been an encounter with God. The same could be said about dreams, visions, or other kinds of miraculous encounters. The form of mediation was not God. However encounter with any form that mediated the Word of God was identical with the manifestation of God's very presence.

Admittedly, this can sound confusing because it is not easy to set aside hierarchical thinking or to pause our minds from engaging in rational deduction. Aristotle did not like eastern thinking because it allowed for contradictions. If two accounts of the same incident were not in complete agreement, so far as the facts were concerned, eastern thinkers could accept two conflicting narratives as each being valid if they were reasonably substantiated. This irritated and frustrated Aristotle. He found that eastern reason made it impossible to resolve legal cases. Therefore, he developed the precepts of deductive logic.

Anyone born in America, was grafted into the mindset of deductive logic without ever knowing that any other form of

thinking existed. We are taught to think rationally without ever realizing that there was another option.

It is kind of like the difference between Apple, Microsoft, Linux, and Android operating systems. Each computing system uses different means of processing information. The first computer I used was a Macintosh. Then at graduate school, they used Microsoft systems and suddenly I had to learn to use a new kind of software and to think differently in order to get my work done.

I should reference the tremendously valuable book by Dr. Richard Nisbett, The Geography of Thought : How Asians and Westerners Think Differently – And Why. If I were ever to have taught a course on biblical interpretation, this would have been required reading.

Aristotle needed to find absolute facts in order that legal disputes in the Greek world could be suitably resolved with finality. Therefore, he invented hierarchical thinking. Accordingly, the Greek bishops who also grew up in this western mindset, put God in a different category than angels because angels were created beings. Therefore, in the use of Orthodox rational deduction, angelic manifestation could not allowably be identical to encounter with God.

Under Orthodoxy's western minded rubric, either individuals had encountered an angel or they had encountered God. In this statement, take special note of the terms "either" and "or." By contrast, in eastern thinking, when angels served as mediators for God in the biblical texts, individuals were understood to have both encountered the created heavenly being of the angel, and the uncreated Being of God. Once again, take particular note of the term "both" connected with the term "and" in this comparison. So then today we remark that western thinking is an "either" – "or," exclusive kind of thought. By contrast, eastern thought has been described as a "both" – "and," inclusive kind of thought. The eastern-mindset allowed for paradoxes while rationalism existed to destroy certain supposed facts that did not agree with other

supposed facts. If there was disagreement, the tool of deduction was used to tear down and eliminate any facts that were proven to have been faulty.

The problem of rationalism is its inherent assumption that it knows everything, which allows this mindset to interrogate and to eliminate faulty information. This process takes place in our brains without ever realizing it is happening. Nevertheless, since none of us using rationalism are omniscient, inevitably the tool of deduction is going to result in measurable error. The wider our knowledge base becomes, so also the need to revise and change former conclusions becomes increasingly necessary.

The existence and justifiability of rationalism depends upon the existence of absolutes. Rationalism does not like relativity. Even so, Einstein realized that all knowledge was relative to an ever increasing number of variables. For example, a vehicle on the deck of an aircraft carrier might be moving west at 3 miles per hour and another might be moving east with the same reading on its speedometer. Would you say that both were moving at the same speed? It would seem so. However, if the aircraft carrier was moving west at 10 miles per hour, then the first vehicle was actually moving at 13 miles per hour and the east bound vehicle was actually moving at a negative speed of 7 miles per hour. However, the measurement becomes even less definable because an ocean current might also be moving in one direction or another. Moreover, the moon and barometric pressure might be affecting the size of the waves which are being traversed that also would affect the allowable distance to be covered in a particular amount of time. Furthermore, the Earth is revolving around the sun, and the solar system is moving through the galaxy, and so on. So then, because of the relative movement in the cosmos, it is never possible to measure an absolute speed.

When Einstein began calling into question the supposed absolutes of the scientific community, he was criticized and

marginalized. Nevertheless, he proved his point, and his detractors were put to shame.

What we realize is that rationalism only works in small measurable finite circumstances, but it does not work when understanding the cosmos. For example, deduction might allow the police to determine who did not obey a traffic signal in order to decide who was at fault in an accident. In this sense rationalism can be put to good use. However, the greater the magnitude of a topic or situation, the less reliable rationalism actually becomes.

The Bible was written by individuals who did not use the rubric of rationalism because Aristotle had not yet invented deduction, hierarchical thinking, and the law of noncontradiction. Even though the New Testament was composed at a time when rationalism was growing and advancing in the world, the Jewish authors were eastern-minded thinkers.

When the biblical texts ended up in the hands of the Orthodox bishops, hundreds of years after the disciples of Jesus, these Greek individuals had actually been raised in Aristotle's mode of thinking. And without knowing any better, they superimposed a different means of interpretation upon the Scriptures than the form in which they were written.

While this may not seem to be a problem, it became catastrophic. The bishops set-about-the-task of imposing deduction upon the narratives in order to find doctrinal truth. However the authors had never been writing to convey doctrinal information. They were writing to explain how faithful participation in a divine-human relationship worked. Resultantly, by the end of the fourth century A.D., Christianity had become something completely different in its form than how it existed when Jesus was alive.

The problem with Orthodoxy's derivation of doctrines is that the process took place while examining a very small amount of information.

For example, if the statement was made, "We are under grace, but we are not under the law," this might seem simple to

interpret. However, the Greek Bishops of early Orthodoxy used only a very limited amount of information to draw their conclusions regarding what the statement actually meant.

They had been influenced by the conclusion that the Law had been set in opposition to the Gospel and grace—by the influences of Marcion—whose church had already existed throughout the Mediterranean world for more than a century. We have the Church Father Tertullian to thank for this realization. Not only did they carry this flawed background knowledge into the process of interpreting Paul's statement, but they lacked the greater relative realization that two different *t*/*Torahs* existed within Judaism. And so, on the basis of their unrealized acceptance of inaccurate Marcionite background knowledge—combined with the fact that they did not have all of the facts—they allowed grace to become something different than what the biblical authors had understood. Adding another layer of error to their conclusions, in Classical Greek, "*charis*" was typically understood to have been "favor." So then, proceeding in the intellectual momentum of Marcion, they pitted the concept of a single body of law against what they supposed to be God's favor. Herein, we realize vast compounded multi-layered error.

The bishops' interpretive conclusion—which took only a fraction of a second to deduce—became a defining influence upon continuing Orthodoxy, the Reformers, and the Evangelicals. When early 20th century Pentecostalism arose and later the Charismatic Movement, this highly misinformed idea had already become pervasive in Christian thought. Churchianity had been poisoned from the start.

This is the reason that I made the case earlier that I do not have a hidden agenda for Jews to become Christians. Instead I am hoping for Jews and Christians to recognize their intended identities and to learn to find life as *Ish-raah-el-ites* who live by the voice of God. This was the *chen*, *charis*, or grace that began with Noah in the

Aionios Covenant of Peace. And this was also what Jesus intended for the first century celebrants of Judaism.

So then, we observe that the body of information necessary to be studied in order to determine the meaning of a statement is larger than the statement itself.

Nevertheless, the Greek bishops discarded other ancient texts considered to have been inspired writings in the first and second centuries—instead attempting to study biblical concepts in a smaller selective collection of books—which they grouped together and labeled as, "the New Testament." Then they set about imposing rational deduction to develop and to support their doctrinal beliefs.

The intellectual bubble created by the early Orthodox Bishops was very small and did not take into consideration other extraordinarily important components of knowledge that were available at that time. They were compelled to move forward—steadily motivated by the religio-political agenda to convincingly and decisively take control of Constantine's new-found religion.

Another compounding complexity was that some of the books of the New Testament existed in Hebrew and Aramaic. By choosing to selectively ignore and by dismissing the relevance of these other texts, which of course differed from the Greek texts, the stage was set for yet even greater error. Had the bishops been able to read Hebrew Matthew, they might have discovered that Jesus differentiated the *takkanot* from the *Torah*. Rationalism combined with ignorance has given way to disaster in Christendom's misapprehension of Paul's comments regarding the Law and grace.

There is no exact one-to-one translational equivalence between any two languages. Since Jesus spoke Hebrew and Aramaic and taught in these languages, and the biblical materials used by the bishops had all been translated into Greek, all kinds of important concepts were lost. As another example, consider our earlier discussion of remembrance from the Hebrew term *zachar* or

the fact that in ancient Hebrew the term “word” could serve as a generalization for any and every kind of action. These ancient concepts no longer even exist in today’s world. And neither the early bishops, nor ongoing Orthodoxy, has ever made any relevant conclusions about these matters that realistically affect any dominant interpretation of the Bible.

Although historical and biblical scholars know that significant discrepancies between widely accepted doctrine and what is stated in the Scriptures exist, keep in mind that researchers—who perhaps care most about faith and spirituality—are employed by so-called “Christian” schools and cannot afford to call Orthodoxy forward to maturity.

I listened to one professor lament that he had purchased an expensive home when he moved to take his job at said Christian University. No matter what, he needed to toe the line. If he said the wrong thing to the wrong person, he knew that the narrow-minded chancellor would know within the hour, and the request for his resignation would follow by the next day. The threat of risking financial trouble kept him and his peers silent. The concept of freedom of speech is an illusion for employees in many Christian businesses if they wish to avoid reprisal.

The same intolerance characterized the lives of Bishop Epiphanius and Athanasius.

The bishops were raised speaking and reading Classical Greek wherein the terms *charis* and *pisteuo* were defined respectively using the noun conveying favor and the verb form conveying the activity of intellectually believing. Under Aristotle, truth was defined as correct information. Therefore, the bishops set about determining what information from their selectively chosen Bible needed to be believed in order to be saved from hell after death. Herein, the architects of Orthodoxy superimposed a mission over the text of the Bible, and as a result, they also completely redefined the concept of salvation. For Orthodoxy, salvation was centered around the concern of obtaining the afterlife, whereas

biblical authors use the underlying terms *yeshuah* or *soteria* to represent the concept of finding God's help, guidance, and deliverance in order to navigate life on Earth. Because the bishops did not consult the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures of the Old Testament, they also redefined the *aionios* life as eternal life. They did so without even considering that when individuals asked Jesus how to inherit this new idea of eternal life, He had directed them specifically to obey the Ten Commandments. And yet in the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments were never taught as a means to get into heaven after death.

And so what we see in the bishop's theological construct is that they invented entirely new ideas and substituted these in place of the ideas of the original authors of the Scriptures.

Second, because they were illiterate in Hebrew and Aramaic, and because of the absoluteness of their rationalism, they did not consider it to have been necessary to have used the Bible as it had preexisted in those forms to interpret their narrow selection of New Testament texts. This resulted in their being an order of magnitude removed from understanding the simple statement, "We are under grace, but we are not under the law."

The bishops did not care or know anything about the existence and eventual division between the Priestly Orders of *Melchizedek* and Aaron. They had no knowledge of the murderous drama which resulted in the eschatological announcement that God would destroy the wicked fraudulent purveyors of Second Temple Judaism and that He would restore the, once prevalent, order of *Melchizedek*.

Third, the Orthodox bishops did not have any idea of the existence of the second *torah* of the *takkanot*. Although the *takkanot* was more clearly differentiated from *Torah* in Hebrew Matthew, the bishops didn't care about Hebrew biblical texts. And moreover, they were unwilling to learn a new language to check and see how the text of Hebrew Matthew might have affected the ongoing derivation of their conclusions regarding what authors of

the Scripture had been attempting to convey. Actually instead, some of the bishops traveled the Mediterranean world gathering and burning ancient texts which they feared might have undermined their doctrines.

Because the bishops did not know the history of the delineation between the *Torah* and the *takkanot*, they lumped these together under the Greek term, "*nomos*," and declared resolutely according to their highly influential predecessor Marcion, that the Law was bad. They taught along with this ancient dispensationalist that the law had supposedly passed away and that Christian believers were under grace which was God's favor, instead of the Hebraic grace which was living life according to miraculous guidance by the voice of God.

In this last sentence there are several compounded errors. We will get to this later in more detail, however, suffice to understand that dispensationalism is a humanly contrived tool used to interpret the Bible with the intent of dismissing the relevance of parts of the Scriptures. Marcion used dispensationalism to throw out the Old Testament. This was convenient for the bishops because they could not read the Hebrew or Aramaic versions. And furthermore, just like Marcion, they hated the Jews. Because their supposed Gospel had replaced the law, they felt they no longer needed the Jews or the Law, the Old Testament. For the sake of their pride, by golly, they were never going to learn Hebrew. Marcion was a bad influence. Nevertheless, some of his interests served the desires of the bishops quite well.

Because the bishops had no clue of a differentiation between the traditions of the elders and the inspired *Torah*, they dismissed the relevance of the Ten Commandments that Jesus had strongly and repeatedly affirmed. Due to their redefinition of *pisteuo*, converting this from the concept of becoming faithful to God, Who existed as Truth, to cognitive belief in facts that were supposedly true, the essence of Hebraic spirituality and the

ultimate concern of Jesus' teachings was undermined, disregarded and forgotten.

The case made here is that Paul affirmed the *Torah* of the Ten Commandments. This was elucidated in Romans 13:8-14. When our eyes are opened to the many factors contributing to the loss of our understanding and the inherent ignorance of our well-intended teachers, we might apprehend that the Apostle did not want any of us to find ourselves living a burdensome legalistic life under the 600+ rules of the *takkanot*—which was the second humanly contrived *torah*. Instead He wanted us to understand that we were intended to live by the miraculous ongoing direction of God's Word which worked in harmony with the initial inspired *Torah*; and that had come in an encounter with the Word. This comprised the walk of *chen*, *charis*, or grace. The ultimate judge of whether or not any of us walked according to *Torah* was the measure of how we treated our neighbors—especially the ones who were not easy to get along with. And the way that we treated our neighbors was a reflection of our love for God. The apostles taught that it was impossible to authentically love God while mistreating our neighbors and family members. Therefore, choices, behavior and character had a profound impact upon our spiritual existences in the *aiona*.

The point was that the faithful were made alive in the *aiona* and so they existed in two realms. Their earthly actions either fostered life in the *aiona* or interfered with entry and then manifesting signs and wonders on the Earth. Husbands who mistreated their wives were not to expect answers to their prayers.

We could go on and on explaining the ever increasing magnitude of Orthodoxy's errors with this small example of spiraling error pertaining to the examples of Orthodoxy's misapprehension of the Law, grace, salvation, the *aionios* life, *pisteuo*. The point of this ever expanding collection of considerations that become necessary to accurately interpret one

simple statement in the Bible identifies the weak ineffectual tool of rationalism.

Although Orthodoxy's leaders may have had good intentions, the fact that they did not account for their own narrow minded thinking, many layers of their ignorance, and their willingness to dismiss the relevance of far more information than they included in order to derive their doctrines, what they passed down to posterity, in many cases, cannot genuinely be considered to have been correct information. When we also consider the malevolent intolerance and hatred that guided the bishops, we should not put them on pedestals lest we ourselves fall into error and manifest their faulty character. Let us not repeat the mistakes of the past, while there are yet new ones we can make for ourselves.

Understanding all of these concerns, if any of us who count ourselves as being truly Orthodox, we have to courageously confront the errors of our forefathers and then boldly step forward in maturity. My goal is not to villainize anyone. Even so, stubbornness combined with ignorance that is situated in the supposed security blanket of longstanding religious traditions is not easily changed. This could be a contributing factor as to why God does not allow us to live hundreds of years. Good intentioned people get stuck in enormous intellectual ruts and become determined that nobody is ever going to make them change.

Nevertheless, we have to remain respectful while not ignoring the need to walk in the Genius of Einstein. If we hope to make discoveries, then we have to keep questioning the validity of our most prized assumptions. Since we do not see many miracles in the church today, and it is evident that Jesus said His followers would perform even greater signs and wonders, then we are compelled to move forward with questions and exploration to determine why. And this is the journey and the destination of *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel*.

Because we exist within the relative confines of a lack of knowledge, Aristotle's rationalism ultimately fails in the hope that it might ever be able to prove the correctness of biblical doctrines. Furthermore, the Scriptures were written in order to pass the knowledge of spirituality that was framed by divine-human encounter down to posterity. The formulation of religious doctrines to have been accepted intellectually to guarantee entry into heaven after death was never the intent of the Biblical authors. This mission was one of the primary mistakes of Orthodoxy. There were a plethora of contributing factors that might have allowed the statement, "We are under grace, but we are not under the law," to have been properly defined. However, the ignorance, intolerance, and the malevolent hatred of the bishops toward those who thought and acted differently prevented the Orthodox movement from actually being correct on these and many other topics. Because of the prideful mindset of their being, the early bishops were predestined toward error.

Is it best for us to stand back and let post-modern critics outside of the Judeo-Christian movement accuse us of these mistakes? Or might it not be more beneficial for us to humbly preemptively step forward and confess the errors of our forefathers. Perhaps we even have to change our approach and make a bigger deal about the fact that we are still making an honest attempt to figure some things out.

Ultimately, all of this leads to decreasing our emphasis on the embrace of doctrines and instead refocusing on the primacy of the practice of spirituality.

Thank you Aristotle for helping the Judeo-Christian movement deduce that we can't always depend upon rationalism.

When we begin to grapple with and take hold of the understanding of how Aristotle's philosophy altered the course of Christianity, we also begin to find our way back to proper interpretation of the Scriptures.

Getting back to our topic of discussion, although the Word of God was described as coming through all sorts of different types of mediation, to have encountered the Word in any form was synonymous with having encountered God.

Understanding this single idea is of enormous value and vitally necessary in order to eliminate *non sequiturs* from contemporary interpretation of the Scriptures.

In *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, I made this point with respect to comprehending the text of Acts 8 wherein Philip encountered an angel and the Holy Spirit spoke to him. If we don't look at this through the eastern lens of interpretation, wherein encounter with the Word of God or with God Himself, came through an angel, and instead confine our minds to the use of Aristotle's rationalism that had been adopted by Orthodoxy, then we are forced to conclude that the angel that appeared was different than the Holy Spirit Who spoke.

And as this point is made, it probably creates conflict in the minds of my audience due to the fact the vast majority will have been raised in the Aristotelian mindset.

Because we have been reared as western thinkers none of us ever considers or questions why it is that we categorize, use deduction, or filter information by the means of noncontradiction. This is simply how our minds were trained to think from the time we learned to speak.

Looking back in time, we understand that early and continuing Orthodoxy had no clue that they were superimposing a different form of thinking upon the Scriptures than had been used by its authors. Resultantly, the concerns of the authors of Scripture were not accurately understood, and translations from the time of Jerome onward have confused the original writers' intentions. As an aside, we need to give credit to Jerome for breaking ranks late in the fourth century A.D. He knew it was necessary and made quiet efforts to study Hebrew in order to provide a more accurate translation of the Old Testament in the Vulgate. However, by the

time of his composition, several major church councils had already taken place and many of Orthodoxy's doctrines had become monolithic impediments standing in the way of ongoing biblical interpretation.

As the Scriptures were interpreted and translated by Orthodoxy, these leaders ran into all kinds of *non sequiturs* as can be seen in the text of Acts 8 involving Philip, the angel and the Holy Spirit. In a fruitless attempt to make matters of interpretation clearer, the bishops attempted to fix what they mistakenly understood to have been logical problems by imposing intellectual interpretive rules known as doctrines. Resultantly, it was declared that an angel was different than the Holy Spirit. And anyone who thought otherwise was declared to be a heretic and became outcast.

By drawing intellectual interpretive lines like this, those who found themselves on the wrong side needed to cross over in their understandings so that they would not be condemned. Ironically, Orthodoxy did not leave room for the ongoing expression of any other form of Christianity than itself, although perhaps dozens of different forms existed before the Orthodox rulership came into power. Several different types of Christianity had existed centuries earlier and continued right alongside Orthodoxy until the religio-politically motivated Greek bishops maligned, discredited, and destroyed the competing movements. Most notably there were Montanists, Ebionites, Marcionites, and Docetists, as well as several representations of Gnostic Christianity. Although, Orthodoxy did not come along until a few hundred years after the life of Jesus, all of these expressions had existed from the first or second century A D onward. The winner in the battle for who would gain dominion revolved around which of them would be tenacious enough to prove their authenticity to Constantine. However, most adherents in these movements could have cared less about the Emperor and his opinions.

Orthodoxy's judgments regarding heresy were contrived in order to protect conclusions they had made in interpretations with which anyone might have potentially disagreed.

Since there was no room in the Orthodox Church for alternate considerations in their existence as an Aristotelian either-or thinking institution, its doctrines were mandates that had to be uniformly accepted.

Nobody was allowed to come up with their own ideas regarding how the Bible might have been interpreted apart from the council of the bishops. And heaven forbid, absolutely none of the Greek bishops were about to consult the Jews to determine how they should have interpreted the Jewish writings of the New Testament.

This very disposition had been the opinion and admonition of the Christian theologian, Origen. Because he thought admirably of consulting the Hebrew texts in order to make sense of the New Testament, the bishops hated him, and they attempted to find and burn every document Origen had ever written.

According to the eastern perspective, the Scriptures actually should have allowably been interpreted according to reason that permitted potential for contradiction or even outright paradox. Since no two people ever witnessed or described the same event in exactly equal terms, so long as each differing account was reasonable, according to the eastern-mindset, both should have been equally accepted. Although an author might have used different terms to describe the same concept or entity, this was not a problem. So then, differences in the accounts of the books of Kings and Chronicles really did not matter to the ancient audiences. Two different people had written these, and each writer deserved the telling and acceptance of their individual accounts.

In the example of Acts 8, angels came from heaven. Angels were spiritual beings. The spiritual realm of heaven was described using the term holy. Therefore, it was reasonable to describe an angel as being a spirit from the holy realm. But none of this even

would have mattered to the original audience because they were not encumbered by the tightly constrained characteristics and goals of rationalism.

Hierarchical thinking and rational deduction were not of intellectual concern in the earlier Hebraic mindset. Orthodoxy's doctrine on the matter would have been of no importance to the ancient reader of the Scripture. Rather instead, first and second century eastern minded interpreters of scripture would have been confused by the Orthodox thinker's compulsion to have separated angelic encounter from encounter with God. The only matter of concern in their minds as they read Acts would have been resolving the question of Philip's obedience.

Did Philip obey the Word? Yes. Therefore, just as Luke explained in his introduction, he was writing to the Most Excellent Theophilus to tell him about those who were eyewitnesses and who thereafter became servants of the Word. There was no contradiction in Luke's mind when he wrote that Philip encountered an angel and the Holy Spirit had spoken to him. Philip had obeyed the Word of God in a divine-human encounter and therefore he had proven himself as a servant of the Word.

In all of this, Luke understood that the Word was God. Therefore, whether he spoke of the Word, an angel, or the spirit, these terms were all equally representative of God.

Hebraic thinkers were not limited by the pedantic confines of categorization, rational deduction, or by the law of noncontradiction. They were able to communicate a single idea by describing it in many different ways with diverse phraseology.

Furthermore, the most important question implied by any narrative in the Bible always had to do with whether or not individuals obeyed God. That was the focus of ancient readers. Hebraic faith revolved around behavioral obedience or the question of ones' faithfulness to *Yehovah*.

The ancient religion had everything to do with Orthopraxy or rather doing what was right in the eyes of God. Herein, the

concepts of righteousness and faithfulness were inextricably combined with one another. In the ancient context, righteous choices and behavior were understood to have been the same as walking in faithfulness to God. In simpler terms, those who obeyed His voice were doing what was right.

Resultantly, we understand that angels who obeyed God also were acting in righteousness. We could convey the identical idea using the different explanation that obedient angels were considered to have been faithful to *Yehovah*.

So then, this discussion and the realizations we may glean from it might help us to make more sense of how the concept of the priestly Order of *Melchizedek* was sustained through the era of the composition of the Old Testament without actually using his title or name.

When ancient readers of the Hebrew Scriptures read either *melek* or *Melchizedek*, they naturally would have made a connection that was obscured or lost after the Scriptures were translated into western languages. Consequently, today when we read the terms "angel" and "*Melchizedek*" in English, we do not easily make any connections indicating a common ancient concept. Not only did the linguistic similarity help ancient readers to make a link between the idea of an angel and *Melchizedek*, but this was also reinforced by the realization that both angels and *Melchizedek* were divine-human mediators.

In the era of Jesus' life and at least until the end of the first century A.D., readers of the texts of Scripture identified references to the Word or the *davar* as being synonymous with God. However, in the second century A.D., the Judeo-Christian movement began associating the *davar* with a divine message instead of with God Himself. As the Jewish scholar Alan Segal demonstrated with his research, this was largely because of Judaism's moratorium banning all discussion of the second power of heaven. As both contingencies moved progressively further away from the Hebraic roots of biblical understanding, Christendom transitioned from being a primarily

Jewish movement into dominance by Gentiles. These members of the emerging faith community lacked ancient background knowledge regarding the spirituality of the Old Testament. And so Jews and Christians alike each began associating the *davar* or the Word of God with the writings of the Scripture.

The change from identifying the *davar* as God Himself to the message of God was due in large part to early Christian Orthodoxy's imposition of the law of noncontradiction and Aristotle's hierarchical thinking back over interpretation of the Bible.

Under the guide of Aristotelian thought, God, angels, and words or messages all fit into different dis-similar categories. Although some church fathers continued to identify the term Word with the identity of God, this decreased over time. Instead, a new concept arose and became prevalent connecting the term word with the writings of the Scriptures—and later with preached messages.

Therefore, by the time that the Bible began being translated into western languages, the concept of reference to the Word being identified directly with the activity of God had been lost and forgotten. Instead, New Testament usages of the term Word were almost always classified as written or spoken, biblical texts or messages.

Since these were categorically different, the Word was stripped of its, or rather, His divine agency. Although the change in the concept began with Christendom's label of Scripture as the "'word' of God" this same concept also influenced Jewish understandings as well.

Resultantly, passages having to do with the spreading of the Word, especially in the New Testament were newly interpreted as the messages of the Gospel being spread through human preaching. The human agency of disseminating information replaced the concept of God Himself working as the Word through the diverse means of angelic visitation, dreams, visions and through miracles.

In the Old and New Testaments however, references to the Word of God pertained directly to the ongoing work of God Himself. This was made abundantly clear by the Aramaic Targums because in these Old Testament writings, the Word of God was personified as the Divine Being of *Memra*.

Of course, the bishops did not care about any of this. What we understand today is that the hateful ignorance of the Greek bishops, as the highly revered leaders of early Orthodoxy, resulted in tremendous historical error with respect to interpretation of the Bible. This snowballed into a lack of comprehension regarding God's mission in the world from the time of Abraham.

God desired to raise up a priesthood of faithful people who would positively influence and bless the nations. This would be accomplished by individuals having become *Ish-raah-el-ites*. From perspective and empowerment gained from entry and abiding in the *aiona*, such ones would manifest the good-Word of God before the nations. Thereby, the nations which had been divided at the time of Babel, would be introduced to the Word of God. As they chose to pledge allegiance to God Most High and walked faithfully with Him, so also as eyewitnesses and servants of the Word, the mission of *Yehovah* would be perpetuated throughout the Earth. Along the way of life in the world, God would provide His *yeshuah* or *soteria* to help, guide and protect those who had been restored as His children.

Orthodoxy has left us today with an opportunity to humbly and lovingly step forward toward maturity in a renewed understanding of the Bible. If we can learn to think outside of the intellectual bubbles in which we were raised, there is hope that the ancient ruins referenced by Isaiah can be set back in place and Hebraic spirituality can be restored.

For those who are interested in understanding the pogrom engaged in by the bishops, I suggest that you begin by reading the *Panarion* written by the Greek Bishop Epiphanius. He was not bashful and did not hide his hateful maligned agenda to destroy the

other Christian expressions which predated the Orthodox Christian movement. His maligned intolerant religio-political agenda was unveiled, reviewed, and summarized in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*.

Where all of this becomes relevant to the discussion of *Melchizedek*, is that ultimately the Aristotelian influences of Christian Orthodoxy and its conceptual changes in the interpretation of the Bible altered how both sides of the Judeo-Christian movement hereafter have understood the Scriptures.

I have heard Jewish thinkers in my own time mistakenly identify that the Bible is the Word of God because He inspired it. Ones who make this errant assumption rely upon intuition rather than inductive historical contextual analysis of the term "Word" or *davar* as it was used in the Scripture. Furthermore, Jews have been influenced by errant concepts that migrated from the Christian knowledge base into the mindset of Judaism. In the era of biblical times, nobody would have made this mistake. In both Hebrew and Greek, distinction between the concepts of the Word and the writings is constantly maintained by context of discussion and by use of completely different unrelated sets of terminologies.

Although I would agree that the Scriptures were inspired and that authors wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, what they produced were inspired writings. By comparison, when the Word of God manifested Himself, divine-human encounter and fellowship took place. This was something different than the Scriptures.

If more people were familiar with the Being of *Memra* from the Targums and if these Aramaic translations of the Bible were dominant instead of the Hebrew Scriptures, the delineation between the Word and the Scriptures would be much more apparent. This is because *Memra* was understood as the Person of God dwelling among His people. He provided guidance, help, miracles and deliverance to the faithful. It would be nearly

impossible to have mistakenly mixed-up the concept of the Word with the sacred writings.

What further occludes the biblical understanding that the Word was God, and that the writings of the Scripture comprised entirely different concepts is that most Christian theologians still today cannot read biblical Hebrew or Aramaic. Instead, they rely upon translations written by thinkers who have been raised in the western Aristotelian mindset of hierarchical thought. And so, they follow the path of deductive intuition which was set in place by early Orthodoxy who misappropriated the title "'word' of God to the Scriptures.

As global literacy rates improved and as the Bible became more accessible, individuals became students of the Bible instead of seekers of the living Word of God. The majority under the faith rubric of Orthodoxy embraced doctrine in order to seal their places in eternity; whereas other matters of spirituality fell by the way-side. If what really mattered was escaping hell and the guarantee of entry into heaven, then the deceptive rationale that became founded upon the first order of error was understood by the question, "Why over complicate life by acting religious? Going through the motions of a prescribed spirituality practiced by rote on the weekend seemed like it should be enough to please God. And this multiplied layer of ignorance dominates the lives of many church-goers today.

Speaking on behalf of the English Bibles I have read, I can see that much of what has been rendered from the Hebrew and Greek has been changed to make the Scriptures align with hierarchical, categorical, noncontradictory thinking.

Moreover, in some cases, religio-political agendas have blatantly altered the reading of some texts. A prime example discussed in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* was Jesus' teaching in the parables and especially in the conclusion of Matthew 13:44-52. In the progression of parables, Jesus used a collection of examples wherein items which were not valuable were

thrown out in order to take hold of authentic treasure—which was the kingdom of God. In the very climactic moment wherein Jesus asked His disciples if they understood, He sealed the compelling point explaining, "Therefore, every scribe and pharisee who embraces the kingdom will throw out all of his household treasures—whether these are old or new." However, English translators uniformly ignore the progression and repeated usage of the Greek terms "*ballo*" and "*ekballo*" in the chapter—never rendering this literally in the finale in order to seal Jesus' point. Instead, perhaps in an effort to prevent toppling the proverbial apple cart of the American Dream, they render the counterfeit conclusion, "Therefore every scribe and pharisee who embraces the kingdom of God will bring-forth old and new treasures from their houses." And this is the only place in all of scripture where the verbs "*ballo*" or "*ekballo*"—which convey the distinct action of throwing or throwing out—is rendered as "bring forth." Although the context uses and reuses the term to express the activity of discarding and actively throwing away items that are comparably useless to what is being gathered, translators of the scriptures, in my opinion, commit a crime by altering the express teaching of Jesus with the rendering of "bring-forth."

To be straightforward and honest, this makes me sick; and that is putting it mildly. Publishers' ongoing need to make money seems to dictate what is allowable in the work of translation. Therefore, they refuse to convey the statement of Jesus that was spelled out and that was reiterated repeatedly in context that pursuit of the kingdom of God will cost everything that anyone owns. Once again, the risk of reprisal in the Christian world ultimately creates problems for the clear presentation of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels.

Some of you may be cringing at this assertion because someone sold you Evangelicalism's bag of goods with its supposed free gift. Nobody likes to admit that they were victimized in a deceptive deal. Being tricked or cheated into mental acquisition and

acceptance of intellectual doctrines that will supposedly get you into heaven after death is a misrepresentation of everything Jesus taught and modeled. And if you disagree or are undecided on this point, begin reading the Gospels and keep asking what did the author want for me to understand from this verse, passage, chapter or book? And when you come to a statement that makes no sense at all, try to have someone who knows Greek or Hebrew translate this in its most literal sense. Then examine and see how the literal rendering might be understood in light of the surrounding context.

If I had another hundred years to live, I would become a teacher of inductive Bible study, and I would gather a group of students to make a rendering of the Hebraic Bible. I am sure that it would not be perfect. However, I would work hard and fast to clear up some theological chicanery, and then I would pray for a means of giving it away as an authentic free gift to teach individuals how to inherit the Bible's ancient version of salvation from a contextual understanding of *yeshuah* and *soteria*.

The Scriptures have gone through so many foreign intellectual filters by the time they are rendered in English that many ancient concepts are lost and hidden from the eyes of contemporary readers.

It is probably easy for readers to make a logical connection between the title *Melchizedek* and the references provided from the prophets which foretold the coming of a future king who would rule in righteousness. We do not need the specific title to be mentioned in order to make eschatological sense of these writings.

However, the association of *Melchizedek* in many other passages of Scripture becomes more difficult to perceive without more significantly understanding the concept of divine mediation embedded within the Hebrew term "*melek*."

Moving forward, *Melchizedek* was a divine priest between God and Abraham, therefore we also make the connection that he was a divine-human mediator or an agent of God. Just as "*melek*" can mean "angel," these heavenly beings were also mediators or

agents of God. When English readers see ongoing use of the term "angel" in the text of the Bible, they have no etymological means of connecting these entities to *Melchizedek*. The phrase "righteous king" doesn't look anything like the English transliteration of the name "*Melchizedek*." By contrast, the most ancient readers of the text in Hebrew were able to make a connection that a similar related mediator described perhaps with the abbreviated title *melek* continued appearing and accomplishing God's interaction with humankind through the history of ancient Israel. Herein, we might be able to perceive how the name or title *Melchizedek* served identifying him as the progenitor of activity that continued onward through time through the angels.

If we pause to think, angels, priests and *Melchizedek* were all divine-human or human-divine mediators. If we are able to change our minds in order to associate the activity of mediation of angels between heaven and Earth with *Melchizedek*'s very name, then the *Melchizedek* tradition is not so lost from the Scriptures after all. Although some may not be literate in Hebrew and are blind to the etymological connection between *melek* and *Melchizedek*, they are still able to trace the concept of divine-human agency or mediation. The activity of the angels throughout the Bible speaks loudly of the identity of *Melchizedek*. Just as Abraham encountered a being entitled as a "priest," so also the angels performed a priestly service as they sought out and intervened in the lives of the faithful among humankind.

When the ancient Hebrew reader of the Scriptures who was familiar with Abraham encountered the term *melek* for angel, there was a linguistic connection to the name or title *Melchizedek*. However, the ability to make such a connection is completely lost in English, Spanish, French, and German translations—as well as in other western-European renditions. However, in eastern languages like Turkish, for example, "*melek*" continues to be the term for angel wherein there is still an obvious literary connection to the Turkish rendering "*Melkisedek*."

So then, while eastern languages may still allow the benefit of making a literary connection between *Melchizedek* and angels, western readers have to depend upon the association of the priest and the angel serving the same function of duty.

The association may be more relevantly understood by English readers who make a connection between the Angel of *Yehovah* in the Hebrew Scriptures—wherein the Aramaic Scriptures might have correspondingly instead have employed the term *Memra*. In the Targums, *Memra*, Who was the Word of God, served the role of a divine-human mediator.

Of course, John, the disciple of Jesus, asserted that the Word of God had taken on human flesh in the incarnation of Jesus—the son of Mary. So also, the author of Hebrews explained that the Word, who was understood to have been God, had visited their forefathers by many diverse kinds of manifestations, but in his own time, the Word had come in the form of God's Son as Jesus. Moreover, he explained that Jesus' flesh was torn, likening this to the veil in the temple, so that the faithful could enter into the *davar* and could find places of standing before the throne of grace. So also John explained that Jesus was going back to the Father in order to prepare dwelling places in God's house for His faithful followers. From that point forward, the faithful were able to enter into the Word of God as priests because the veil separating the holy of holies from the holy place had been torn open during the crucifixion of Jesus.

This had been a central component of the more ancient priestly order of *Melchizedek*, whereby individuals became prophets. However, the kings did not appreciate the divine authority of the prophets, so they killed them, tore down the altars to *Yehovah* that were spread throughout the land, and banned worshipping the name of *Yehovah*. For this had been the means by which the ancient Israelites like King David had come before the throne of grace and was the means by which the prophets had called forth grace into the world.

Although there are multiple directions from which we may approach the topic of divine mediation, there is continuity between the introduction of *Melchizedek* in Genesis, angelic involvement throughout the Scriptures and with respect to the identity of *Memra* as the Word of God in the Aramaic Targums. Although the continuance of the priestly order of *Melchizedek* seems to have disappeared from translations of the Scriptures into western languages, to the readers of the ancient texts, His presence may not have been quite so absent as is the case for many of us today.

One final important connection to make in keeping with the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace was that *Melchizedek* had also been identified as the King of Salem. When literally translated, His title was rendered "King of Peace." Again we note use of the term *melek* for king.

So then following along with the pattern of identifying the work of angels with the identity of *Melchizedek*, in Luke 2, we read at the angelic announcement of Jesus' birth that the holy entity proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace among people with whom He is pleased."[74]

Moreover, throughout the Bible, angels provided protection for the faithful and therefore were the mediators of peace.

Margaret Barker's dedicated work should be referenced regarding the dark side of King Josiah's reign. Her findings demonstrate that there was a cover-up regarding evil done by the king. Because of their subjective mystical spirituality, *Ish-raah-el-ites*, who had been constituents of the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*, were massacred and *Zadokite* worshipers fled for their lives.

Josiah's religio-political motivations were rooted in the dispositions of the kings preceding him. They abhorred the fact that the prophets asserted themselves as having higher divine authority. Therefore, the kings could not live with the seers, oracles, and

[74] Luke 2:14 NASB

prophets telling them how they should rule. When King Saul was told not to enrich himself from the spoils of his enemies, he disobeyed the Word of *Yehovah* that had come through Samuel. The kings hated divine-human accountability because this interfered with their egotism, greed, and lustful desire to openly embrace worldly obsessions.

Deuteronomists, like Hezekiah and Josiah, did not enter into mysterious engagement with the Word, nor would they permit others to find their places in the *aiona* of God. Instead, by destruction of the high places and altars consecrated to *Yehovah*, they made the *aiona* desolate.

These individuals stood as abominations before the Lord's temple until the final remainder of them were taken away into captivity in Babylon. Nevertheless, at the start of the Christian Era, their wicked children also pridefully chose stubborn blindness when the signs and wonders of the Word once again had been made plain to see. Because they had heard and seen the prophetic works of Jesus and His disciples, and yet rejected all of these, they inherited the culpability of their forefathers.

The dead legalism of the *takkanot* did not provide a pathway that could lead back to the life of Eden. These corrupt ones did not bear the fruit of their Father Abraham—as was noted by their rejection of their Gentile neighbors. Otherwise, their deeds and their response to Jesus would have proven that they had turned away from the wicked ways of their forefathers.

Second Temple Judaism's beloved traditions of the elders in the *takkanot* conditioned a separatist lifestyle that condoned rejection of the nations and caused them to become the polar opposite of *Yehovah's* intentions for humankind. They did not abide in the Vine and the Father did not abide in them. Therefore, they would not be the recipients of his *yeshuah*. These prideful legalists remained dead—only shortly thereafter in human years to die a second death.

The Foundation of the *Aionios* Covenant

Three months after fleeing from Egypt, Israel came to the Sinai wilderness and camped in front of the mountain.

> Moses went up to God, and *Yehovah* called to him from the mountain, saying, You shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of *Ish-raah-el*, "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. I bore you on the wings of eagles, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the Earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."[75]

Priests stood in the presence of God. The sons of *Ish-raah-el*, who sought after the voice of *Yehovah* and obeyed, would enter this covenant and find standing places in the *aiona* before the throne of God. Lest there be any doubt, the term "holy" as it is used in the Scriptures, referenced being set apart in the heavenly realm. Therefore, the phrase "holy nation" conveyed the reality that these ones were entitled to entry into the *aiona*. Moreover, as was the case with Noah, we note *Yehovah's* vocal connection to the *Ish-raah-el-ites* in the covenant. However, His voice meant nothing if they refused to listen and disregarded walking in His protection.

Moses explained this to the people and they responded together as one voice, "All that *Yehovah* has spoken we will do!"

After Moses reported back to *Yehovah*, we discover more evidence connecting the *Ish-raah-el-ite* covenant with Noah.

> Observe that I will come to you in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also have faith in the *aiona*.[76]

And henceforth, the Israelites were to have commenced on the three-day journey. *Yehovah* instructed:

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[75] Exodus 19:3–6 modified NASB

[76] Exodus 19:9 modified NASB

> Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day *Yehovah* will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. And you shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, "Be very careful that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death." No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live. When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain. So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people, and they washed their garments. And he told the people, prepare yourselves for the third day; do not go near a woman.[77]

Herein, instruction for consecration was given providing safe entry into the presence of God.

> And it came about on the third day, in the morning, there was thunder and flashes of lightning and a thick cloud upon the mountain. There was also a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who *were* in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the bottom of the mountain. Mount Sinai *was* covered in smoke because *Yehovah* descended upon it in fire; and its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently. When the sound of the trumpet increased louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder. And *Yehovah* came down to the top of the mountain on Mount Sinai, and *Yehovah* called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. Then *Yehovah* instructed Moses, "Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to *Yehovah* to look, and many of them perish. And also let the priests who come near to *Yehovah* consecrate themselves, lest *Yehovah* break

[77] Exodus 19:10–15 modified NASB

> out against them." Moses replied to *Yehovah*, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, You warned us to set boundaries around the mountain and consecrate it." Then *Yehovah* said to him, "Go down and come up *again*, you and Aaron with you; but do not let the priests and the people break through *the barrier* to come up to *Yehovah*, lest He break forth upon them."[78]

Moses went down to the people and instructed them regarding the words of God which became the Ten Commandments:

> I am *Yehovah* your God, Who brought you out of the land of the house of slavery in Egypt. You will not have any other gods before Me. You will not make for yourselves an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the Earth beneath or in the water under the Earth. You will not worship them or serve them. I am *Yehovah* your God. I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, for those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of *Yehovah*, your God, in vain. *Yehovah* will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of *Yehovah* your God. You shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days *Yehovah* made the heavens and the Earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore, *Yehovah* blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which *Yehovah* your God gives you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against

[78] Exodus 19:16–24 modified NASB

> your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor. And all the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance.[79]
>
> The Israelites were terrified and cried out to Moses,
>
> Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die. And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."[80]

Once again, the concept of sin as missing the target or goal of entry into God's kingdom was emphasized. God desired to impart a priesthood to Jacob so that all would become *Ish-raah-el-ites*—allowing them entry into the *aiona*. They too could be enabled to enter into the cloud and experience the radiance of *Yehovah*. However, they did not pass the test of the three-day journey. Slavery to fear caused them to reject God's offer and instead to desire Moses as an intermediary priest.

Ten guiding instructions were given to the sons and daughters of treacherous Jacob which provided a pathway comprised of choices and behavior that would produce the character necessary for individuals to have embraced in order to ascend the hill of *Yehovah*.

Moreover, instructions were offered for those who would obey in how to approach *Yehovah* through use of an altar. These could be built anywhere an *Ish-raah-el-ite* desired to seek His presence.

> So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God *was*. *Yehovah* spoke, "You

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[79] Exodus 20:2–18 modified NASB

[80] Exodus 20:19–20 modified NASB

> yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven. You will not make *other gods* besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you will not make for yourselves. You shall make an altar of Earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you. And if you make an altar of stone for Me, you shall not build it of cut stones, for if you wield your tool on it, you will profane it. And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it."[81]

From the passage above, it is immediately important to recognize that God intended to manifest His presence "in every place" where He caused His "name to be remembered." Herein, we understand the premise for establishment of the high places that were consecrated and were renowned to God Most High. These included locations such as "the Plain of the Vision" in the Aramaic Bible where Abram encountered and fellowshipped with *Memra*," "*Peniel*," where Jacob had seen and wrestled through the night with *Memra* or the Mighty One, sent by *Yehovah*, or "Beth-el" where Israel later repeatedly encountered and sought the Lord. Altars were constructed and offerings had been made in these locations for innumerable generations.

It is difficult to imagine, over thousands of years, the number of locations and how many altars had been constructed where *Yehovah* caused His name to be remembered. Of course, remembering His name was not a mere cerebral event. The phrase employing the Hebraic concept of *zachar* implied taking action. Gatherers in these places worshipped His name, seeking the help of God Most High. It is likely that these could have been as numerous as churches today that are scattered throughout the nations.

Herein, the Hebraic concept of remembrance is emphasized, referencing future ongoing divine-human encounter. It was not intended to be understood that God would merely think fondly of

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[81] Exodus 20:21–26 modified NASB

the *Ish-raah-el-ites* in His mind, but instead, remembering His faithful ones meant that He would look out for them. His presence could be re-enlivened and would return to pour out His compassion in faithfulness to preserve their welfare. Accordingly, David praised the name of *Yehovah*, and the Lord visited him and invited the man into the *aiona*. David saw the glory of the Lord and heard His voice. Most of the time he obeyed. When he did not listen, however, he brought serious consequences upon himself and others.

It is also very important to understand from Israel's encounter with the *davar* on the last-day of their three-day journey, that the Ten Commandments were inseparable from the *Aionios* Covenant. These benevolent instructions had been given in an encounter with *Yehovah* in the cloud.

From the time of Marcion onward, because of his influence, early Orthodox leaders, Reformation thinkers, and Evangelicalism would establish doctrines attempting to separate the Law from the restored covenant, emphasizing that this was a "new" covenant. However, this is going to sound redundant but the restoration was only new in the sense that the covenant had been restored. As mentioned earlier, the newness of the covenant was qualitative in that animal sacrifices were no longer necessary.

Rather than offering sacrifices, wherein smoke arose into the heavens, now the sound of individual's praise of the name of the Father ascended into the heights from the lips of the worshipers. And with this, the eyes of *Yehovah* searched the Earth to find those bearing His name which was evidenced by their good deeds or works. The practice of authentic religion, comprised of caring for the needs of those unable to care for themselves, was emphasized throughout all of the Scriptures. God saw and took notice of those individuals in the Earth who were the faithful bearers of His name.

Just as *Yehovah* remembered and protected those who entered into His covenant of grace, so also His angelic holy children looked to-and-fro throughout the Earth to help and provide deliverance for those in need.

Despite the agendas and misinformed opinions of men with little or no understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures, the *Aionios*

Covenant of the *chen*, *charis* or grace of Noah, Jacob, Moses, David, and Isaiah, etc., was no different by character or experience than the *Aionios* Covenant of grace in the New Testament. Hebrews' author emphasized that the covenant and the Priesthood according to the Order of *Melchizedek* had been recovered. The Gospels make it clear that Jesus reopened the *aionios* life that was connected to the instructions given to Israel from atop Mount Sinai by *Yehovah*.

Jesus had identified Himself both as the speaking voice of God and as the gateway. John 10:9 reads, "I am the door; if any one enters by Me, he will receive *yeshuah*, and will go in and out and find pasture." Note that in the parable, God's voice is compared to sustenance.

> And behold, one came to him asking, Teacher, "What good thing shall I do, that I may obtain the *aionios* life?" Jesus replied, "If you desire to enter into life, keep the commandments." But the man asked, "Which commandments?" Therefore, Jesus further explained, "You will not kill. You will not commit adultery. You will not steal. You will not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. And you should love your neighbor in the same way that you love yourself."[82]

The *aionios* life obtained through a covenant relationship with *Yehovah* was inseparable from the first and the only divinely ordained *Torah*.

Although early and ongoing Orthodoxy were conditioned by Marcion and firmly set in a disposition to think negatively of the Law, in its Hebraic context, *Torah* was understood as the kind instruction of the Father.

The young man replied to Jesus, "All of these things have I observed. So then, what do I still lack?" Jesus answered, "If you really want to reach the goal of experiencing the *aionios* life, then go and sell your many possessions, and give to the poor. Then you will obtain the treasure of heaven." Jesus further invited him,

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[82] Matthew 19:16-19

"Come and follow Me."[83] Mark and Luke also connected obedience to *Torah* as the essential component of inheriting the *aionios* life.

Readers should recall the brief summary provided earlier regarding the parables of the kingdom from Matthew 13. Those who would fully embrace the kingdom of God and who would experience the *aionios* life would be individuals who would value the kingdom so highly that they would throw out from their homes all of their earthly treasures.

Apprehending the corrected translation of that set of parables helps us to make better sense of Jesus' instruction to this man. It was time to forsake greed and spend his money caring for the poor. This was an exciting opportunity to practice true religion—as was described by Isaiah and Jesus' brother, James. Jesus had also taught that people could not be the servants of both God and earthly riches. Just as the eye could only be focused either on objects that were close or far away in any single moment, so also the heart of man was not made to simultaneously love money and God.

A choice stood before all of humankind. You can either have treasure on Earth or treasure in heaven. Which will anyone choose?

As a side note of comparison, the treasured theoretical salvation of Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and Evangelicalism was a free gift. By comparison, the treasure of the *aionios* life came with discipline and at a very dear *cost*.

Jesus invited the man to embrace the calling of Abraham to become a blessing to the nations. Accordingly, Job's neighbors had been clothed from the wool of his sheep. James, the brother of Jesus taught that pure and undefiled religion practiced before the eyes of God the Father was to help the needy. This was far more important than spilling the blood of rams and bulls upon altars. And it more quickly gained the attention of God. Like Isaiah, he suggested visiting and tangibly helping orphans and widows who suffered. Furthermore, James provided the instruction that people should keep themselves unstained by the lusts of the world.[84] In

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[83] Matthew 19:20-21

[84] James 1:27

continuity, Jesus taught others that gathering riches in this world could prevent them from entry into the kingdom.

All of these acts of compassion can be understood in Abraham's calling to bless or to good-Word the nations. Recall again that the term word in its ancient context of usage could be a connotation for engaging in any kind of action. One sentence might say that "the men were circumcised" and then afterward, the statement would be made that "they had been worded." Of course, that sounds strange to an English reader because we no longer use the term "word" in this manner.

Although it was absolutely essential to find time to wait in His presence in order to hear God's voice and to become empowered, the adherents of Hebraic spirituality also invested their lives blessing the needs of the people around them. Part of the purpose of the Sabbath was to provide time to enter behind the veil so that the faithful could seek and stand in the glory of God.

In Jesus' dialogue with the man seeking the *aionios* life, we recognize the subtlety of Second Temple idolatry. Jesus taught elsewhere that it was harder for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

Jesus and Paul taught that demonstrative proof of obedience to the Law was proven by the tangible love of one's neighbor. Pure love never defrauded anyone and demonstrated the fruit of God in one's life. The disciples understood that if it had been within anyone's power to help their neighbor, but they chose instead to look the other way—ignoring visible needs—they were missing the target or the goal of walking out life in the *aiona* here on Earth. Just as God remembered the needs of His children who were participants in the covenant, so also His children were to remember the needs of those around them in the world. The Hebraic remembrance of *zachar* implied taking tangible action.

Second Temple Judaism used the *takkanot* to excuse themselves from the calling of Abraham. The traditions of the elders had been put on a pedestal so that keeping these rules usurped even Moses' *Torah*. Accordingly, Jesus told this parable:

> There was a rich man who dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. But at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus whose body was covered with sores, who longed to eat what fell from the rich man's table. In addition, the dogs came and licked his sores. Now the poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. And in hell, as he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far off with Lazarus at his side. So he called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in anguish in this fire." But Abraham said, "Child, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things and Lazarus likewise bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in anguish. Besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us, so that those who want to cross over from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us." So the rich man said, "Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house (for I have five brothers) to warn them so that they don't come into this place of torment." But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets; they must respond to them." Then the rich man said, "No, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." He replied to him, "If they do not respond to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."[85]

Those who walked in the faith of Abraham would be authenticated as his spiritual descendants by reduplicating his deeds while they yet remained upon the Earth. This admonition helped the disciples to link practical obedience to *Torah* with the commission of Abraham and to learn how the Law was worked out in concrete love and care of the needy. As the faithful unadulteratedly and unselfishly loved their neighbors, so also, they proved their identities at the doorway of heaven. Moreover,

[85] Luke 16:19-31 NET

individual's choices on Earth were determinant factors of what came after death.

We who dress in purple and fine linen and who feast sumptuously every day had better take a look around to see who we have the means and power to help. Who is lying at our gate? Obvious visible needs should not go unaddressed. If we haven't started already, today is the day for us to begin lovingly investing possessions and resources into our eternal future.

It may be frightening to think, but according to Jesus, it does not appear that the slaves of possessions who willfully turn a blind eye to the needy have such a bright comfortable future waiting in the next world. Furthermore, Jesus never taught that the embrace of religious doctrines or churchianity's statements of faith exempted anyone from complacency in caring for the needs of those around them. If you think that you are exempt from helping the needy in this world because you have prayed the sinners prayer or because you have embraced doctrines about salvation, think again. You have been deceived. Jesus very clearly taught something different. Actions taken here on earth to help the needy have the potential to vastly re-shape the eternity any of us will experience in the hereafter.

The seed of divine *aionios* compassion planted in the hearts of those having pledged faithfulness to *Yehovah* would grow up to bear fruit in the earthly expression of compassion toward those in need. This enduring mandate from the mouth of God was an expression of His *chen*, *charis*, or the grace that held the potential to change the world.

Selah

> Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. And the glory of *Yehovah* rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of *Yehovah* was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. And Moses entered the midst of the cloud as

> he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.[86]

In this experience of the *davar*, God revealed to Moses all of the details for construction of the Tent of Meeting wherein the presence of *Yehovah* would dwell with Israel.

Moses explained that the covenant of peace was extended to Israel because they had obeyed the voice of *Yehovah*.

> Behold, I give him My covenant of peace; and it shall be for him and his descendants after him, a covenant of a perpetual priesthood."[87]

The Assyrian captivity began during the reign of Hezekiah, when Isaiah was alive. Israel had forsaken a living relationship with God through *Torah* and encounter through the Word. They no longer lived in peace with *Yehovah* nor did they live in peace with the nations surrounding them.

> The Earth is polluted by its inhabitants because they have transgressed the Laws, violated the statutes, having broken the *Aionios* Covenant.[88]

Translating Isaiah 55:3, we read of the future expectation for reestablishment of the Covenant: "Follow after the pathway of hearing. Hear [so that your] good soul will live! *and* I will grant the *Aionios* Covenant of righteous David's faith." David's life was characterized by seeking and listening to the voice of *Yehovah*. The pathway to be made alive spiritually, that David followed in faith, was by obeying God's voice.

The priesthood pronounced from Sinai was intended for all of the Israelites. Herein we perceive a distinction between nationalistic Israelites and those among them living in the

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[86] Exodus 24:15–18 modified NASB

[87] Numbers 25:12-13

[88] Isaiah 24:5

namesake of *Ish-raah-el* as individuals who would see God—otherwise referenced as the second power of heaven.

The people cried out to God in fear, asking that Moses would speak to them on behalf of *Yehovah*. So then, what occurred with establishment of the priesthood, was that Moses' brother Aaron and his family would be designated as intermediaries to enter into the presence of God.

In this we observe that *Yehovah* seemingly did not get exactly what He desired with respect to raising up a nation of priests. This hope would be delayed. Whereas He wanted each individual to understand the three-day journey and for this to have perhaps become an ongoing component of their lives, so that each would individually hear His voice and become empowered to reach their neighbors and the nations around them, the priesthood was going to grow much more slowly.

Nevertheless, God's blessing of the Aaronic priesthood did not invalidate the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. Both priesthoods served God Most High. Even as *Yehovah* had offered *Torah* which served as a written guide providing stepping stones leading the descendants of Jacob toward God's presence, He also had instructed them regarding the construction and use of local altars. The Jacobs of Earth were intended to become the *Ish-raah-el-ite*s of heaven.

Because of David's testimony and practices, we understand that God continued working through the order of *Melchizedek* throughout the Old Testament Era. Note David's remarks in Psalm 110.

According to the research of Dr. Margaret Barker in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the faithful who had fled in Josiah's era and their spiritual descendants were waiting for the restoration of the Priesthood of the "King of Righteousness."

> And the Lord said to Noah: "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between my *Memra* and all flesh that is upon the Earth."[89]

The Bow or radiance in the cloud, as a divine manifestation of God's presence, would be understood as an enduring point of connection between the second power of heaven and humankind. Accordingly, in the Targums, *Memra* was understood as a divine intermediary between God Most High and humankind.

> The Lord instructed Aaron, "Go to the wilderness to meet Moses." And he went and met him on the mountain on which the glory of the *Shekinah* of the Lord was revealed. God gave signs to demonstrate before Pharaoh as a witness of His miraculous help to the *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Afterward, the people believed in the name of the *Memra* of the Lord and heard that the Lord, in his good mercies, the *Memra* of the Lord remembered the children of Israel. And their tribulations were manifest before *Memra*. And they bowed down and gave thanks and praised.[90]

In Hebrew and Aramaic, "*Shekinah*" meant dwelling. When combined with mention of the glory or the radiance of the Lord, this was a divine presence of light. By being called up to the high-place where His glory dwelt, Moses and Aaron entered the presence or the light of God.

Recall the constant biblical association of the *davar* with bread along with the teaching of Moses and Jesus that humankind was not intended to live by earthly bread alone, but by every Word proceeding from God. *Memra* was the Word of God. As the bread of heaven, He remembered and provided rescue to God's people as they were in Peril under the hand of Pharaoh. Notes in the Targums

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[89] Targum Neofiti 1, Genesis 9:17.

[90] Exodus 4:27–31, in *Targum Neofiti 1: Exodus*, trans. Martin McNamara (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994).

specifically tie God's remembrance to the imposition of His Word or divine actions in bringing plagues upon Egypt. This was the more precise reason that the people bowed down, gave thanks, and praised the Lord.

Continual burnt offerings for *Yehovah* were to be made for generations at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting.

> *Yehovah* promised, "I will meet with you, to speak to you there. And I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. And I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. And I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am *Yehovah* their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am *Yehovah* their God."[91]

It was understood from Deuteronomy 31:15, and from Numbers 12:5 that *Yehovah* would manifest Himself in a cloud at the doorway to the Tent of Meeting.

> Moses used to take the tent and pitched it at a distance from the camp; and he called it, The Tent of Meeting. And it came about, that everyone who sought *Yehovah* went out to the Tent of Meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people rose up, and each man stood, at the door of his tent They watched Moses until he entered the Tent of Meeting. Whenever Moses entered into the tent, the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tent and spoke with Moses. And all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent, and all the people rose up and worshipped; each one standing at his own tent door. *Yehovah* spoke to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. And Moses came back into the camp: but his

[91] Exodus 29:42-46 modified NASB

young servant Joshua, the son of Nun, did not leave the tent.[92]

The context of Moses' discussion with *Yehovah* was explained later in the chapter. He understood that what set Israel apart from the other nations was that they had *Yehovah's chen*, *charis*, or grace—which was evidenced by His voice and divine manifest presence with them. This was further indicated by the cloud speaking at the doorway of the Tent of Meeting. After Israel built and worshipped the golden calf, Moses was terrified over the possibility of losing the *chen* of God. And so he desperately appealed that both he and the nation would not lose the *chen* of God.[93]

To walk under *chen*, *charis*, or grace was to abide under the protective rulership of *Memra*—the second power of heaven Who spoke from the cloud. *Chen* or *charis* was the gift of the saving Lordship of the Redeemer of *Ish-raah-el*, Who protected the faithful and Who rescued them from their enemies. Furthermore, when the second power of heaven imparted miraculous provision to the faithful children of *Yehovah*, the bread of heaven changed the lives of the faith community. Moses could not bear the thought of what would befall the nation if they were separated from God's protective and provisionary help in their midst.

Under Christian Orthodoxy's rulership and prescription for religion, because of the guiding interpretive lens of the Classical Greek minded bishops, the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God became confused. This was no longer interpreted in the Hebraic context as having to do with miraculous encounter and living by the voice or Word of *Yehovah*. Instead, biblical references to *chen*, *charis* or grace became interpreted as divine favor. As a result, none of these Old Testament understandings from the time of Noah and throughout the lives of the *Ish-raah-el-ites* ever made their way into interpretation of the concept of grace in the New Testament.

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[92] Exodus chapter 33:7-11 modified NASB

[93] Note Exodus 33:12-17.

Today we might think the connection between *charis* and the *charismata* would have been obvious simply based upon term etymology, and moreover due to the study of its contextual usage in the Old and New Testaments. However, literacy was unbelievably low. Almost nobody was fluent in three ancient languages and it was not as if everyone could purchase scrolls of the biblical texts. Even for the few who might have been able to engage in this kind of study, without the educational, literary, and technological advantages we have today, discovery would have taken a lifetime of investigation.

And even if we do not consider any of this, we have to remember the mortal danger of making discoveries that might have upset the leaders of ancient Orthodoxy. Posterity has taken note of how Origen was treated. When Arius' voice became too influential, he was murdered. His Orthodox opponents gloated about supposed divine providence. However, it is fairly obvious from the report of his death that he had been poisoned. And this threat continued under the reign of the most famous Reformers.

Loss of the Biblical Concept of Grace

From *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* we are reminded that as the Scriptures were interpreted and translated by Orthodoxy, from the time of the fourth century onward, the altered concept of favor in place of grace was superimposed over the Greek texts of the New Testament. *charis* more aptly should have been understood either as "gifts of divine empowerment," or as "the manifest presence of God," that accompanied direction by His voice. The manifestation of grace was the result of God's visitation through the *davar*, also known of either as the Word or as *Memra*. Ones who had been acknowledged as having entered into the covenant were also observed to have been ones who had received the Spirit of God.

By the time of the rise of Evangelicalism, "*charis*" became firmly understood as "the unmerited favor of God." This unbending interpretive stance hindered and prevented readers thereafter from ascertaining the intended point of the authors of the Bible—who

used the term to reference the *Aionios* Covenant made with Noah. When the nation of Israel constructed and worshiped the golden calf, Moses cried out to *Yehovah*, pleading repeatedly that the Lord not remove His *chen*, *charis*, or grace. King David begged for the same after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and had set up Uriah the Hittite, her honorable husband, to be killed in battle.

The change in understanding that biblical references to *chen*, *charis*, or grace predominantly referenced the concept of favor radically altered the focus of Christianity away from seeking prophetic empowerment that came through an active divine-human relationship with the second power of heaven. With the loss for the expectation for His impartation of prophetic spiritual gifts, the way was further paved for Christianity to become—primarily for many—an intellectualized gnostic religion.

When history did record undeniable miracles among Orthodoxy, these were understood not as the norm, but instead as exceptions to the rule. Just as the Deuteronomists and the Second Temple rulers subdued those who might have laid claim to radical encounter with *Yehovah* or His Son, even going to the extent of banning worship of His name with the weak cover-story that this was too holy to be pronounced, so also this dynamic was repeated in Christian Orthodoxy and continued to be affirmed in the Reformation.

In Proverbs 30, Agur, son of Jakeh challenged the establishment, “Who has ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who established all the ends of the Earth? What is His name, and what is His son’s name? Do you know?”

Although we do not know the entirety of the context in which this was written, it appears to be a provocation aimed against those who denied the second power and who had forbidden the worship of His name. Agur’s climactic question put the religious leaders on the spot. To not have answered his last three questions forthrightly would have placed them in direct opposition to Moses who taught that calling upon the name of *Yehovah* was the means of re-enlivening or calling forth His presence. If they had replied honestly saying, “His name is *Yehovah*,” they would have

transgressed their own rule. And if they refused to answer, pretending to be innocently unaware, their silence disacknowledged the empowering spirituality of ancient Israel.

History records that the denial of the supremacy of subjective intimate divine-human encounter has taken place on both sides of the Judeo-Christian movement.

Nevertheless, subjectivity has often created problems for religious institutions—even though many have been founded upon its embrace. The real question boils down to who is in control. Humankind has consistently proven that people thrive on making rules and exerting earthly authority in vain attempts to contain God Most High. In so doing, many religious leaders may have proven they were not really His children.

Today, another common explanation of grace is that it is an expression of God's mercy. For centuries, theologians have either not made detailed study of the *Koine* Greek terms of the New Testament that include the *chari* word stem from *charis*, or they have just refused to admit what is obvious in the Greek reading of the text. In the vast majority of instances in the New Testament, when terminologies contain the *chari* word stem, the surrounding contexts pertain to the miraculous activity of God.

It is noteworthy to mention that the *Koine* Greek language has its own term for mercy, which is "*eleos*." *charis* and *eleos* are two very different concepts in ancient *Koine* Greek. Nevertheless, fourth century Orthodox thinkers merged these together into the more singular idea of an expression of a compassionate attitude or disposition. Reformation and Evangelical teachers followed in this same intellectual error.

Because the terms associated with the *chari* stem that are spread throughout the New Testament became redefined by early Orthodoxy, this also made it easy for the primacy of the first century message of the availability to receive spiritual gifts to fall by the wayside in ongoing biblical interpretation.

If anyone reads *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, not only will readers find a contextually responsible presentation of the concept of *charis* or grace in the New Testament but they will also become enlightened regarding the

malicious agendas of Bishop Epiphanius in his composition of the *Panarion*. It is plainly evident that he and his Orthodox peers were on a mission to doctrinalize the Christian world and they aggressively sought to destroy Christian movements like the Montanists who practiced the prophetic gifts of grace.

Changing *charis* from its contextually supported definition from the Bible as being "the divine gift of God's manifest presence" associated with hearing His voice or receiving His *yeshuah*, to instead be represented by the concept of "favor" was actually quite an easy mistake to make because contexts of gift giving often carry with them the idea of favor.

An example may help us to understand how one concept was replaced by another—especially in light of the narratives of the Bible being converted from one language into others.

Consider that three people were standing in a parking lot and Joe observed Bob giving an expensive car to Fred. Joe not only witnessed impartation of the tremendous gift, which specifically was an automobile, but moreover read into the transaction the attitude of favor that Bob must certainly have had for Fred. Because gift giving is so strongly associated with the demeanor of the benefactor, it is plausible that an interpreter using context in order to attempt to decipher an ancient term's meaning could miss the intended point of the passage.

Concepts sometimes overlap, especially when they are transmitted from one language into another—thereby challenging our best intentions in translation and interpretation. If the interpreter does not remain strictly focused on the actual object that was being given, attention regarding what was imparted might mistakenly shift away from the car and become fixated on the likely "charitable nature" prevailing in the narrative. Consequently, a misinterpretation and mistranslation could take place.

Here is an example of the subtle translational error from Romans 4:4: "Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor [*charis*], but as what is due. The term favor speaks of the demeanor of the employer and "favor" seems to work in the translation. However, "gift" would have been a more accurate rendering of "*charis*."

The main object of the discussion in the context of the example is money. However, the example being used does not tell us anything about the personal relationship that the employer had with the employee. Therefore, reading such an attitude into the context is not justifiable. People work in order to earn money, and earnings are not gifts.

In Paul's example, the object being received was payment. The payment is what was agreed upon before the worker accepted the job. However, there are probably almost no workers who accept jobs in order to earn favor. Paul's actual point was that on the basis of a work for pay agreement, the payment received was not a gift. For all we know, the employer hated the worker and resented handing over the money that had been earned.

The context of Paul's discussion never conveyed any sense of the emotional disposition of the employer toward the worker. What we do know, however, is that workers expect to be paid for their labor. The payment being rendered is not favor.

In the above example, if the statement merely stood on its own and had not been part of a larger discussion surrounding the concept of *charis*, there might not be any serious results from the errant translation that affect spirituality. Nevertheless, authors of Scripture, in arguing to make certain points in their narratives, present concepts, the importance of which, can build over time throughout their larger contexts of discussion. Smaller points build together to make larger points. This was the case of the parables regarding the incomprehensible value of the kingdom in Matthew 13. The combination of three different stories resulted in the conclusion that individuals would willingly throw away their earthly treasure to embrace the invaluable kingdom of God. However, this entire point was thrown in the trash by translators desiring to maintain tradition, rather than demonstrating the willingness to ingenuously offer Jesus teachings.

When bits and pieces of a well-established foundational points of the Scriptures are mistranslated, then the trajectory of the author's argument, that had long been rooted in other ancient literature becomes interrupted, appears to meander, and is lost. This is what occurred with the concept of *chen*, *charis*, or grace. A

giant destructive *non sequitur* was created by rendering translation of the *chari* terms as being synonymous with *eleos* as favor or mercy.

Orthodox bishops had several strikes against them. First, they approached interpretation with ingrained Classical Greek term definitions in mind as they examined the *Koine* Greek texts. Second, they did not care to inductively study the concept of *chen*, *charis*, or grace in the Old Testament. Third, they thrived on advancing a destructive supremacist agenda to gain influence over Emperor Constantine. Fourth, they were steeped in arrogance—speaking and acting out of hatred in order to contain and destroy other Christian movements. A reading of the *Panarion* is quite revealing on the matter of Orthodoxy's malevolent character—which was something different than was modeled by Jesus. Sixth, they lived with an agenda to strip subjective divine-human experience from Christendom and to replace this with cold objective religion—just as had been one of the crimes of Second Temple Judaism. And number seven may not be the last, but we will end the list here. Compared to the Montanists, early Orthodoxy was the representation of liberalism. The bishops vengefully desired to destroy Montanism, not only because of their celebration of the charismatic gifts, but also because of their solemn moral values and behavior. The Montanists lived daily by the voice of God as servants of His *chen*, *charis*, or grace and strictly condemned immorality. Such was not the case for the Orthodoxy—who asserted that the time for God speaking to humankind had ended with the Apostles. The very ongoing existence of these Christians stood as an intolerable judgment against the liberalism of Orthodoxy.

Torah was received in an encounter with the Word in the manifestation of God's *chen*, *charis*, or grace and was engraved in tablets of stone. However, these were destroyed at the foot of the mountain when Moses came down from God's presence and discovered the children of Israel worshiping an idol.

> Moses cut out two stone tablets like the former ones. He rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, in obedience to the voice of *Yehovah*. And *Yehovah* descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the

name of *Yehovah*. Then *Yehovah* passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "*Yehovah*, *Yehovah* God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in Lovingkindness and Truth, Who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, Who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."[94]

And Moses hurried to bow down low toward the Earth and worship and asked, "If now I have found *chen*, *charis* or grace in Your sight, *Yehovah*, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so *obstinate*; and please pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession." Afterward, God replied, "Listen and hear, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles, which have not been produced in all the Earth, nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of *Yehovah*, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you. Be certain to observe all I command this day: Look and see, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Plan ahead to guard yourselves so that you do not make any covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or else it become a trap for you. Instead, you should tear down their altars and smash their pillars and cut down their Asherim. As I have instructed my people, you shall not worship any other god, because *Yehovah*, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.[95]

If you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, just as they play the harlot and make sacrifices to their gods, and someone invites you to eat of his sacrifice, and you take his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot

[94] Exodus 34:4–7 modified NASB

[95] Exodus 34:8–14 modified NASB

> with their gods, they will also cause your sons to play the harlot with their gods. Moreover, you will not make any molten gods for yourselves. You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread.[96]

Recall that it was by partaking in a forbidden meal in Eden that Adam and Eve brought the curse of death upon themselves. It was by feasting on the bread of heaven which was the Word of God that they could be made whole again. Accordingly, an adversarial feast was prepared for them by their enemies, yet God had a different feast which they were called to attend to.

After providing more instructions for the nation, Moses had been with *Yehovah* forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. The Word of God alone had been his sustenance.

> After completing the words of the covenant on the tablets, the Ten Commandments, he came down from Mount Sinai, but Moses did not know that the skin of his face was shining from his encounter in the *davar*. When Aaron and all the sons of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Nevertheless, he called the people, including Aaron and the rulers in the congregation to return. He commanded them to do everything that *Yehovah* had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. Afterward Moses put a veil over his face. However, when Moses went in before *Yehovah* to speak with Him, he would take off the veil until he came out. Then he would replace the veil before speaking with the sons of Israel.[97]

Remembrance—Exercise & Calling Forth Grace

We have to take care not to superimpose our contemporary definitions back over biblical terms. The Hebraic concept of "remembering" from the term "*zachar*" is different than we understand commonly as a mere activity of the mind in recollecting. It has more to do with God making Himself and His intervening

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[96] Exodus 34:15–18

[97] Exodus 34:28–35

presence alive in future moments so that He takes action. When the Scriptures teach that God will remember, this means that He was roused to activity in order to fulfill His previous commitments.

Regarding the establishment of a covenant relationship with Israel, Exodus introduced readers to the fact that, "God heard Israel's groaning as they were in bondage to Egypt and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And God took notice when He looked upon the sons of Israel."[98]

Yehovah gave Himself in a covenant relationship to the nation of Israel—as He had earlier established with Noah and with the family of the Patriarch. Just as *Yehovah* had remembered Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and others perhaps not specifically mentioned in the biblical texts and had come to rescue them from peril so they might live in peace, God also resolved to protect the nation as they emerged from Egypt.

In accordance with the Hebraic use of the term *zachar*, mention of *Yehovah's* commitment to remembrance was synonymous with a promise to take future action when it was needed. These acts of remembrance embodied in His intervening actions were expressions of God Most High's compassionate Love and Truth that were being worked out in the manifestation of the *Aionios* Covenant in Exodus.

In order to alert *Yehovah* of potential peril when they might be threatened by enemies, and in order to be alerted to join them in the celebration of their festivals, *Yehovah* directed Israel to construct two silver horns.

> When you go to war in your land against the adversary that oppresses you, then you will sound an alarm with the trumpets; and you will be remembered before *Yehovah* your God, and you will be saved from your enemies. Also, in the day of your gladness, and in your set feasts, and in the beginnings of your months, you will blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace

[98] Exodus 2:24-25

> offerings; and they will be to you for a memorial before your God: I am *Yehovah* your God.[99]

The sounding of the horn would be used to invoke *Yehovah's* presence when they found themselves in peril and also when they presented offerings. The Lord would manifest His presence and would take action in situations where His intervening attention was needed.

In exercise of the covenant, we note a progression as *Yehovah* moved forward grafting increasing numbers of the faith community into His presence.

> And *Yehovah* came down in the cloud, and spoke to Moses, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and put it upon the seventy elders: and it came to pass that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, but they did so no more.[100]

Herein, a growing number of individuals experienced *Yehovah's* coming in the cloud. These ones were further identified as prophets in verse 29. Such ones were spoken of as having received the Spirit upon themselves. From the continuing context of the Bible, we understand that prophets did not need the human intermediaries of the Aaronic Priesthood in order to receive the Word from *Yehovah*.

Understanding that biblical authors throughout time used different phraseologies to describe the same occurrences, it is possible to comprehend that God's glory, His Name, or similarly, His radiance was put upon them. All of these kinds of terminologies were used to denote God's faithful children who had been marked and adopted into the divine family of heaven. Their names were written in the book of life and they were given places of standing before His throne. Moses further stated *Yehovah's* desire wishing also for himself that all people would become prophets.

It should be mentioned that in the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*, no human intermediary was necessary. God had

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[99] Numbers 10:9-10

[100] Numbers 11:25

desired for all of the ancient *Ish-raah-el-ite* faith community to have become a nation of priests. In other terms, it does not seem that it was His first choice to appoint the Aaronic Priesthood to begin with. Ultimately, in a more perfect world, the goal would be that the Aaronic element would someday no longer be needed.

As a descendant of Abraham, Moses grew up in the faith tradition of the Priesthood of *Melchizedek*. He fled from Egypt and found refuge in the tent of Jethro, the priest of *Midian*—who also perhaps became labeled as such by his own encounter with the *davar* of *Yehovah*. Jethro did not turn the refugee Moses away or view him as just another bothersome mouth to be fed. Instead, he provided food, clothing, housing, and took care of his needs. Because of these actions, students of Scripture may note that Jethro became a blessing to others as had been *Yehovah's* calling for Abraham. We perceive the compassion of God Most High guiding the life of Jethro in his care for Moses.

Moses desired for all men to become prophets and to stand individually in priestly relationships with *Yehovah*. Although the entire nation had been presented before *Yehovah's davar*, as the Word became manifest atop Mount Sinai, it was evident by their response that the majority were not ready to become prophets—walking in a daily communal relationship with God. Growth would be incremental.

Whereas God had poured out His Spirit on some flesh, being the 70 elders of ancient Israel, in Joel's prophetic foresight, God would one day pour out His Spirit on all flesh. And so the student of Scripture realizes a progression taking place throughout the narrative. Ultimately all of humankind would be drawn into *Yehovah's* loving protection, under the *chen*, *charis*, or the grace of God in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

In the latter days, when Jesus renewed the ancient life of the *Aionios* Covenant, again reestablishing peace with humankind, once again the Spirit was to have been poured out at Pentecost as this had formerly taken place with the 70 elders serving under Moses. Largely due to John Nelson Darby's influences, dispensationalism harmfully altered interpretation of the Scriptures from the 1800s onward causing Protestant Evangelicals to lose sight

of this connection. From Joel's perspective, the outpouring of the Spirit would be a restorative event—falling upon a remnant of spiritual descendants who continued in faithfulness to *Yehovah* like their forefathers.

Moreover, we can be certain that the biblical texts do not mention every single instance of the outpouring of the spirit that occurred in the era of the writing of the Old Testament, just as these do not contain the record of every single individual in the ancient world who encountered the *davar*. Beyond this, it is valuable to remember that the event of the anointing of the 70 came from Jethro, the priest of *Midian*. As a descendant of *Keturah* the second wife of Abraham, there is a strong connection linking his priestly service to the Order of *Melchizedek*.

Considering early Orthodoxy's lack of knowledge regarding Hebraic faith and spirituality, the division of the Old and New Testaments, the bishops' assumption that Jesus' covenant was quantitatively new, and their separation of the Law from grace, and due to the convoluting development of innumerable generations of dispensational thought, it is nearly impossible to pull the texts of Scripture all back together.

In conjunction with passages speaking of the Lord moving in the lives of His people, so also when these ones were instructed to remember, they too were expected to take action.

As an example, we will look at a passage commonly used in the Christian religious ceremony of communion which has to do with actively calling forth the *charis* or grace of God.

In the discussion of grace in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, inductive contextual analysis of the Greek term "*eucharisteo*" demonstrated that in about half of its New Testament contexts of usage, divine miraculous activity took place. This is almost always translated as "thanksgiving," or as "giving thanks."

Looking at the transliteration "*eucharisteo*" more closely, what term do we see in the middle?

Orthodoxy, which historically has been more concerned with theological deduction, has not invested much time engaging in inductive Bible study to determine contextual usages for terms.

There seems to be no need to dig further. The traditional understandings of biblical terms and concepts seem good enough. And why go rocking the boat?

The reason some students of Scripture dig deeper is because of the innumerable *non sequiturs* that confuse a straightforward reading of the Bible. Most people who sit down to read the Bible like a book find all kinds of confusing and sometimes seemingly contradictory statements.

This was the impetus for the research and writing of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*. Churchianity essentially teaches that "the Gospel" is the story of the life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Jesus. If you believe this and that Jesus died for your sins, those who accept the validity of the information get to go to heaven when they die. This formula sounds like a real bargain. How could anyone refuse?

So then, let us consider, did Jesus ever offer this deal to anyone?

When we carefully read the larger context of the entirety of the Bible examining the eschatological expectations of ancient Israel, we run into logical problems when we place this today's commonly accepted definition of the Gospel back over Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

In a nutshell, Jesus did not say anything overtly regarding His intent to go to the cross and to die a sacrificial death until perhaps the last month of His earthly life. So then what could Matthew, Mark, and Luke have meant when they stated that Jesus preached "the Gospel" at the very start of His ministry. Furthermore, John the Baptist came out preaching the Gospel before he even baptized Jesus and died several years before Jesus went to the cross. What Gospel was John preaching? It certainly was not the story of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The problem of defining the term "Gospel" becomes scandalous when we realize that the author of Hebrews claimed that the Gospel was preached to ancient Israel when Moses led the nation. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul told the Galatians that the Gospel first came to Abraham. These events took place thousands of years before the life of Jesus. Taking all of this into consideration, it is evident, at least to some,

that the term “Gospel” was used to identify a completely different concept than we commonly use the term for today.

If our eternal destiny supposedly depends upon a proper understanding of the term “Gospel,” then don’t we need to make a priority of getting this straight?

General ignorance regarding the connection between many events and concepts in the Scriptures cause multitudes to just blindly accept whatever they are spoon fed from the pulpit. For the most part, everyone simply follows in the tradition in which they were raised. Or, they remain in the religious observance by which they were led to faith. They never find a reason to question or realize any need to exercise the Genius of Einstein. They either do not realize or care that they have become contained in an intellectual bubble. Instead, they are conditioned to trust that the institution in which they have grown up is the most authentic or correct.

Intellectual inertia provides a false sense of security. So then, those who become caught up in lethargic disinterest, casually and unquestioningly dismiss the relevance of anyone who may see things differently. Sometimes individuals become defensive when inconsistencies are pointed out between their theology, spiritual practices, and the Bible. In fact, those with differing perspectives may be thought of as threats. And of course, they are.

Blaise Pascal wagered that each human being could only possibly know a tiny fraction of what was actually knowable. Therefore, each person moving through life, having proudly assumed that they had achieved the most perfect understandings, were actually quite short-sighted.

The Intellectual frailty of Aristotle’s narrow deductive rationalism is vastly amplified with the realization that several gross oversights and errors were made by early and continuing Orthodoxy, the Reformers, and by prominent theologians in Evangelicalism.

As we attempt to find our way back to the beginning and get down to the brass tacks of Jesus’ teaching, we hope to include as much relevant information as possible from ancient sources that were in use during the first century A.D.

It comes as a surprise to many, but the Greek New Testament did not begin to exist as a collection of books and letters until about the fourth century A D. Some of the works it contained were not written until the end of the first century; decades after the earthly life of Jesus. His disciples were all Jews. Jews spoke and wrote in Aramaic and Hebrew. It was only as the faith and spirituality of Abraham moved into the Gentile community and gained dominance that there was any need for a Greek New Testament.

The earliest New Testament fragments we have today date from the second century A.D.

Tischendorf's Greek New Testament dates to the fourth century A.D. and is the first copy containing all of Orthodoxy's selections.

By contrast to the bishops' efforts to narrow down the texts which constituted their Bible, our goal moves forward in acknowledgment that other biblical texts exist that need to be consulted. We desire to expand what we know. Discovery is predicated upon investigation. We are gathering more evidence so that we can reasonably recover and prove matters that have been lost and forgotten.

Just as Pascal realized, improvement in accurate discovery is predicated upon gathering increasingly wider bodies of knowledge.

Early Orthodoxy took the opposite approach. But then we have to understand that their agenda was different. They supposed from the start that they had already figured everything out that needed to be known in a gnostic paradigm. The very human opinionated project of deciding which ancient texts were divinely inspired was just a process of weeding out and discarding religious writings that might conflict with Orthodoxy's doctrines.

And because time was of the essence in proving the supposedly correct religious facts to Emperor Constantine, the bishops had to remain vigilant in selectively making up their minds which texts were going to make the cut. And moreover, the others had to be gathered up and destroyed. The winners who gained Constantine's allegiance could not afford for anyone to leave any evidence behind that could work against their ideas.

It is fortunate for posterity that it was not feasibly possible for the bishops to destroy everything that belonged to the Jews.

The ongoing problem of Aristotle's influence upon theology is that it works like an algorithmic machine. The first religious contingency, who think they are the most correct, selectively enter certain data into the computation of doctrine. Then they turn on the processes of logical deduction, hierarchical categorization and impose the law of noncontradiction on the ideas that are left. Afterward, bam-boom-bangarang, and they now have the supposed indisputable truth. But then later a second group of thinkers come along and enter in a whole new subset of biblical data and bippity-bopp-bang; suddenly there is an entirely new more absolute religious truth.

Historically speaking, theology has provided a short-cut for spirituality. It is easier and seems safer to just follow in the footsteps of grandpa who followed in the footsteps of 50 other grandpas. If all that anyone wants is a prescription for religious practices maybe this method is satisfactory. However, some of us have desired for more. We have read Jesus' teachings and have realized that there are all kinds of *non sequiturs* which we cannot easily resolve by reading the English texts. Nevertheless, where the teachings seem difficult, and the ability to understand gets clouded, there are solutions. First and foremost, we have to begin with the mindset that the texts of the Bible made perfect sense to the first century audience and so it can also make sense to each of us. From there, it is a matter of finding a way to recover missing pieces of the puzzle. If we take this to the Lord, He is going to help us. But this may take time, and changes may be necessary in each of us so that we can see and understand. We have to be patient and persistent.

For most folks, the thought of learning a series of ancient languages is far too overwhelming to consider. Moreover, this is impractical. So then we have to pray and figure out who to trust. And the Lord will lead each of us. We have to keep our eyes and ears open.

My personal advice is to avoid triumphal teachers who adorn religion with pomp and circumstance. Can I get an "Amen?" This is what I am talking about. Judge character. If a leader jokes

around about morality or disparages others, run and run quickly. Listen carefully to see if the person brags about his or her accomplishments—especially when all of this is situated in so called testimonies about what God has done in their lives. If a teacher feeds on your approval and affirmation, there is something wrong. You have a Teacher Who is the Lord Himself.

And when priests, pastors, and teachers offer persuasive rational arguments, but they lack spiritual empowerment, that is probably a bad sign. At the other extreme are those who fake all kinds of powers to heal and perform signs and wonders.

Once I attended several 5 month long Christian missions training schools. To coin a phrase by Charles Dickens, "It was the best of times, and it was the worst of times." While some good foundations were laid, I also witnessed fraud. I remember a man coming to our school in Colorado who I think must have been a reasonably well-known local evangelist and healer. One of his specialties was supposedly the ability to lengthen people's legs to rid them of back pain.

The room was stirred up in worship and I believe that the Lord was at work in our hearts. The man and his assistant moved around the circle of students praying for each individual. So far, so good. When he came to the person next to me, he took the person's feet and held them up slightly, but it appeared to me that the way he did so actually made the legs look uneven. My eyes were less than 48 inches from his hands. He was kneeling on the floor so he could not see me examining his every move. As he prayed to lengthen the legs he slipped the person's heel of their shoe slightly off of the heel, making it look to those who could not see the manipulation close up as if the leg was growing longer. But I saw it, and it was outright fraud.

Then suddenly the fake healer glanced up at me and our eyes met. He knew what I had seen, and could probably tell because of the expression on my face. I was ready to get up and leave and I probably should have done just that. But I was young and I did not want to upset the leadership of the school—so I stayed. And the man began to prophesy over me saying that it was

the Lord's will that I should not believe what my eyes thought they had seen. Ha! How convenient.

Among the 18 or so of us gathered together for the service, it turned out that nearly half of them had one leg longer than the other. Imagine that, and think for a moment, what are the odds that if we gathered a random sample of 18 people from a crowd anywhere that half would have different length legs. I'm not going to say that the Lord never used this guy to heal anyone, but I know what I saw, and it was a lie.

Earlier in part of the man's testimony, his mouth betrayed his deceitful nature. He had lost some crops and called the insurance who paid generously for the damages. When they left, he harvested the crops anyway and bragged about getting paid twice. So my advice is that each of us needs to judge people by their actions and by what they say. This is how God judges each of us. On the other hand Jesus said that we should not judge others lest we fall under God's judgment. I think what Jesus meant was that we needed to forgive and to move on. If we are humble, we need to live with mercy. We too have missed the mark—perhaps in other ways. Nevertheless, it is not our job to live a life holding other people under judgment. Instead, it is our job to love our neighbors and to do so in meaningful ways.

> Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.[101]

God is merciful and forgiving and we should also bear His image and act accordingly. If I thought I could help a guy with this problem, I would ask the Lord if that was really my job. Such ones need to be restored in love. However, they first need to admit their fraud. Otherwise, I would not waste any of my time with an individual like this. I think that the Lord could work more strongly through the look on my face than whatever words I might have

[101] 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 GNT

spoken. I was definitely caught off guard by the event. Because I could have still proven that I had a big mouth at that age—and maybe even now—it was probably better in that moment to have remained silent. When I was a kid, my mouth was so huge that my Mom could fit the better part of a bar of soap in there when I needed it. And I needed to have my mouth washed out with soap quite often.

I know that God honors loving respect. None of us wants to make mistakes. But if you're going to make a mistake, do so with kindness, honor and respect. Leave room for the Lord to stand up and to show Himself strong on your behalf.

You have a faithful Teacher who is the Lord. You don't need a mere human being as a mediator between you and God. And for all of the importance stressed in this book about study of ancient texts, we have to remember that getting spirituality right is not about knowing biblical languages. It is about humbly seeking the Lord and doing what He says. Don't let anyone talk you out of doing what the Lord has clearly and repeatedly shown you to do.

What if Joseph had let his neighbor talk him out of fleeing to Egypt with Jesus and Mary?

Herein, those armed with rationalism cannot see its inherent deception. The Aristotelian machine rushes forward trapping the mind of its user with hardened conclusions—never considering that it was only able to process a small fraction of the knowledge that was actually necessary to find the proper solution. And never mind the fact that rationalism rarely invests the time to seek the Lord.

And so what we have ended up with over the years are competing systematic theologies that are based upon layers and layers of theorization. Theological speculators construct arguments based upon their religious traditions. They use translations of the Scriptures instead of consulting the original languages due to illiteracy in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Entire doctrinal conclusions are sometimes built upon a few verses, but quite often, the inventors of these dogmas don't have much of a clue about how the Aramaic and Hebrew Bibles informed the Greek verses upon which they have constructed their thoughts. The Scriptures are only

used in order to demonstrate the supposed correctness of the results. Otherwise, the Bible is shoved to the corner on the bookshelf to gather dust.

Nevertheless, today the movement to study the original languages may be growing slightly in some streams of Christendom. This is a calling. If the Lord calls you to learn a language, with investment of time and effort, you will do it. The harder you work, the better you will become. If he calls you to become a doctor, don't worry. He will make a way. Keep seeking Him and do all that He shows you to do.

We can hope that inductive contextual analyses of the Bible that take into consideration their place in history, society, and culture wherein the texts were written will one day be the basis of spirituality.

The more we learn, the more our intellectual bubbles are pushed to their limits. One of two things will happen. Individuals will complacently choose not to grow intellectually and will surround themselves with the same old same-old, or—they are going to gain increasing perspective and realize there is far more to the picture. Sometimes when this happens with individuals ensconced in churchianity—and they cannot find suitable answers to their questions—in the Genius of Einstein, they move on from where they are. Or their questions and comments make leaders feel uneasy and they are asked to leave. Questions are a very real threat and a perceived danger to those who are trapped inside the imaginary safety Of denominational bubbles. And so, one way or another, the keepers of the bubble are going to silence those who walk in the Genius of Einstein.

Students who dig deep, studying terms in the ancient contexts of their usage apprehend entirely different understandings that have been buried beneath the English translations in the Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. Because so few individuals are able to invest themselves in the arduous process to learn, we have ended up with terribly inaccurate translations of the Scriptures resulting in errant theological constructs. Because misguided dogmatic conclusions, like those of John Calvin or John Nelson Darby, have been overlayed upon the reading of the Scriptures, and because

interpretive lenses like dispensationalism, and denominational biases are added into study of the Bible, what we end up with is a heterogeneous mess. The result is that many steadfast adherents of Protestant Evangelicalism cannot see the forest through the trees. And to be honest, many don't really seem to care because the prosperous western-European world in which we live has distracted us. Western affluence seems to provide everything anyone could want or need.

Along with this we have adapted ourselves to the incomparable convenience of microwave churchianity. We agree to a neatly pre-packaged set of intellectual doctrines and become satisfied with rote participation in religion. Religious institutions control the lives of their adherents prescribing what each person needs to know and do in order to get to heaven when they die.

The age in which we live is similar to the world David had left to Solomon. The Nation had secure borders, plenty of food, and lots of nice things. In subsequent generations, they forgot that it had been *Yehovah* Who had prospered and protected the nation. They became blind to their own need for divine provision and protection. Eden's intent for humankind to have become the bearers of God's image had been lost. And due to this, subsequent generations gradually forsook their covenant marriage with *Yehovah* and departed from the miraculous life of His *chen*, *charis*, or grace.

When their enemies showed up on their doorstep, however, and plagues of locusts destroyed their crops, everybody panicked and suddenly got religious. And this is what has happened all over the world throughout history. Revivals absolutely love war, plague, and famine.

Eucharisteo—Calling Forth Grace

In a context of describing how the followers of Jesus should live, Paul concluded the lesson "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in all things give thanks ['*eucharisteo*']; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" evaluating this translation, [102] we have to

[102] 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

question, “Is it really God’s will that we should give thanks for rape and murder?” That is what the translation clearly implies. Nevertheless, our common sense should alert us to the fact that this is absolutely incorrect.

In perhaps nearly every instance of *eucharisteo* in the English translations, this was never rendered as “calling forth grace” because translators have depended upon the way that their traditions have rendered the biblical texts. Even when common sense demands something different such as in this passage, translators have gotten stuck in translational inertia. Interpreters look at King James and a few other English translations that haven’t really changed except for eliminating antiquated pronouns, and nobody wants to upset the boat.

For decades, the number one selling book has been the Bible. And no big spender is going to buy pallets of your Bibles if they don’t tell people what they are used to hearing.

When I engaged in the *chari* word stem study, it took 9 months to work through all 256 terms in my Greek New Testament that contained some form of *charis*. I wasn’t sure what I was looking for but I wanted to know more about grace. Actually, part of the reason I suggested the study to Dr. Jon Mark Ruthven was in order to get out of writing a traditional 12 page research paper—recording what everyone else had to say about grace. That seemed like a redundant waste of time. And to be honest, because I had acquired Bible software, I thought that a contextual inductive analysis would be faster, easier, and way more interesting. It turns out that I was quite the optimist regarding the amount of work this project would require. And when I was finished, the paper was a little over a hundred pages long.

Later in my Ph.D. studies, several professors suggested that I might use the *chari* project for my dissertation. However, by that time my brain was wrapped around trying to make sense of the Hebrew term *davar* and the eschatology surrounding the proclamation of the Gospel—God’s restoration of the Word of God.

What I realized pertaining to the New Testament usage of the *chari* terms was that in a surprising number of these instances a

miracle took place. Signs and wonders swarm in the contexts surrounding use of the *chari* terms in the biblical texts.

Keep in mind that I had not yet realized that the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God had initially come to Noah, and I had not directly associated this more specifically with living by the voice of *Yehovah*. What I realized instead was very close. Out of the 256 instances, in a large percentage of these occurrences individuals encountered the manifest presence of God. These events included the manifestation of miracles. There were just far too many instances wherein miracles took place to dismiss the concept that grace was related to miraculous empowerment that was intentionally sought after and received from God.

After a while, it became evident that in some instances, translation of *eucharisteo* merely as thanksgiving was a short-sighted mistake. Newer translations just followed the same path of earlier translators. While I will concede that it always might have been possible that individuals were thanking God in every instance of the biblical usage of *eucharisteo,* we are compelled to acknowledge that thanksgiving typically follows receiving provision. It is after a need is supplied that the recipient says, "Thank you." When you pass the food around the dinner table, the person you pass the mashed potatoes to typically says, "Thanks." Likewise, when we sit down at a meal that is ready to eat, we thank the Lord.

But what do we do when we don't have enough food to eat? What do we do when we need a miracle?

If you were in need, would you seek the Lord's help and provision? Most people would pray. And this is the context wherein we best understand the use of *eucharisteo*. Individuals who are in dire need call forth grace.

In order to shine a light on this interest of translating the Bible differently, let's take a look at a couple examples.

> When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already

> getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. "Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.[103]

While it can be argued that Jesus only gave thanks, we do take note in this context of a tremendous urgency for the provision of sufficient food. It was going to take a miracle, and so Jesus called forth grace.

This important understanding was passed down through the heritage of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. When individuals needed a miracle, they called forth grace.

And Jesus' calling forth of grace opened the gates of heaven.

We find a second point reinforcing our revised ancient understanding of *eucharisteo.*

In Mark 6:41 we take note of Jesus' actions,

> Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all.[104]

We can similarly understand that Jesus was looking into heaven. He was seeking intervention from God's throne that the will and desire of the Father would become manifest in the realm of

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[103] Matthew 14:13-21 NIV

[104] Mark 6:41 NIV

Earth. The reason we bring this up is that we are gathering clues regarding the means by which Jesus performed miracles.

It might seem irrelevant to say as much, but note that Jesus didn't pause to study doctrine in order to perform a miracle. The point in mentioning doctrine is that the more we study Jesus and learn to replicate His ministry, church doctrine becomes increasingly less necessary.

I was listening to one of the local Christian radio stations recently and heard several advertisements for programs teaching parents how to instruct their children about theology. I could not help but think that the immeasurably more important concern was that we might instead be investing in teaching our kids to pray like Jesus prayed. Perhaps the real problem is that we as adults have not taken the time to learn about Jesus' prayer life. And moreover, we haven't invested time in order to enter into the gates of heaven. As I see things, this is due to two primary factors. The church has always emphasized the primacy of doctrine. And between Sundays, we have followed in the way of the world pursuing earthly wealth. Prayer is just something that most church goers do for a few seconds before a meal and for a minute or so as we fall asleep. I humbly confess my own guilt and shortcomings in these practices.

Many years ago I thought of a figurative comparison, having to do with the study of theology. Would you rather research a bunch of information about kissing, or would you rather try out kissing for yourself? Admittedly, this is a silly example. But it proves the vast importance of experience and the fact that some correct information is actually completely irrelevant. What matters is spirituality, not theology. Each of us will actually give an account for what we did during our lives. By contrast, there is no theology exam waiting for any of us at the pearly gates.

> I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to

you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me,"[105]

Jesus never taught that religious factual knowledge was of any benefit. What He desired for audiences to embrace was the restoration of the spirituality of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Therefore, what mattered for those in need was to increase their prayer tolerance beyond 10 seconds. Of course, God does hear ten second prayers, however, it seems that the concept of waiting on the Lord for two hour or three-day answers has been forgotten.

In similar contexts of miraculous feeding, not only did Jesus call forth grace, but He also good-Worded or blessed the food. The cumulative point here is that Jesus was observed looking into heaven. He entered. He called forth grace. And finally, He good-Worded, blessed, or called forth grace into the food. This is not a formula, but it was an inclusive pattern that resulted in signs and wonders. We will have much more to say about this ahead.

Defining biblical terms has proven to be a little bit tricky over the ages. Believe it or not, there are no dictionaries left over from the first century telling us what terms in the *Koine* Greek New Testament actually meant. Scholars devoted their lives to contextual analysis of the terms in the same methodology that I used to determine meaning. One of the most popular studies was completed by four scholars—Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich—and is entitled: A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. This is affectionately referenced by seminarians simply as BDAG.

It was one of those prestigious books that I couldn't justify buying since there was a copy at the library. Time often proves that we did not really need to purchase everything we wanted. One day another scholar will probably add to the collection of knowledge and get her or his name and initial added to the list.

My point in bringing up this lexical resource is that these men have combined years of research invested in producing a book that has helped students of the Scriptures to make sense of

[105] Matthew 25:36-40 ESV

terminologies in the original languages. And the problem of limited time for research is why we still have centuries to go in producing works like this. Unless a person is adept at getting a research grant with which to support themselves, scholarship moves forward slowly.

Nevertheless, the lexical tools we have today were non-existent to early Orthodoxy. By the time of the Reformation, systematic theology had been set firmly in place based upon very narrow collections of Bible verses taken out of context and mortared together with countless generations of dogmatic opinion. Afterward, the purveyors of Evangelicalism smeared nonsensical ideas over the inaccurate theological mess that had been passed along to them. Darby's great imagination in the multifaceted use of dispensationalism really knocked everything completely out of whack regarding the teachings of Jesus. Under His prescription, it was only necessary to know roughly 3 facts about Jesus and grace and then to confess one's belief in these facts in order to get into heaven after death. Once anyone had embraced dispensational Gnosticism, they were no longer accountable to God, and Jesus' teachings no longer applied to anyone.

Of course, once the Plymouth Brethren realized the anti-Christ nature of Darby's instruction, they got rid of him. However, he became an internationally acclaimed celebrity teacher in many denominations—largely due to his confident definitive interpretation of Revelation and his assertion of being able to identify the end-times. By then he had realized how to use sensationalism to move the crowds. Since his audiences were primarily illiterate people who had no means of checking his teachings, Evangelicalism ran wild with the fanaticism of the supposed soon-coming rapture. And they were made to feel proud of themselves—having received Darby's approval in their supposed efforts to rightly divide the word of truth. The spirituality of Evangelicalism forever hereafter has revolved around watching the news and evaluating current affairs to determine the identity of the supposed Antichrist. Like cats chasing their tails, Evangelicals have been narrowing down the timeframe before the tribulation for a couple hundred years. All of this has set the stage for endless

generations of preparations for the end times. And fanatics run here and there trying to get people to believe and confess a few facts about Jesus and grace in order to get saved before it is too late. I used to be one of these fanatics wasting time and money.

Contemporary Evangelicalism has one feather in its cap in that it has revived Bible study. This is probably what saved me. I kept running into things I could not understand, and here we are now getting back to *eucharisteo*. It has been quite the journey!

In Acts 27 we find Paul aboard a ship that was out of control and destined to sink. Everyone was in need of God's help to survive. Following the direction of the Lord, Paul broke bread, called forth grace, and made every man aboard eat so that each would not die. All of them made it ashore alive. Was Paul merely thanking God for food to eat? That seems unlikely when we study the context. Paul compelled the men,

> I strongly exhort you, take this food! This food is for your safety. No hair will perish from the head of any of you. After saying this, he took bread, called forth grace from God in the presence of all and began to eat.[106]

I can only imagine that Paul was making serious noise in heaven as he sought God's *yeshuah*—letting principalities and powers on high know just how things were going to be. And the manifest presence of God in the form of a divine rescuing gift filled the food and the being of the eaters.

Essentially, the manifest saving presence of God, a concept described as *yeshuah* in the Old Testament, had rescued the men through a divine meal. We could say the same thing using the concept of the *davar*. The manifestation of the Word or His *yeshuah* were one and the same.

The conclusion to render *eucharisteo* as "calling forth grace" was not made indiscriminately, but only after the lengthy inductive contextual examination of every term in the New Testament—each of which contained the cari-stem. When the discovery that miraculous divine manifestations took place in the dominant

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[106] Acts 27:34-35

number of usages, only then did it become evident how the translation of *charis* should be made. When the terms pertained to references in the Old Testament, this required study of the Hebrew contexts. The research project was worth every minute. Those days and nights with the Lord were a treasure to me. And by the way, men who typically engage in this kind of work are known as "bachelors."

The overwhelming empirical evidence indicated that in the majority of cases, the *chari* terms were used to indicate the miraculous manifest presence of God. Only in a small minority of instances could *charis* reasonably have been translated as "favor."

Instead, it should more accurately be understood that Paul was instructing the Corinthians to call forth God's grace in all circumstances. Man was not intended to get by on Earth eating physical bread alone, but by every miraculous Word that proceeded from God. There were times when humankind needed God's help; which whether or not everyone recognized it, this was probably all of the time. And so, the faithful living in a fallen world needed to live in a spirituality constantly calling forth grace.

The practice of *eucharisteo* was the heart of Jesus' instruction in prayer. He taught His disciples to hallow God's name and to call forth God's kingdom, so that His will, instead of the wickedness of Earth, would prevail. The desired result was finding God's provision of daily bread, which was the Word of God and His *yeshuah*. All of this was the calling forth of *charis* or grace which was accomplished by crying out to the name of *Yehovah*.

Upon hearing His name, God Most High would open the gates of heaven to allow His children to enter.

Some things are so obvious that they are never explained. And so, when we examine texts from antiquity, we run amok for a lack of background knowledge. The task of the student of Scripture is to investigate and to pull facets of what is known back together. From this vantage point, we are better able to recover what might have been lost. This was the case both with the concept of *charis* and the calling forth of grace.

In the Hebraic paradigm, in the simplest terms, abiding in God's grace was seeking, listening, and obeying God's voice. Obedience or faithfulness to His will was righteousness.

The calling forth of grace was technically described in the Lord's prayer, and was functionally accomplished by praising the name of the Father, and then by walking through its various aspects. The phrase "give us today our daily bread" can be likened to the eucharist or the breaking of the bread, whereby the gate into the heavenly *aiona* was opened. Herein the connection between *eucharisteo* and the breaking of the bread may be obvious. Asking the Father to let His will be done on Earth as it was in heaven is also a clear connection. The bread which He would render would be His help, healing, deliverance, guidance, provision of needs, etc.

In Classical Greek, *eucharisteo* was rendered with connotations having to do with thanksgiving. Here again, however, early Orthodoxy followed the natural inclination of their upbringing and formative education as they interpreted *eucharisteo* in the *Koine* Greek Scriptures by actually superimposing Classical Greek assumptions back over the biblical texts. They completely lost sight of common sense as we see in the ridiculous fabrication of 1 Thessalonians 5:18—implying that thanks should be offered to God for moral crime and wickedness. If thanksgiving was intended, then why don't we see lots of examples in the Old Testament of the faithful thanking God amidst calamity? You will not find David thanking God for all his misfortunes in the Psalms or anywhere else.

Later we are going to explain more precisely how Jesus and others throughout the Bible performed miracles, signs, and wonders. However, it is first necessary to embrace the Hebraic background understanding that miraculous grace, *charis*, or *chen*, was only availed to those who walked in a divine-human matrimonial relationship with *Yehovah*.

Individuals who intimately sought the Lord, entered into the *aiona*, and received divine instruction, thereafter could do what they saw the Father doing as He had instructed them. This spirituality did not begin with Jesus. And there were different means practiced by which ones found their way to stand before the throne of God.

Because they discerned and obeyed His voice and were under the *chen*, *charis* or grace of God, they could render His will on Earth as it was so in the realm of heaven.

This is why it is vital to understand the foundational aspect of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. The ability to become a conduit of God's power was a quality of life reserved for the faithful.

Because early and continuing Orthodoxy steered individuals into a cognitive religion based upon the intellectual acquisition of facts and depersonalized objective practices, their production has become like a wall hiding what authors of the Scriptures hoped for their audiences to actually have embraced.

Simply going through the motions does not make anyone faithful or constitute a relationship with God.

These factors may help us to understand why signs and wonders faded away with the establishment of Orthodoxy. We may marvel—when we hear of their hateful lives—whether or not some of the renowned individuals within Christendom actually ever even knew the Lord.

Many of these people's lives were consumed by efforts to prove the correctness of their systematic doctrinal contrivances. And moreover, pastors and teachers emphasized that these authentic and divinely ordained expressions of knowledge needed to be embraced by their followers in order to escape eternity in hell.

In the Hebraic paradigm, a faithful walk with *Yehovah* did not depend upon religious knowledge. Nobody in the world had to be smart in order to be the servant of God Most High. Theological literacy was not a prerequisite for participation in signs and wonders.

The writing of a book such as this one would not even be necessary except for all of the ignorant syncretistic error of Orthodoxy, the Reformers, and Evangelicalism through the ages that has commandeered, shattered, and swept under the rug the faith of the Bible. Almost nobody understands what it meant to become an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. And if we do not comprehend this concept, it is unlikely that we can make sense of the means by which Jesus performed miracles. We are literally rebuilding the

ancient ruins referenced by Isaiah as we restore these understandings, act correspondingly with adoring worship of His name, and by our prayerfulness calling forth *chen*, *charis*, or grace. When you call upon the name of *Yehovah* or *Yeshuah*, you are raising up the walls of His temple.

At the end of His earthly ministry, when Jesus began to explain that He was about to leave the disciples, Simon Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later." Thomas objected, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"

Jesus replied,

> In My Father's house are many dwelling places; I would not have told you this if it was not so. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, you may be also. And you know the way where I am going. I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him[107] Note also the relevant discussion in John chapters 13 and 14.

Throughout the Old Testament, entry into the realm of heaven was accomplished by praising the name of *Yehovah*. Studying the Greek text of John closely, we see that Jesus was preparing a place for the faithful in the *aiona*—where they would receive the *aionios* life. David and innumerable celebrants of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace had entered into the gates of heaven by praising the name of God Most High, and access had been promised for all generations.

In Exodus, God revealed His name to Moses and explained how it was that the *Ish-raah-el-ites* should call upon Him in praise. This was the key to finding His help in times of need.

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[107] John 14:2–4, 6–7

> And Moses said to God, "Behold, when I come to the children of Israel, and say to them, the God of your fathers sent me to you; and they say to me, 'What is his name?' How should I answer them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM: this is what you should say to the children of Israel, I AM sent me to you." And moreover, God said to Moses, "You will say to the children of Israel that *Yehovah*, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, sent me to you. This is my name in the *aiona* and this is my memorial for all generations.[108]

Taking note of the term *zachar*, for a memorial, the name of *Yehovah* was given that the children of *Ish-raah-el* could call forth God's presence. Upon hearing His name, *Yehovah* was stirred into action. Crying out to *Yehovah* was like ancient Israel blowing the silver horn to call for heavenly intervention. It was the means by which they had invited His presence to their feasts. Correspondingly, it was also the means by which worshippers "remembered," participated, or entered into God's presence.

Praise of His name rose up into the *aiona* just like the smoke and the aroma of incense fills a room.

Because of Second Temple Judaism's and early Orthodoxy's shared agendas in eradicating subjective spirituality, this passage has not been relevantly understood. The Jewish leadership would have condemned this in the same way that they forbade the reading of certain parts of Ezekiel and Isaiah. They were threatened by mysticism. In like manner, the Greek bishops, hurried their efforts to condemn and to destroy extant forms of Christianity, like the Montanists—whose identities thrived on divine-human experience.

The Jews transitioned the spirituality of Israel into legalistic daily religious practices thought to be pleasing to God. Stricter adherents of liturgical Reformed Christianity followed closely with the same agenda to eliminate divine-human subjectivity. Generally speaking, reform movements attempt to clean things up. When

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[108] Exodus 3:13-15

individuals assert themselves to be communicating directly with God, it makes those who have never done so quite uncomfortable. It was easier for the Reformers to discuss theology than to contend with mystical encounter.

The Jews actually went so far as to stringently forbid calling upon the actual name "*Yehovah*," because for thousands of years this was understood as the means by which the presence of God had repeatedly been invoked. However, those who had laid claim to hearing God's voice and asserted they had entered into the throne room of God were not afraid to cry out to His name.

Jewish leaders actually went so far as to ban verbalization of the phrase "*ha shem*," which is translated "the name." They were removing a risk factor to prevent the proverbial opening of Pandora's Box.

The concept of calling forth the Lord by name had been relegated to the time period of their ancient forefathers, but in the historical present it was considered to have become an abandoned practice. Along with this, increasingly over time, the miracles of *Yehovah* were more or less thought of as unusual occurrences that endured for a short time in order to establish the Jewish faith. Regardless of the past, those days were long-gone in the minds of Second Temple Judaist leaders.

And it followed that as calling upon the name of *Yehovah* was expressly forbidden, the standing place in the *aiona* became increasingly desolate. The abomination established in the practice of Second Temple Judaism had robbed the faith community of their Noahic, Abrahamic, and *Ish-raah-el-ite* inheritance. The *chen*, *charis*, or grace that provided re-entry into the Edenic life, guided by the mysterious voice and protection of God Most High, was lost. For all intents and purposes, the entirety of direct divine-human encounter in the *aiona* became relegated to myth and legend.

Moreover, the leaders of the Second Temple viewed subjective mystical spirituality as a danger that could only harm the children of Israel. These practices were condemned as having come from demonic origins. And so they accused Jesus of having a demon when He performed miracles. It became absolutely scandalous to consider that anyone might ever directly encounter the Word of

God in a dream or vision and have received spiritual power. The Jews considered that the era of the miracles that had been experienced by their ancient forefathers had long since passed away. By forbidding worship of God's name, the Jews sought to prevent future controversy. The last thing they needed was for people to start testifying divisively about having encountered the Holy One of Israel in the cloud, or even worse, to claim that they had been raised up into the realm of heaven. Since these sorts of assertions had always begun with reverent worship of the name of *Yehovah*, Judaism found a way to shut it down.

By contrast, praising the name of *Yehovah* was the first line of instruction that Jesus gave His disciples when they asked Him how to pray. The rabbi contended that the greatest matter of importance was hallowing or praising the name of the Father. This pattern was modeled again and again by David in the Psalms.

Where English translations of the Scriptures capitalize all of the letters in the term "LORD," this is an indication that in the Hebrew text, the actual name "*Yehovah*" appears. Contemporary Orthodox Christian translators have followed in a restrictive pattern set for posterity founded upon the ancient agendas of the Second Temple and the Deuteronomist kings who proceeded the Babylonian captivity. The deceptive assertion that the name of *Yehovah* was too holy to be pronounced by common people was introduced and established in order to rid Israel of divine-human interactive subjective spirituality. However, it is clear from the Psalms and the rest of the Bible that David and many others never hesitated to reverently lift up the name of their heavenly Father, because this is how they were drawn into the very presence of God's throne.

Jesus taught similarly that if He was lifted up, He would draw all men to Himself. Although this has been interpreted in the context of His being crucified, this is not the only way to understand what Jesus was saying. Jesus was the second power of heaven Who had drawn the children of Israel into His presence. Although this may be confusing to those who are not familiar with Hebrew, both God Most High and the second power of heaven could equally be addressed as *Yehovah*. Jesus was going back to His heavenly

position in the cloud. When Jesus openly identified Himself as the Holy One Who rode upon the cloud, the Second Temple religious leaders, used His testimony against Him to condemn Him to death. However, with His return to the *aiona*, He would once again draw the faithful to Himself as they worshiped His name or as they hallowed the name of the Father.

> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."[109]

The following segment of verses are excerpted from Psalms 7, 30, 102, 113 and 135, in order that we might begin to understand David's practice in worship as he called forth the grace of God.

> I will give thanks to *Yehovah* according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of *Yehovah* Most High…Sing praise to *Yehovah*, you His godly ones, and give thanks to His holy name…Hear my prayer, O *Yehovah*! And let my cry for help come to Thee. Do not hide your presence from me in the day of my distress; Incline Your ear to me; In the day when I call answer me quickly. Praise *Yehovah*! Praise, O servants of *Yehovah*. Praise the name of *Yehovah*. Blessed be the name of *Yehovah* From this time forth and forever. From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of *Yehovah* is to be praised. *Yehovah* is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. Who is like *Yehovah* our God, Who is enthroned on high…Praise *Yehovah*! Praise the name of *Yehovah*; Praise *Him*, O servants of *Yehovah*, you who stand in the house of *Yehovah*, In the courts of the house of our God! Praise *Yehovah*, for *Yehovah* is good; Sing praises to His name, for it is lovely.

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[109] Matthew 23:36-39 NIV

It is evident from what we read here that David not only set an example of praising the name of God, but moreover, he taught others to do the same.

Just as was stated in the quote from the psalms above, the name of *Yehovah* was to be praised for all generations—which includes the period from when this was stated until today. God Most High never in all of Scripture reversed this foundation. God's name was stolen from the people by Jewish leaders who had distanced themselves from God and was only allowed by the Aaronic Priesthood. And because of its vast ignorance of all things Hebraic, Orthodoxy plodded forward without ever caring to confront the logical problem. If *Yehovah* offered His name to be praised for all generations, as the Scriptures clearly state, then who gave men the right to take this away? What mortal being has the authority to usurp the will and power of God to forbid access to His throne?

When we study the Psalms, we realize that this is exactly what David was doing. He sang, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving, *into* His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. For *Yehovah* is good…"[110]

By contrast, if anyone were to stand up in a conservative Reformed church today or in an Orthodox Jewish synagogue and assert that they were praising the name of *Yehovah* and had heard the voice of God, or more scandalously claimed to have entered into the throne room of heaven by means of encounter with the *davar*, they would be silenced, pulled aside, and marginalized. If they persisted, they undoubtedly would be asked to leave in order to protect the minds of the congregants.

And here is a tremendous unconscionable problem. This is what it meant to have become an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. What the Judeo-Christian movement has substituted instead are counterfeit spiritualities.

If anyone has read *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, they know that the manifestation of the *davar* or the Word of God was repeatedly compared to bread throughout the

[110] Psalm 100:4-5

Scriptures. Moreover, the *davar* of the Hebrew Scriptures was also a dwelling place in the presence of God, as was the case with the *aiona* of the Greek Bible. In antiquity and still today, the term *davar* is used to reference the holy of holies, wherein the priest entered and stood before God's throne.

As we learn to comprehend the Hebraic concept of grace, we ascertain that grace not only came into Earth from heaven, but from God's covenant with Noah, we learn that *chen*, or *charis* offered the faithful divine places of standing before God to hear His voice. Celebrants of the Hebraic tradition entered into *charis* in order to receive the bread of heaven. And still today we call forth *charis* into the bread we break in order to open the veil separating the physical world from God's throne.

The author of Hebrews taught that Jesus had died and His body was broken, once for all of humankind, so that they could be cleansed in order to enter into His presence.

> After offering one sacrifice for sins for all time, Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. By a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.[111]

The term sanctified means "to make holy" with the connotation of being made able to enter into the holy of holies. The broken body of the sacrifice opened the way behind the veil. The purpose of the breaking of the challah in the *kiddush* signified the sacrifice and the opening of the way into the *qodesh* or the holy realm at the start of *Shabbat*. Ahead we will explain more for the benefit of Christian readers.

Christians understand that Jesus' blood was shed to allow entry into the throne room of God. Humankind were created in Eden to dwell in the presence of God. Jesus restored this Edenic place of standing that had also been spoken of in the Septuagint as the *aiona*. And we continue reading about the re-enactment of the

[111] Hebrews 10:12–14 NASB

covenant which was forsaken by ancient Israel and Judah when they were taken into captivity.

> And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, and upon their mind I will write them, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer *any* offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh.[112]

Examining Luke, we read, At the last supper Jesus took bread and when He had given thanks [*eucharisteo*], or rather when He had called forth grace, He broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is my body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of Me."

Jesus' broken flesh corresponded to the torn veil of the temple which was ripped in two from top to bottom after Jesus breathed His final breath. The way into the holy of holies was opened according to the ancient order of *Melchizedek* for those sanctified by the blood of Jesus. Hebrews' author admonished the faithful to obtain their inheritance of a dwelling place in God's presence instructing, "let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts cleaned from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.[113]

Now we take comprehension of what Jesus accomplished back to His instruction. Realizing that the bread represented the veil. Jesus picked up the bread, called forth God's *charis*, and then broke it. What came next? Jesus told them to repeat these same actions later in order to remember or to re-enliven the way into His presence.

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[112] Hebrews 10:12-20 modified NASB

[113] Hebrews 10:22

As the bread was broken, the way into the holy of holies was opened. With the gateway made accessible, the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God was being called forth with praise of *Yehovah's* Name and with thanksgiving for His *yeshuah*. Eventually, the bread was eaten. In its consumption, the enlivened bread became part of the eater. The one called to the holy feast entered into the holy realm of the kingdom of God. Like a cloud settling on a mountain, seekers became engulfed in communal intimacy. God's Being of Truth and Love made Himself present with the worship of His name—which was the calling forth of His grace. God could not resist rushing to take His beloved to Himself when she called His name and sang of His glory. And the bride possessed everything in the arms of the Groom.

The admonition, "Do this in remembrance of me," was not merely an exhortation to think back kindly on Jesus' sacrifice—although that is of course something we should always be doing. Instead, the call to remember, rooted in the Hebrew concept of *zachar*, along with Jesus' actions, provided instruction for entry into the *aiona*. Not only could entry into the divine angelic realm occur on the Sabbath, but later we are going to understand more specifically that this could also take place on the third or the last day of the three-day journey. On the third day, divine manifestations of power could be imparted by those who had consecrated themselves with fasting and prayer. This is why Jesus admonished His followers to pray for eyes to see and ears to hear. He hoped for each of them to enter the cloud and to feast upon the Word of God. In so doing, they would know what God intended for them and would receive power from on-high. Jesus' closest followers were not only given specific instruction, they experienced fellowship with the second power of heaven in the cloud of His dwelling as the world around them was rolled back like a scroll.

The Remembrance of communion was about making spiritual divine-human contact and the celebration of oneness with the Lord. However, the Reformation brought doctrinal arguments of consubstantiation versus transubstantiation seasoned with arrogance to the table of the Lord—each contender attempting to

prove who was right in their theological interpretation of an event that had been reduced to ceremony.

In many ways, these kinds of doctrines or beliefs of the church have mimicked the bickering of the rabbis who fought over minute details of the *takkanot*—and all for absolutely nothing except to puff up their egos and to assert intellectual dominance. Has proving oneself as supposedly being smarter ever improved one's standing before the Almighty? Or instead, have ones just wasted their breath, missing the intention of God altogether.

Sometimes, when any of us begin to argue, the battle has already been lost. We defile ourselves by stepping outside of the protective liberty of those who remain humble. Let people have their opinions, but do not be tempted lest you find yourself consumed by foundationless quick-sand. Move forward into the arms of Truth and set a loving example for your neighbors. Those who have encountered God need not explain the correctness of their spirituality to anyone. Intimacy is treasured by privacy. If some cling tightly to ceremony, let them keep whatever they think that they have. Let those who are able to do so move forward in peace without defiling themselves.

Jesus put this another way as He instructed His *Ish-raah-el-ite* disciples, "Do not cast your pearls before swine."

Having been founded upon the *Koine* Greek term "*eucharisteo*," today the bread or wafer is often described as the eu*charis*t. For many, attention has been shifted from calling forth tangible grace, and has been replaced by a ritualistic activity.

Nevertheless, Jesus instructed and modeled that the Bread was to be held and broken with the calling forth of grace in order that the veil would be opened into God's presence. Those who once apprehended the Hebraic meaning of *zachar* would have continued in the action of entry into the holy of holies. This is why Jesus washed the feet of the disciples after the meal. The way had been opened by the breaking of the bread for the faithful to enter the *aiona* and to stand upon holy ground. Similar to Moses and Joshua who removed their sandals as they entered God's presence, so also foot washing was a component of consecration. Note Exodus 3:5 and Joshua 5:15.

However, because Christendom has completely lost sight of how the meal fit together with the foot-washing, well-intended religious teachers assume that Jesus was merely teaching a lesson on servant-leadership.

> We have this hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest in the *aiona* according to the order of *Melchizedek*.[114]

So then we realize that there are two distinguished understandings regarding the figure of bread used in the Bible. The first is that the Word Who came from heaven into the Earth was frequently compared to bread, or in some way it pertained to the receiving of sustenance from God.

Jesus, Who was the Word of God, having taken on human flesh, was appropriately born in Bethlehem—which means "house of bread." The second important figure of bread was that Jesus used this to provide the faithful with the means to call forth grace so that they might enter into the *aiona* before the miraculous presence of God.

Just as God would see the Bow in the cloud, remember, be aroused to action, and come to help His people, so also His children could call forth grace and find refuge in His heavenly presence. Those who entered were surrounded by grace. The manifest presence of God is grace whether we think of this as coming to us or if we think of ourselves as passing into the holy realm.

Jesus restored the heavenly inheritance of the Hebraic tradition that was described with the term *chen*, *charis* or grace. He certainly was not establishing an intellectual ritual to be practiced by rote. In the restoration of the covenant, Jesus showed the means and way to where he was going—helping His followers to understand exactly how to get there. The opening of the heavens was the means by which to perceive the spiritual realm and to hear the voice of God.

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[114] Hebrews 6:19-20 modified NASB

Within Judaism there continues to be a very similar spiritual practice celebrated by the devout which is undeniably connected to the Christian practice of communion. The Sabbath was understood as a holy day because of the practicality of this being a time to seek the living presence of *Yehovah*. It was established as a very specific opportunity to seek and find God's peace and to rest in His presence. This was a gift. The Sabbath was understood in Hebrew to have been a *qodesh* time or a holy time.

Accordingly, in the evening at the start of the Sabbath the *kiddush* prayer is spoken over wine and blessing is offered over the challah bread. One cup is shared by those gathered.

All of this was done in remembering or re-enlivening what God Most High taught and modeled in Genesis 2:1-3.

> Thus the heavens and the Earth were finished, along with everything in them. On the seventh day God was finished with his work which he had made, so he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. God blessed the seventh day and separated it as holy; because on that day God rested from all his work which he had created.[115]

God good-Worded the seventh day—distinguishing this time as a holy time for those to attend to the Bread of Heaven. The celebration of partaking in the challah bread spoke of consuming and being consumed by the Word.

The *kiddush* prefigured calling forth grace in the celebration of communion.

Although it is not typical to associate Ezekiel chapter 39 with the *kiddush* of the Sabbath or even with Christian communion, the prophet spoke of a day when God would provide and would make His exceeding sacrifice in Israel. It would be a day when their transgressions would be forgotten and when He would restore the treasure of Jacob—which was further identified as encounter with the *panim* or the presence of God. It would be a day when *Yehovah* would pour out His spirit just as had taken place when the cloud

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[115] Genesis 2:1-3 CJB

had come upon the 70 elders of ancient Israel. It would be a day when the *Ish-raah-el-ites* would be gathered together in the angelic realm for a holy feast—not in the sense of sharing a meal with the community—but as a time feasting upon the Word of God.

Herein, the *kiddush* and the breaking of bread came together in a single event that was the intent of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. The spiritual realm was opened. Jesus was celebrating the *kiddush* as an announcement of what was taking place as He became the sacrifice of God.

What has changed for the Christians, due to Orthodoxy's vast ignorance in lumping together the Ten Commandments with the traditions of the elders, is that many have claimed that celebration of the Sabbath is no longer appropriate for Christians. Many of those who are well-intended but are also woefully uninformed, ignorantly declare, "We are not under the Law." Or others assert instead that the day of rest is accomplished by going to church on Sunday.

Recall Daniel's concern in that an attempt would be made in the future to change both the times and the Law. Christendom has changed the time established by God Most High to enter into the *qodesh*. Christians also dismissed the Ten Commandments which teach celebration of the Sabbath. Christians argue that they instead are under grace without having the slightest clue of the incredible error they are making—as they blindly follow centuries of multiplied layers of mistaken interpretation of the Scriptures. Somehow in this paradigm of thought, grace provided the license and became the means by which to change what God had established. ,

Orthodoxy dispensed with the treasure of Jacob by dismissing the time God had established for entry into the *qodesh*.

Reflecting upon Daniel 7:25, Orthodoxy became culpable of bringing harm to those who might otherwise have found their standing places in the *aiona*. They enforced a different understanding of the Law which was actually its abolishment. This mirrored the sin of Second Temple Judaism who closed the door to the *aiona* and did not even enter for themselves. The seventh day celebration of God's *panim* instead became a day to hone one's

daily disciplines under the *takkanot*. Similarly, by removing the Sabbath, the church negated the specific time provided as a gift by *Yehovah* to enter His gates.

While it may be convenient to use Sunday as a time of church gathering, this should not have negated the *kiddush* blessing of the wine and the bread which was intended to open the way into the *qodesh* on the seventh day.

It might be obvious to some readers, however the point is worthy of our attention that "*kiddush*" and "*qodesh*" are both English transliterations of the single Hebrew term for "holy." Moreover, the concept of holiness has been lost and forgotten throughout the centuries of the Christian Era. Fundamentalist Christians, who often lean toward legalistic daily practices in the same disposition of their Jewish counterparts, have come to associate the concept of holiness with strict religious behavior. Fundamentalists intend for their neighbors to look upon their lives in order that they might be seen as first class polished individuals.

Some readers may be familiar with the twentieth century fundamentalist saying, "Don't smoke and don't chew and don't hang with those who do." Throughout the ages, many Christians became separatists thinking that in doing so they were pleasing God. Among them, contingencies attempted to out-do one another with their legalistic religious practices. Instead of moving forward in the calling of Abraham to bless the nations, ones such as these conveyed the maligned concept of expressing strict forms of outward behavior that they labeled "holiness." They assumed the label "saint" because of their public behavioral abstinence from smoking, drinking alcoholic beverages, and swearing etc. Of course, this same sort of legalism has also characterized the lives of some among Judaism.

> Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them. If you do this, do not expect any reward from your Father Who is in heaven.[116]

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[116] Matthew 6:1

This supposed type of holiness became a counterfeit spirituality that was rooted in misunderstanding of the Scriptures. However, those who chose to become set apart, separating themselves from the ways of the world, as was the case for the Nazirites, so that they could draw near to *Yehovah*, did so as a form of consecration. They may have curtailed or have abstained from certain activities in order to have invoked the name of *Yehovah* or the presence of God upon themselves. However, their actions were personal and privately observed for only God to see.

> Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.[117]

Jesus taught that individuals seeking God should practice this kind of righteousness privately—not letting on to their neighbors that they were fasting. The essence of becoming holy or to have been addressed as a "saint" was ones' entry into the holy realm. Those who entered God's holiness were recognized as being "holy."

Legalism is poison. Legalism is not what *Yehovah* intended for His children.

In this same matter of concern, the Sabbath has also been misrepresented. Many Jews and Christians alike attempt to "keep the Sabbath" and do so out of burdensome legalism. And on both sides of the Judeo-Christian movement, there are those, who in showy fashion, attempt to out-do their neighbors as they flaunt their spirituality.

We need to realize that many concerns that are of high value to men are of no value to God. Do you know what human arrogance is in the eyes of the Lord? Arrogance is the vain attempt to pretend that one does not need to walk through life in humility. Arrogance deceives people—leading them to think that they are superior to others. Arrogance is poison. Oppressive legalistic arrogance is vomitous in the eyes of God—Who is full of

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[117] Matthew 23:27-28 ESV

lovingkindness, compassion, and mercy. The Lord helps the desperate to stand, survive, and thrive. He does not load unbearable burdens upon anyone.

Jesus taught that the Sabbath was made for humankind and by contrast that humankind was not made to become slaves to the Sabbath. He challenged His audiences with the lesson of a neighbor in need. “Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?” The primacy of acting with kindness, love, and compassion for one’s neighbor was an authentic expression of one’s love for God.

There are many lessons we might glean from this instruction. Our point to set the record straight regarding holiness, God’s intent for the Sabbath, and all matters presented herein is not intended to set a foundation for legalist observance of the Sabbath. Neither is the discussion of “holiness” intended to condone arrogant religious one-upmanship that has become one of many poisons that has defiled Judeo-Christian spirituality.

The Sabbath was offered to humankind as a gift, in order that every inhabitant of Earth might have a time to set themselves apart to enter into the holy presence of God. And while there were many reasons for seeking and obtaining a standing place before His throne, one of these was to learn His will, become empowered, and to carry the good-Word of God back into the world in order to bless others.

Problematically, many of those who are spiritually minded make naïve assumptions, and from these they attempt to accomplish the calling of God in their own power. They march-forward—confidently armed with rational deduction and with an operating budget from their financial supporters. But they might not have seen, heard, or tasted the good-Word of God.

Christian Orthodoxy removed actual entry into heaven each Sabbath with the tremendous misunderstanding that God’s sacrifice was intended to tangibly effect eternal salvation in the hereafter—only after a person died. In the Hebraic paradigm which was being celebrated by Christian movements in the first and second centuries, the sacrifice and the blotting out of sin was accomplished to allow entry into God’s *panim* in the *aiona*. All of this was erased

from the radar of the spiritually by early Orthodoxy's marginalization, persecution, and violent actions taken against those perceived to have been threatening heretical Christian movements. Bishops like Epiphanius saw themselves as exterminators of a scourge that had defiled the ongoing expression of Christian faith. And so, as they acted—thinking they had been authorized by God Himself—they harshly condemned prophetic spirituality.

This same attitude, demeanor, and activity continues today among some of my dear friends. As I have worshiped alongside of them and have joined with them in prayer, certain individuals have found me to be a contradiction to their own religious values. They have been conflicted in how to think of me. They do not understand why a guy like me would ever want to associate with those Christians who come from the wrong side of the tracks.

Some of this vitriolic history was preserved by Bishop Epiphanius in his *Panarion* where he proudly argued for the sole existence and the dominance of objective religion.

Getting back to the discussion of entry into the *qodesh* realm on the Sabbath through the *kiddush* severing of the challah bread, does anyone recall what specific day and time Jesus broke the bread in what Christians reference as "the last supper?"

In the Jewish calendar, the first day of the *Feast of* Unleavened Bread is always a Sabbath.

As in the case of the *kiddush*, with the blessing of the wine and the bread, this should have been understood as opening the way into the *qodesh* which was the holy realm. Jesus celebrated the *kiddush* in keeping with Moses' instruction in Exodus 20—to be quoted ahead. With the breaking of Jesus' own flesh, the Bread of Heaven opened the holy realm.

If the Masoretes had never added vowel pointing to the Hebrew language, and if the concept of the term holy had not come to revolve around behavioral abstinence, today it would have been apparent that *kiddush* and *qodesh* were the same term—understood as a location in the presence of God. Perhaps, at least among the Jews, the spirituality of keeping a holy Sabbath by entry into the angelic realm of the *aiona* would have been preserved. And

moreover, this might have eventually affected the Christian apprehension of the purpose of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples—even though early and continuing Orthodoxy rejected all things Jewish as they interpreted the New Testament. Nevertheless, at least for this audience, today this understanding is restored.

We read in Genesis 2:1-3:

> And so the heavens and the Earth were completed, and all their heavenly lights. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.[118]

In Exodus 20:8-11, we read:

> Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. For six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; *on it* you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male slave or your female slave, or your cattle, or your resident who stays with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the Earth, the sea and everything that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; for that reason the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.[119]

In each of these passages the concept of the *qodesh* realm is signified by translation of the terms sanctified and holy.
The concept of sanctifying this particular day meant that this specific time was set apart as something different than all other time. Specifically, those who entered into this rest entered into the *qodesh* holy realm of the *aiona*. Eventually, over time in the long distant past, the breaking of the challah and the blessing of the wine in the *kiddush*, was employed as the initiation of entry.

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[118] Genesis 2:1-3 NASB

[119] Exodus 20:8-11 NASB

Note the reference to remembrance in the Exodus passage. In keeping with the ancient Hebrew understanding of *zachar*, we comprehend that Moses was not speaking of recollection. Instead, he was making the case that the *Ish-raah-el-ites* were to re-open the doorway into heaven.

Should any of us dare to change the appointed time? Is it possible that those who repeat the deeds of the Whore of Babylon can identify themselves before heaven as God's children? Perhaps we should take heed and prove ourselves as the innocent daughters of Zion who greeted David, standing in the gates of God's presence welcoming the seekers of *yeshuah.* Note the abbreviated verses from Psalm 9.

> I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders. I will rejoice and be jubilant in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. The Lord sits as King in the *aiona*; He has established His throne for judgment. The Lord will also be a stronghold for the oppressed; A stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, Lord, have not abandoned those who seek You. Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion; Declare His deeds among the peoples. He does not forget the cry of the needy. Be *chennan* to me, Lord. You who lift me up from the gates of death, So that I may tell of all Your praises; that in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in Your *yeshuah*.

For the record, and specifically in speaking of the Sabbath, I would not want to represent myself as being a perfect celebrant of this gift. I have missed the mark and have not used the Sabbath in the way that it should have been received. Even when I have fully understood all of the matters I am speaking of herein, it also seems that I have misplaced my priorities—always seeming to find that my oxen or donkeys have fallen into the ditch. Those who teach come under stricter divine judgment and so I want to humbly confess my shortcoming.

Therefore, I am not going to criticize or look down upon anyone for not keeping the Sabbath. Neither should any of us be

tempted to fall into this Pharisaical trap. Nevertheless, I do exhort everyone to work and plan your week in order that you may celebrate this gift.

And for that matter, any criticism that I make about anyone or any religious movement, first and foremost, I am identifying and acknowledging my own hypocritical shortcomings. O Lord, please have mercy upon us all and lead each of us into the spirituality that pleases you. Help us to walk in obedience to Your voice.

Moving forward we consider the question, "Are Christians violating *Torah* by going to church on Sunday—or on any other day for that matter?"

No. They are not.

However, that does not change the seventh day establishment of rest in order to seek the Lord and to enter into His presence.

Going to church on Sunday, or any other day, does not exonerate any of us from walking in the ways of the Lord and according to God's calling for each of our lives. And this is in respect to observance of the Sabbath or with respect to any other concern to which God has drawn our attention.

Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, also spoke of the restoration of God's ancient covenant as he prophesied:

> Praise the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old, Salvation from our enemies, And from the hand of all who hate us; to show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.[120]

Pausing for a moment, we need to understand that Zachariah was comparing Jesus to the silver horn fashioned in the

[120] Luke 1:68–75 modified NASB

lifetime of Moses—which when sounded, activated God's remembrance and rescue. We infer that calling upon the Name of the Son was coterminous with calling upon the Name of the Father.

Zachariah continued his prophetic impartation of the Word, shifting his attention to blessing his son John.

> And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; to give to His people *the* knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.[121]

There is much to be learned from the prophetic Word of Zachariah. The salvation about to be received in the era of the New Testament was the same that had been experienced by those in the house of David.

On that point, we ask the question, "Was the house of David a reference to those who lived under his earthly roof or to those who shared in the king's faith and spirituality."

Zachariah's prophecy clarified that it was to all those who participated in the covenant of Abraham. Because of His divine compassion, children in the present age of the first century A.D. would be guided into peace, as had been the case with their spiritual forefathers who walked faithfully with God Most High. The covenant of peace was about to be renewed.

Furthermore, Simeon and Anna were expectant to see the revival of their ancient inheritance. Jesus was brought to the Temple for dedication as an infant.

> Now there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon who was righteous and devout, looking for the restoration of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.[122]

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[121] Luke 1:76-79 modified NASB

[122] Luke 2:25 NET

Recall that the namesake "*Ish-raah-el*" pertained to the faith community, who in ongoing experiences, had seen God.

> It had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So having been directed by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple courts when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary according to the law.[123]

Simeon was guided by grace or by the voice of the Lord, explicated in these verses by mention of the spirit from the holy realm.

Simeon took Jesus in his arms and blessed God, saying, "Now, according to your Word, Sovereign Lord, permit your servant to depart in peace. For my eyes have seen your *yeshuah*—which in English translations is rendered as "salvation." And *Yeshuah's* presence had been prepared for the people, "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

Did Second Temple Judaism's members allow for any socialization with the Gentiles? No. Absolutely not! By contrast, those who embraced the more ancient faith of Abraham walked in a manner of life so as to continually bless the Gentiles. For all intents and purposes, the religious leaders of Jesus' day had completely forgotten that their forefather, the Patriarch, was a Gentile. However, as Jesus restored the earlier faith of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*, so also the commission to good-Word the nations was again embraced.

Very little if any interaction with Gentiles was initiated by Jews due to the belief that this would cause defilement. Luke briefly remarked that Nicolas had been a Gentile convert to Judaism who lived in Antioch. Ones like this man were exceptions to the rule and it very well may have been Nicolas who initiated contact to make this happen. Even so, those who could not prove direct Jewish lineage probably would never hold respected positions of authority among the Second Temple Jewish faith community.

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[123] Luke 2:26–27 NIV

Simeon was making two points. First, the calling of Abraham to bless the nations would once again take precedent with the impartation of *yeshuah*. Second, the Holy One of Israel, Who was understood to be the glory of God or the second power of heaven, Who was known to become manifest in the cloud of the covenant, would reappear to the faithful.

> Your Husband is your Maker, Whose name is *Yehovah* of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the Earth.[124]

There was also a prophetess named Anna, who after being widowed, for years had never left the temple. She remained there worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. When she saw Jesus being presented by His parents, she came up to them and began giving praise to God for this child—publicly identifying Him as the awaited One—Who would redeem Jerusalem.

The Greek term for redeem is *lutposis*, which had to do with paying a price. Recall that *yeru-shalem*, or Jerusalem meant "they will see peace." What we draw from the Greek text is that Jesus was going to pay a price so that the Covenant of Peace could be restored. The namesake of the city was foundational to the understanding of the Covenant of Peace. In fact, at times Jerusalem is translated as "foundation of peace."

Accordingly, the author of Hebrews explained that through His own blood, Jesus had entered the holy place once for all, having obtained *aionios* redemption for all those who would continue to enter. The Holy One of Israel, God's Son, had paid the price for all of humankind. Anna's prophetic hope was that the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace was going to be brought back by this child who would pay off a debt that had been incurred in the past.

Luke reported that Simeon further prophetically good-Worded or blessed Mary announcing, "This child is destined to be the cause of the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be rejected. As a result of Him, the thoughts of many

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[124] Isaiah 54:4

hearts would be revealed." Simeon continued explaining that in all of this a sword would "pierce Mary's soul."

Note Luke chapters 1 and 2, as well as Hebrews 9 from which these details have been extracted.

The Cloud in the Heavens—Faith vs. Belief

In this book, our focus has been placed mainly on Greek terms because the early Orthodox Gentile bishops who set the foundation for churchianity were raised with Classical Greek educations. The system of doctrines they developed were derived from the *Koine* Greek New Testament. Athanasius, Epiphanius and the rest of them were not familiar with Hebrew and could probably not have even explained a concept within Hebrew pertaining to dualism in term meanings. The Hebrew term *shama* meant "to listen." However it also meant "obey." The point was that if someone had actually listened, it was proven by their actions of obedience. Those who had not obeyed, had in fact, not listened. Similarly, *emunah* (אמונה) expressed the foundational concept of belief and faith. Initially a person might, for example, witness a healing and believe because they saw it with their own eyes. This was directly connected to faith and faithfulness. However, ones who said they believed but did not thereafter walk in faithfulness had not actually believed.

Later, this becomes more important to New Testament interpretation where English biblical texts seem to be directing readers toward belief. We have to keep in mind that Jesus was a Jew Who taught in Hebrew or Aramaic and therefore we cannot solely depend upon interpretation of Greek texts without considering the Hebrew background of the discussions that took place.

While acknowledging the initial element that belief is conveyed by *emunah*, in this book, we are primarily focused upon the follow up significances of obedience and faithfulness.

As we look at instances of *pisteuo*, *pistis*, or *pistos* ahead, we should keep in mind that faithfulness is the product of belief, but so called belief that does not result in faithfulness is a false assertion.

The terms *shama* and *emunah* were foundational relational terms. In the context of divine-human matrimony, what mattered most was faithful obedience. There can be no such thing as a matrimonial relationship except if there is also faithful obedience.

It may seem crazy to mention as much, but ahead we are going to examine corruptions of biblical interpretation that sever belief from faithfulness. What arose are forms of Christianity that claim to believe without actually walking out any kind of faithfulness with the Lord. Instead, celebrants believe doctrines and this is the heart and soul of their faith. Such ones think they have obtained eternal life, more or less, through a legal agreement based upon their intellectual cognition. But for all intents and purposes, there is no tangible matrimonial intimate relationship with God. They find no need whatsoever to hear God's voice, or they limit hearing from God to whatever they might read in the Bible.

Unlike individuals in the Scriptures who saw divine manifestations, heard His voice, and either responded with faith or disobedience, for such ones in Christendom, grace has nothing to do with hearing the voice of God.

Following Noah's life, throughout the Scriptures, God was understood to have dwelt in the cloud and to have acted and spoken from that place. The sight of the rainbow was a reminder of divine-human peace. We can think of this as a partial return to how things had been in Eden—where humankind dwelt in the presence of the Lord.

A cloud became the continuing means of God's expression of protection and peace throughout the Scriptures.

> *Yehovah* was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.[125]
>
> And it came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward

[125] Exodus 13:21 modified NASB

> the wilderness, and behold, the glory of *Yehovah* appeared in the cloud.[126]
>
> And *Yehovah* said to Moses, Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you, so that you may have faith in the *aiona*.[127]

The phrase "so that you may have faith in the *aiona*" is commonly translated with diverse renderings having to do with Moses, or the people believing forever. This default translation, which emphasizes an eternal timeframe, was based upon early Orthodoxy's refusal or ignorance in recognizing the *aiona* as a location in the presence of God. Here the context clearly supports this concept because *Yehovah* has just explicitly said He will come to Moses in a thick cloud. The cloud was a location. There is nothing in the context of the discussion to support the phrase *eis ton aiona* being used as a time-frame. Moreover, the people would not be around to "believe forever." So then why translate the phrase in this way?

To be even handed, today we have a colloquialism that states, "Seeing is believing." However, we are treading on thin ice if we take contemporary phraseology and reapply this to texts written three and a half thousand years ago. Nevertheless, if I witnessed this supernatural event taking place, I would be convinced of *Yehovah's* reality dwelling among us. And I would tell my children what I had seen. Maybe 10 or 20 generations later, for those who might not continue in the tradition, such ones might just call the story, "an old wives' tale" and forget about it.

If we interpret use of the term *pisteuo* in the wider perspective of God's work to expand the Covenant of Peace with humankind however, we have to agree that God was building a people of faith and faithfulness.

Some may ask, "Was *pisteuo* ever used in the Bible to convey the simple concept of belief? The answer is, "Yes." There are some good examples. James told his audiences, "Even the demons

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[126] Exodus 16:10 modified NASB

[127] Exodus 19:9 modified NASB

believe and tremble." The demons had become convinced of God's power. They were not faithful to God, but they knew what He could do. So they trembled. Another good example is found in Hebrews:

> Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must <u>believe</u> that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned *by God* about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household.[128]

Noah had become convinced that God was real and that He desired to change the course of wickedness on the Earth. Accordingly, having encountered the *davar*, he moved forward to complete the task laid before him as a partner in the work of God. Noah's actions demonstrated his faithfulness. It would not have been enough for him to have said "I believe in God" and then to have called it a day. Therefore, we have to stress the fact that Hebraic faith was not simply about believing that God was real and then acquiring some factual religious knowledge. Noah was rewarded, not because he acknowledged the reality of God, but because of his obedience to God's voice. By contrast, ones who heard the voice of God directing them but did not act in accordance with His Word were not walking in *chen*, *charis*, or grace.

So then, the foundation of faith is belief. But if it does not lead to participation in the works of God, it is useless. Ones such as these have chosen to ignore the grace of God.

James, the brother of Jesus taught:

> What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and be well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You

[128] Hebrews 11:6-7 NASB

> believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that and shudder. You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.[129]

James was a good Hebraic thinker! For that matter, who might have been better informed about Jesus' teachings than his own brother?

Faith plus actions equaled righteousness. A person was counted as being righteous by what they did and not by claims of intellectual faith or belief alone. The Reformer Martin Luther, who lived between 1483 and 1546, thought that the book of James should have been removed from the Bible because of this passage.

James learned from His brother Jesus—Who had explained the basis of good deeds for entry into heaven.

> for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment.[130]

Perhaps this verse happened to slip by Martin Luther and the other Reformers whose theology of grace was rooted in the opinions of men instead of in a contextual study of *chen*, and *charis*.

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[129] James 2:14-26 modified NIV

[130] John 5:28-29 NASB

We are reminded that the Reformers built upon the foundations of early Orthodoxy that had been set far off course due to their vast ignorance of Hebraic concepts as well as by the Aristotelian upbringings of the early Greek bishops that caused them to further misidentify biblical concepts. Many layers of compounded ignorance, error, and religio-political agenda prevented Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers from accurately interpreting the Scriptures. As a result, their theological opinions were irremediably flawed.

Hebraic spirituality had everything to do with walking in a mutual relationship of divine-human faithfulness. The appearance of *Yehovah* in the cloud would be awe-inspiring and faith building, but it was not going to result in the Israelites believing anything eternally.

We read in Exodus 24:18 that Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain, and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

When Moses had taken action to build the Tent of Meeting, the Presence of God's Bright Radiance in the cloud dwelt more closely with Israel.

> Now on the day that the Tent of Meeting was erected, the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting; the tent of testimony. But in the evening, it was like the appearance of fire over the Tent of Meeting, until morning.[131]

The term "testimony" pertained to the Ten Commandments which were placed in the Ark of the Covenant along with a jar containing a sample of the *manna* that *Yehovah* had provided in the wilderness. The *manna* was referenced as *davar*; hence we also note a connection between the bread provided by God being identified as the Word. The ark had two cherubim with their wings spread over the mercy seat on top of the ark. This was God's throne where the priests would seek the Lord.

> And there I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the

[131] Numbers 9:15 NASB

> ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.[132]

The word "commandment" in this quote comes from the Greek term "*entole*"—which had to do with the specific instructions that would be given to the priest each time they sought *Yehovah*. The *entole* were God's verbal instructions by contrast to the testimony, which was written comprising the Ten Commandments.

> And keep the charge of *Yehovah* your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His *entole*, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn.[133]

Herein, the spiritual recipe for success included the subjectivity of seeking, hearing, and obeying God's voice in light of the Ten Commandments.

> Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My *entole*, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.[134]

> Pay attention to what I say. Then I will be your God, and you will be my people. In everything, live according to the way that I *entole* you, so that things will go well for you.[135]

> In the day when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, I commanded your fathers saying, "Hearken to my voice, and follow all of the instructions that I will *entole*; so that you will be my people, and I will be your God"[136]

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[132] Exodus 25:22 NASB

[133] 1 Kings 2:3 NASB

[134] 1 Kings 11:38 NASB

[135] Jeremiah 7:23 CJB

[136] Jeremiah 11:4 modified NASB

We note that being recognized as a child of God depended upon actionable faith which was obedience. Those who cognitively knew the commandments but chose to disregard them disclosed the absence of *Yehovah's* Lordship over their lives.

From Numbers 9:15, in continuity with the *Aionios* Covenant made with Noah, we should realize that the cloud had the appearance of fire. Reading the text closely, we realize that the cloud did not change into fire, but the bright radiance shown forth in the darkness. Other similar references speak of the glory that was seen in the cloud. Identical phenomena were described by different authors in diverse ways. The intended interpretation by their readers was made obvious by the surrounding contexts of discussion. The second power of heaven was also described as radiance or glory. Ezekiel foretold the revealing of the glory of God in the world at a time when a great incomparable sacrifice would be made on the mountain of Israel. In like manner, John identified Jesus as the Light Who came into the world.

The author of Numbers continued to describe how they were led by *Yehovah* according to changes with the cloud.

> And this continued; the cloud would cover the Tent of Meeting, and the appearance of fire by night. And whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp. At the command of *Yehovah* the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of *Yehovah* they would camp; as long as the cloud settled over the Tent of Meeting, they remained camped. Even when the cloud lingered over the Tent of Meeting for many days, the sons of Israel would keep *Yehovah's* charge and not set out. If sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the Tent of Meeting, according to the command of *Yehovah* they remained camped. Then according to the command of *Yehovah* they set out. If sometimes the cloud remained from evening until morning, when the cloud was lifted in the morning, they would move out; or *if it remained* in the daytime and at

> night, whenever the cloud was lifted, they would set out. Whether it was two days or a month or a year that the cloud lingered over the Tent of Meeting, staying above it, the sons of Israel remained camped and did not set out; but when it was lifted, they did set out. At the command of *Yehovah* they camped, and at the command of *Yehovah* they set out; they kept *Yehovah's* charge, according to the command of *Yehovah* through Moses.[137]
>
> Now it came about in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth of the month, that the cloud was lifted from over the Tabernacle of the testimony; and the sons of Israel set out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai. Then the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran. So, they moved out for the first time according to the commandment of *Yehovah* through Moses.[138]

In Exodus 33:10, we read:

> And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the door of the Tent: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man at his tent door.[139]

God's presence and glory were so powerful that neither Moses nor the priests of Aaron were able to enter into the Tent of Meeting when the cloud was manifest.

> And Moses was unable to enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of *Yehovah* filled the Tent of Meeting.[140]
>
> And *Yehovah* said to Moses, "Tell your brother Aaron that he shall not enter at any time into the holy place inside the

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[137] Numbers 9:16-23 modified NASB

[138] Numbers 10:11-13 modified NASB

[139] Exodus 33:10 ASV

[140] Exodus 40:34-35 modified NASB

> veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat."[141]

As Israel looked back in time from the era of the former prophets, this same understanding held firm: In 2 Chronicles 6:1 we read, "Then Solomon said, '*Yehovah* has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud.'"

Nehemiah walked in the same understanding.

> And with a pillar of cloud, You led them by day, and with a pillar of fire by night to light for them the way in which they should go...In Your great compassion, You did not forsake them in the wilderness; The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, to guide them on their way, nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go.[142]

Job also participated in the same covenant; understanding that God dwelt in and spoke from the cloud.

> Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, The thundering of His pavilion? Behold, He spreads His lightning about Him, And He covers the depths of the sea. For by these He judges peoples; He gives food in abundance. He covers *His* hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike the mark. Its noise declares His presence… At this also my heart trembles, And leaps from its place. Listen closely to the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling that goes out from His mouth. Under the whole heaven He lets it loose, And His lightning to the ends of the Earth. After it, a voice roars; He thunders with His majestic voice; And He does not restrain the lightnings when His voice is heard. God thunders with His voice wondrously, doing great things which we cannot comprehend.[143]

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[141] Leviticus 16:2 modified NASB

[142] Job 9:12-19 NASB

[143] Job 36:29-37:6 NASB

Then *Yehovah* answered Job out of the whirlwind.[144] If we think of a tornado or a whirlwind as a particular type of cloud formation, we note from whence Job heard the voice of *Yehovah*.

Although we may consider that Job was speaking figuratively, in the New Testament in John 12, we are instead led to understand that Job had been speaking more literally. Consider the following narrative where Jesus disclosed to His disciples that He was about to die:

> The hour has arrived for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you that unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only as a single seed. But if it dies, it bears more seeds and fruit. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it into the *aionios* life. Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves Me. Now my soul is troubled. Should I ask the Father to save me from this hour? No. It was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name! After this, a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it, and will glorify it again. The crowd that had gathered and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to Him. Jesus explained, this voice was for your benefit, not mine. The time has come for judgment on this world, and now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the Earth, I will draw all people to myself.[145]

When outsiders witnessed what sounded like thunder, others were able to discern and comprehend God's voice knowing exactly what He had said regarding His Son.

Of further importance in the passage, we note that Jesus wanted those who were obeying His voice as servants to also be with Him in the experience of the *aionios* life. As the second power of heaven, following His earthly life, He would once again be raised

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[144] Job 38:1

[145] John 12:23-32 NIV

back up into the spiritual realm in the cloud where He would draw to Himself those who were proving themselves faithful by their deeds.

We take note of the same kind of language being used in John's explication in Revelation. From specific mention of the rainbow, we realize the *Aionios* Covenant connection.

In Revelation 10, we read, And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.

Immediately, we understand the Hebraic context through which God was speaking and acting by the clear reference to the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. We note that John the beloved disciple of Jesus understood that the Lord's activity among humankind took place according to the peaceful relationship He had established with His faithful ones.

The Word which came in the form of a vision continued:

> …And he placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices…And when the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken, and do not write them." And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives in the *aiona* of the *aiona*, who created heaven and the things in it, and the Earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be delay no longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.[146]

The Bow in the cloud witnessed from the perspective of Earth was not merely a rainbow, but instead from heaven's

[146] Excerpted quotes from Revelation chapter 10, modified NASB

perspective, this was the glory of the second power of heaven; sometimes spoken of as the Angel of the Lord and in other instances referenced as the Word of God. As mentioned earlier, in order to imagine this, if you have access to the internet, search for the image or the video of a Brocken Spectre, a Brocken Bow, or a Mountain Spectre.

After the two prophets in Revelation 11 were resurrected, they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them.

Luke reiterated Jesus' explanation of the afterlife:

> But those who have been considered worthy and attain to the *aiona* and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the *passage about the burning* bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him.[147]

Those among the inhabitants of the Earth who proved themselves faithful to the Lord had a place in the *aiona* of heaven and would exist in an angelic form thereafter. When the body ceased to exist physically, those who had been born a second time in the *aiona*, while they yet dwelt on the Earth, would continue to live in the presence of God.

This was the end result of the *aionios* Life Jesus offered. Essentially, after death it was humankind's final restoration to the Paradise of Eden. This was each individual's inheritance in the family of God. Although flesh and blood could not inherit the kingdom, each person's angelic being, remained alive. We may think of this as their soul.

Upon death, the earthly physical world would be rolled back like a scroll and the faithful would no longer see heaven dimly, but

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[147] Luke 20:35-38 modified NASB

instead they would be with God face to face in the cloud of the *aiona*.

> For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.[148]

Yet again, we see that the Lord was expected to have been abiding in the clouds. Consistent with Revelation, the clouds remained as the meeting place of the faithful with the Lord.

Although it is through discussions like these that we can confirm entry into the *aiona* after death, Jesus made it clear that experiences such as this were also the inheritance of the faithful while they yet dwelt upon the Earth. And of course, this was witnessed with many of the prophets in the pages of Scripture as they described other-worldish aspects of the heavenly realm.

Each member of humankind was born with an angelic identity. Jesus spoke of little children already having this quality of existence. As each one might be drawn into an abiding place with God, the angelic part of one's being was made alive or came to life. With this birth into the spiritual realm, humans became aware of their alternate heavenly identity.

> Jesus warned His disciples, "Take great care that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father in heaven.[149]

Although Reformation thinkers have taught us everything we never needed to know about something called "original sin,"

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[148] 1 Thessalonians 4:15:17 modified NASB

[149] Matthew 18:10 modified NASB

what we actually realize instead when we read the Bible is that in Eden, humankind was born in original innocence.

It is my opinion that babies, infants, and little children walk in original innocence. Problematically, we become defiled and walk in the sin of Adam as we become aware of the knowledge of good and evil; and thereafter, we make the wrong choices. Resultantly our earthly being becomes contaminated and enslaved by lust, greed, avarice, and hatred, etc. When we listen to the poisonous voice of Satan and act according to his will, we lose our inclination to hear the Lord's voice—and original innocence is lost.

Jesus taught, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."[150] The rabbi was helping listeners to find their way back to original innocence. The foundational means was provided by John the Baptist which included, confession of actual sins in ones' lives, cleansing with water, and moving forward, by committing a pledge of faithfulness to *Yehovah*. Furthermore, Jesus taught that in order to be forgiven by the Father, ones' needed to first forgive others who had sinned against them.

Note that contemporary Evangelicalism teaches individuals to merely confess that they are sinners when they turn to the Lord. This represents a huge divergence from the Hebraic model wherein individuals confessed their darkest deeds. And in so doing, they broke spiritual bonds of wickedness. Suffice to understand that confession of sin brings wickedness into the Light where spiritual freedom is completed; whereas only generally acknowledging oneself as a sinner, preserves the secret oppressive bondage.

Later we are going to discuss the history behind the Evangelical model of merely confessing one's identity as a "sinner" rather than confessing one's actual sins. We will explain why this may be all but useless as a preparatory event to permit entry into the *aiona*—wherein ones receive divine authority to perform signs and wonders.

Suffice to understand that confessing you are a sinner prepares you for Evangelical religion and church membership.

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[150] Matthew 18:3

However the very costly and difficult act of confessing your secret sins to another human being prepares you to become an *Ish-raah-el-ite*.

Upon immersion into the realm of the spirit, the angelic part of each individual was made alive as they were born again a second time—and thereby made alive in the *aiona*.

One more point was conveyed by Jesus, "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence; and the violent take it by force." These individuals were willing to do anything and everything necessary to embrace and enter the kingdom. This meant that they would even confess the secret acts of sin that had kept them in bondage and that lived on in the darkness of their souls.

There is probably no more difficult act in this life than confessing one's acts of wickedness and spiritual bondages to another living person. However, there is nothing that is more necessary for those who hope to find freedom. A wise person once said, "You are as sick as the secrets you are keeping."

We cannot hope to enter the heavenly realm while we live in a covenant of secrecy with darkness. Jesus condemned the religious leaders of his day because they forsook the way that had been provided for them by John the Baptist. He longed to gather them to Himself, but they refused. As a result of their choices, their intended habitations in the heavenly *aiona* were left desolate.

When anyone swears that she or he will never tell something to another living soul, an oath is created that wields control over the individual. There is a way to dismantle that oath and to break its power. The way to freedom is to bring deeds that were committed in darkness into the light.

Note that Jesus only took Peter, James, and John into the cloud with him. They were His closest followers and presumably the few among the twelve who had prepared themselves to enter into the *aiona*.[151]

Later, when we delve into the practical steps related to the Hebraic spirituality of ancient Israel, we are going to understand

[151] See Matthew 17:1-8.

exactly why Jesus taught that the entry way was narrow. Few would find it, and even fewer would enter.

Just as it was in the time of Jesus, today it seems unlikely that nominal Christians or Jews will find birth into the realm of the spirit in order that their lives might be characterized by signs and wonders. Very few individuals are willing to face the difficulty of confession of their sins to another human being in order to overcome the oppressive accusing voice and bondage of the enemy. Although they are known of by the label as being Jews or Christians, many walk in a covenant with darkness, having sworn to carry their secrets to the grave.

Accordingly, it is through humbling verbal confession that individuals truly taste death. And the death that takes place through the confession of sin is the necessary starting point in the way that leads to new life. And after washing with water and being raised to life above the water, the three-day journey to be discussed ahead presents its own continuing challenges.

John the Baptist prepared the way. Our goal is to explain what has been lost and forgotten so that perhaps a few more may be freed in order to enter the kingdom and become empowered to change the world. The broken flesh of the sacrifice opened the way into heaven. Those who are washed and clothed by the sprinkling of blood may enter.

The Lord's unwritten questions throughout all of Scripture are, "How bad do you want Me?" and "What are you willing to do in order to fully embrace Me?"

Many will settle for humanly contrived religion rather than actually becoming an *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Each of us has a choice.

It is pertinent to be reminded that in Hebrew, the single term *shamayim* (שָׁמַיִם) is translated both as the "skies" and as the "heavens." The Lord's presence is sometimes spoken of by biblical authors as being in the clouds, in the air, in the sky, or in the heavens. All of these different phrases speak of His abode in a spiritual realm that existed above the Earth. Some of the differentiation has been caused due to translation into contemporary languages.

Hebrews' author explained,

> Now may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the *Aionios* Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory in the *aiona* of the *aiona*. Amen.[152]

The covenant restored by Jesus was connected to the Patriarch by Hebrews' author. The following interpretive paraphrase of Hebrews 7 is offered in order to understand the author's conviction that the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek* was superior to the Aaronic Priesthood.

> For this *Melchizedek*, King of Salem, Priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and *Melchizedek* blessed him. Abraham gave *Melchizedek* a tenth of all his spoils. His name is interpreted literally as the "King of Righteousness." Moreover, *Melchizedek* was also known as the "King of Salem," which is interpreted literally as, the "King of Peace." *Melchizedek* was without father, without mother, and without descendants, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but He was like the Son of God; Who abides as a priest continually. Now consider how great *Melchizedek* was, to whom the Patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. His priesthood preceded that of Aaron's. The tribe of Levi existed in the loins of Abraham, when Abraham paid tithes to *Melchizedek*. The lesser Aaronic Priesthood was blessed by the better Order of *Melchizedek*. Although the Aaronic priests receive tithes and all died, *Melchizedek* received tithes and continues to live. And so, we understand that Levi who later received tithes, had actually formerly paid tithes while they had existed as Abraham's seed. For Levi was still in the loins of Abraham when the Patriarch met *Melchizedek*.[153]

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[152] Hebrews 13:20-21 modified KJV

[153] Paraphrased Hebrews 7:1-10.

The author emphasized the inferiority of Aaron's priests, asking "If the Levitical priesthood had been perfect, what further need would there have been for another Priest to rise up after the order of *Melchizedek*—One Who was not of the blood-line of Aaron."

Looking at what Hebrews' author wrote in the context of the time in which he lived, the Aaronic Priesthood who ran the Jerusalem Temple no longer held any authority over the king. The few faithful priests might only quietly influence a small margin of society. Nevertheless, the majority of the wicked religious leaders who had departed from any active relationship with *Yehovah* within Second Temple Judaism, in their own duplicitous corruption, bowed before Israel's kings. The followers became ruined in character like their leaders. Although the priests churned out sacrifices to *Yehovah*, the hearts and lives of many among them did not belong solely to God Most High. Outwardly, they were pretenders—investing themselves in the second *torah* of the *takkanot*, which Jesus had exposed as being the misleading imposturous contrivance of man.

It is widely accepted that Mary the mother of Jesus came from the tribe of Judah in the lineage of King David and this was affirmed in Hebrews 7:14. However, not having been conceived by human seed, Jesus' father was God Most High. Although Moses made no allowance for any from the tribe of Judah to have a place in the Tabernacle, David had entered and had eaten the bread of the presence when he was on the run hiding from King Saul.

With the restoration of *Melchizedek*'s Priesthood by Jesus, Hebrews' author affirmed the necessity of a change in the priority of the Law as it had been maniacally enforced by Second Temple Judaism. The more ancient and newly restored priesthood was not going to remain focused on the carnality of the commandments but instead upon embrace of the *aionios* life. Jesus had been identified as a priest of the *aiona* according to the order of *Melchizedek*—in accordance with David's statement in Psalm 110:4. Hebrews' author understood that Jesus and the Holy One encountered by David were one and the same.

As previously mentioned, both Jesus and Paul affirmed the remaining ongoing validity of the Ten Commandments, although both also agreed that these were carried out by loving God Most High with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, and by loving their neighbors as they loved themselves. Faithfulness was demonstrated by individuals' thoughts, choices, behavior, actions, and deeds.

Hebrews' author made the point in verse 18 that a myopic focus upon the commandments had been unprofitable. The Law was weak in that it could not make anyone perfect. However, an emphasis on drawing near to God through *Melchizedek*'s Priesthood was a better hope. The way into the holy of holies had been reopened through Jesus' torn flesh.

He summarized that because *Melchizedek*'s abode was in the *aiona*, just as it had existed in the past, it was revived and would continue for all of posterity. Therefore, this enduring heavenly priesthood was unchangeable. The author recognized Jesus as the divine mediator Who offered God's daily help and deliverance known of in Hebrew as *yeshuah* and in Greek as *soteria*.

> For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens; who has no daily need, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because He did this once for all *time* when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the Word of the oath, which came after the Law, *appoints* a Son, who has been made perfect in the *aiona*.[154]

Much of Hebrews chapters 5 through 7 was dedicated to explaining Jesus' restoration of the Priesthood of *Melchizedek*.

Revelation continued in continuity identifying the dwelling of the cloud where the temple exists: "And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the Earth; and the Earth was reaped. And

[154] Hebrews 7:26-28 modified NASB

another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle."[155]

Similar to the circumstances surrounding Moses and Aaron's priests not being able to enter into the Tabernacle due to the divine presence in the cloud, we read in Revelation 15:7-8:

> And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives in the *aiona* of the *aiona*. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.[156]

Note that the phrase in the *aiona* of the *aiona* appears four times in Revelation.[157] This also occurs in the Septuagint. If we follow the pattern modeled in Classical Greek, the phrase is translated as "forever and ever." What is uncanny however, is the parallel between biblical usage of the *aiona* as a location in the presence of God. Could there be a parallel between the *aiona* of the *aiona* and the holy of holies? The Aaronic priest was understood to have been transformed into his angelic being as he entered the third room of the temple as a standing place before the throne of God.

The Apostle Paul witnessed to an abiding place in the third heavens as if this could be measured by degree.

> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.[158]

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[155] Revelation 14:16-17 NASB

[156] Revelation 15:7-8 modified NASB

[157] Note 4:9-10, 10:6, 15:7.

[158] 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 NASB

David understood the location of God's temple in the clouds from which divine judgments proceeded:

> in my distress I called upon *Yehovah* and cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, and He heard my cry for help. Because He was angry, the Earth shook and quaked; and the foundations of the mountains were trembling and were shaken. Smoke went up out of His nostrils, and devouring fire from His mouth. Coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down with thick darkness under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub and flew; and He sped upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him, Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies. From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds, Hailstones and coals of fire. *Yehovah* also thundered in the heavens, And the Most High uttered His voice, Hailstones and coals of fire. And He sent out His arrows, and scattered them, and lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them. Then the channels of water appeared, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at Thy rebuke, O *Yehovah*, At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils. He sent from on high, He took me; He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.[159]

Herein, *Yehovah* was understood to have ridden on the clouds. Michael Heiser, who preferred to reference the divine name as *Yahweh*, offered an amazing discussion on this topic of the cloud rider being the second *Yahweh* spoken of in the Hebrew language in the Old Testament. He pointed out that it was Jesus' assertion that He was the cloud rider while under judgment of the Second Temple priests that was used as evidence of Blasphemy. This claim by Jesus was the justification used for His crucifixion:

> Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they

[159] Psalm 18:6-17 modified NASB

> might put Him to death…And the high priest said to Him, I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said to him, You have said it *yourself*; nevertheless, I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think? They answered and said, He is deserving of death! Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, Prophesy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?[160]

David continued adding more insight in Psalm 18:33, explaining how the Lord set his feet upon high places where he received *yeshuah*. The Lord forced David's enemies to abandon their murderous pursuit. David clearly understood God's intervention to have been based upon his own choices and actions as he followed the leading of the Lord. He reaped that which he sowed.

Note Psalm 18:24-30, 43, and 46-50:

> Therefore, *Yehovah* has repaid me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyes. With the kind You show Yourself to be kind; With the blameless You show Yourself to be blameless; With the pure You show Yourself to be pure; And with the crooked You show Yourself to be astute. For You save an afflicted people; but haughty eyes You make humble. For You light my lamp; *Yehovah* my God illumines my darkness. For by Thee I can run upon a troop; And by my God I can leap over a wall. As for God, His way is blameless; The Word of *Yehovah* is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him…You have delivered me from the contentions of the people; You have placed me as head of the nations; a people whom I have not known serve me…*Yehovah* lives, and blessed be my rock;

[160] Matthew 26:59-68 NASB

> and exalted be the God of my *yeshuah*. The God who executes vengeance for me and subdues peoples under me; He delivers me from my enemies. Surely You lift me above those who rise up against me; You rescue me from the violent man. Therefore, I will give thanks to Thee among the nations, O *Yehovah*, and I will sing praises to Your name. He gives great deliverance to His king and shows lovingkindness to His anointed; To David and his descendants who dwell in the *aiona*.[161]

As a reminder, in the Hebrew language, from which the Greek Septuagint was translated, a single term or phrase could have several different meanings which were intended to have been ascertained by readers.

The Latter Prophets shared in the same understandings of the Lord speaking and acting from the cloud of heaven according to the *Aionios* Covenant, as is understood by Ezekiel's witness to the rainbow in the clouds:

> The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am *Yehovah* Who does all these. Drip down, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds pour down righteousness; Let the Earth open up and salvation bear fruit, And righteousness spring up with it. I, *Yehovah*, have created it.[162]

> When He utters His voice, *there is* a tumult of waters in the heavens, And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the Earth; He makes lightning for the rain, and brings out the wind from His storehouses.[163]

> As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of *Yehovah*. And when I saw *it*, I fell on my face and heard a

[161] Psalm 18:24-30, 43, and 46-50 modified NASB

[162] Isaiah 45:7-8 modified NASB

[163] Jeremiah 10:13 NASB

> voice speaking. Then He said to me, Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you! And as He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard *Him* speaking to me.[164]

All of these prophets participated in the *Aionios* Covenant. Herein we note Ezekiel's second birth into the holy angelic realm of the spirit in accordance with God's promise in Genesis 9. There are other significant references to immersion in the heavens by individuals in the narratives of the Old Testament. What is presented here is an overview and is not intended to be comprehensive or all inclusive.

When Daniel had visions in the night, he testified of seeing the Ancient of Days or the Most High, and then the second power of heaven as the Son of man—also identified as the Highest One. The "Holy ones of the Highest One" were mentioned four times as those who would eventually receive the kingdom. They would receive a favorable verdict from the highest heaven by the Ancient of Days after a king or an enduring rulership of the Earth, would persecute and oppress them. This persecutor very likely seems to have been Second Temple Judaism. The holy ones on Earth who served the Highest One were the adherents of Abrahamic faith. These *Ish-raah-el-ites* were the victims of a brutish religious oppressor. As Daniel looked ahead, these evil ones would speak out against the Most High, and teach contrary to His instructions that had been given over time. In so doing, they would make alterations to the Law. And we see that this was exactly what happened with the rise of the Second Temple.

They nullified the calling of God to Abraham to reach out and to bless the nations in order to draw the Gentiles back into the family of God, and they invented and authorized the second *torah*.

On this basis, Jesus condemned the second *torah* of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Contrary to the inspired *Torah* where God had instructed Israel to "Honor your father and your mother," which implied providing for them in their elder years, the neglect of

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[164] Ezekiel 1:28-2:2 modified NASB

which was punishable by death, the Second Temple priests taught "If someone says to his father or mother, 'I have promised what I might have used to help you as a gift given to God," this exonerated the child from having to provide for the ongoing needs of his parents. In other terms, if a son gave money to the priests, he could be relieved of a familial obligation mandated by Moses that had been given during Israel's three-day journey and encounter with the Word of God at the base of Mount Sinai. Jesus explained that the *takkanot* or the traditions of the elders—they were handing down—were used to nullify or to invalidate the Word of God! See the discussion in Mark 7.

This gift giving to the temple, referenced as *korban*, might as well have been thought of as a bribe. The religious leaders received money which magically absolved a son from the obligation of caring for his parents.

A note was added at the start of the chapter explaining that:

> The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, *thus* observing the traditions of the elders; and *when they come* from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.[165]

Jesus summed up what Second Temple Judaism actually served, "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."[166]

Speaking of the expanded second *torah*, using the figure of yeast that makes bread rise, Jesus warned His disciples, "take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees," which was their teaching and enforcement of the *takkanot*.[167]

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[165] Mark 7:34 NASB

[166] Mark 7:8

[167] Note Matthew 16:6.

When the Apostle Paul figuratively instructed his listeners to remove the leaven from their lives, he was speaking of the deceptive traditions of the elders. In Galatians 5, Paul contrasted the second *torah* to grace.

Matthew exposed the corruption of the Second Temple Jewish leaders in chapter 23:

> Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The experts in the law and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat. Therefore, pay attention to what they tell you and do it. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy loads, hard to carry, and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing even to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by people, for they make their phylacteries wide and their tassels long. They love the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues and elaborate greetings in the marketplaces, and to have people call them 'Rabbi.' But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher and you are all brothers. And call no one your 'father' on Earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You keep locking people out of the kingdom of heaven! For you neither enter nor permit those trying to enter to go in. Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You cross land and sea to make one convert, and when you get one, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves! Woe to you, blind guides, who say, "Whoever swears by the temple is bound by nothing. But whoever swears by the gold of the temple is bound by the oath.' Blind fools! Which is greater, the gold or the temple that makes the gold sacred? And, 'Whoever swears by the altar is bound by nothing. But if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by the oath.' You are blind! For which is greater, the

gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So, whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and the one who dwells in it. And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and the one who sits on it. Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You give a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, yet you neglect what is more important in the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness! You should have done these things without neglecting the others. Blind guides! You strain out a gnat yet swallow a camel! Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside may become clean too! Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs that look beautiful on the outside but inside are full of the bones of the dead and of everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you look righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have participated with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' By saying this you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of your ancestors! You snakes, you offspring of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? For this reason, I am sending you prophets and wise men and experts in the law, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town, so that on you will come all the righteous blood shed on Earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, this generation will be held responsible for all these things! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you

> who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would have none of it! Look, your house is left to you desolate! For I tell you, you will not see me from now until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" Now as Jesus was going out of the temple courts and walking away, His disciples came to show him the temple buildings. And he said to them, "Do you see all these things? I tell you the truth, not one stone will be left on another. All will be torn down!."[168]

It is important to understand what grace is not. Moreover, it is significant to see what the *takkanot* and the offering of *korban* did to the temple. It became a den of self-righteous thieves. And at the end, Jesus foretold what was about to happen to the corrupt temple.

Herein, rather than all the end times 100 percent wrong nonsense pushed off on the world by Evangelicalism over the last several hundred years, we have a suitable apocalyptic interpretation of Daniel 7 that corresponds to passages in Revelation. Daniel provided a prophetic view looking forward and John provided a view after the fact.

A battle took place on Earth. Josiah's armies slaughtered worshipers who sought God Most High according to the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. He and Hezekiah both thought that the only entry into the holy of holies should allowably happen in the Jerusalem Temple under the control of the Aaronic Priests. Survivors, who were able, fled to Arabia and continued in their faith—expecting that the ancient priesthood of the king of righteousness would someday be restored. The Gospels explain this renewal in the physical world while the book of Revelation tells of a corresponding war in the heavenly realm whereby the earthly restoration was made possible by God Most High through the servitude of the second power of heaven.

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[168] Matthew 23 NET

Daniel also foresaw the end result: "But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom in the *aiona* of the *aiona* of the *aiona.*"[169]

Could the tripartite use of *aiona* have corresponded to the Apostle Paul's entry into the third heavens, where he saw things too inexpressible to describe? Note 2 Corinthians 12 wherein Paul explained his immersion or baptism into the third heaven.

Dogmatic presumption that contemporary eschatological interpretations of Daniel and Revelation are somehow backed by divine authority often come back to haunt fanatical Evangelical apocalyptic interpreters. Honestly, pastors and teachers should be ashamed of their disappointing repetitious fearmongering end times assertions from the pulpit that never come true.

Sounding as if they speak with inspired authority, they use the pulpit as a platform upon which to make themselves appear to be smart or as the Lord's special confidants. In reality, however, they make pronouncements that only prove the idiocy of their nonsense when their predictions do not come to pass.

And yet, when the planets align, they make alarming statements. When there is a war in the middle-east, they sound the trumpet of the supposed soon-coming rapture. When a new Pope is appointed, they warn of doom and gloom confidently asserting that the end is near.

How is it that, generation after generation, preachers of this empty rhetoric continue to be revered? These men blindly rely upon a religious tradition with a track record of hundreds of years of complete error and still continue to spoon feed this slop to their congregations.

I listened to a popular television preacher, who touts his knowledge of the Greek, teach on half a dozen verses in the Bible which—as he falsely claimed—mention the term rapture in the original languages. However, he conveniently never stated exactly what that term was. This is because there is actually no *Koine* Greek term in the entire New Testament for "rapture." Shortly ahead we will trace exactly where that term originated in a prophetic

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[169] Daniel 7:18

utterance by Margaret McDonald and how Darby errantly applied this to the Scriptures in the 1800s.

I might suggest that if your pastor makes confident assertions regarding the end times based on news reports, the papacy, or wars in the middle-east, it may be time to ask the Lord whether or not these should be your last days in his or her church. As we will see, none of this rot has anything to do with the celebration of Hebraic spirituality taught by the authors of Scripture.

Jesus, Peter, and Paul warned against false prophets. When religious teachers and pastors make predictions that do not come true, are these once not proven as being false prophets?

This being acknowledged, I humbly submit the perspective that in his vision, Daniel foresaw the rise of Second Temple Judaism and its modification of the law in the development of the *takkanot*. When we examine History, the biblical record, the Latter Prophets, and the New Testament, this seems to make sense. Many questions seem to be adequately answered. Let each one study and think on these matters.

The cloud and the radiant presence of the Lord, Who had committed himself to the holy inheritors of His *yeshuah*, would make them the recipients of the treasure of God's kingdom.

> The holy ones of the Most High were to receive the kingdom and possess it in the *aiona* of the *aiona* of the *aiona*. As I watched, this horn waged war against the holy ones and was prevailing over them…He spoke against the Words of the Most High and oppressed the holy ones of the Most High and intended to change the times and laws. The holy ones would be handed over to him for a time, times, and half a time…until the Most High Ancient of Days gave authority to His Holy One to exact judgment in favor of His holy ones on earth. For eventually the time had come, and the holy ones took possession of the kingdom. The kingdom, dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under heaven would be given to the people—the holy ones of the Most High. His

kingdom will be an *aionios* kingdom and all rulers will serve and obey Him.[170]

The mysterious gobbledygook regarding beasts and horns was removed to get down to the brass tacks of what can be more plainly understood.

From all of Daniel's cryptic discussion in chapter 7, two points might be understood examining the heavenly perspective. The greatest beast was defeated. Accordingly, Jesus asserted that He saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning, as was recorded by Luke 10:18. The arch-enemy of humankind was defeated. However, the smaller beasts, or geopolitical principalities and powers of the air, were given a short bit more time before they also would be cast down. The Apostle Paul discussed these in several of his letters.

I am not dogmatic about any of this. Nevertheless, restating the point, if we examine the narratives of the Bible as a homogenous unit of knowledge wherein all of what was presented was supposed to have fit together logically, this scenario works very well.

Moreover, it is dangerous to dwell on fanatical ideas or to let apocalyptic hype condition our study of the Bible and our interpretation of the world. Every single solitary person on Earth in all of history who has predicted the end has been wrong. And so we see that people have done exceedingly stupid things with their lives and resources because of baseless absurdity regarding the supposed end times—imagining that they lived in the last days of Earth.

King Josiah followed in the path of the newly developing religious tradition of the Deuteronomists that despised and ignored the need for the prophetic leading of *Yehovah* through the prophets, and he needlessly died a senseless death because of it. His life was wasted and ruined because he relied upon manipulative murderous advisors instead of diligently seeking *Yehovah* and

[170] This summary was rearranged from Daniel 7, 18, 21, 25, and 27, using the HCSB.

thinking for himself. The enduring message of Josiah's life is that none of us should be like Josiah.

If there is more that the Lord wants us to understand from Daniel, it will be evident looking back after it happens. This is the way that biblical prophecy works. The disciples understood Jesus' identity by looking back upon the Scriptures. Otherwise, our daily bread and goal should be entry into the kingdom and the practice of true religion. We should follow in the Lord's leading to meet the needs of the world around us. Josiah's advisors appear to have remembered him as a good king because he blindly obeyed their wishes.

Perhaps after Daniel was given more understanding in his vision, these four verses, which actually provide reasonably comprehensible information, were re-inserted back into the more obscure parts of the text that were later written down. If we read closely, it would seem that rulership would be accomplished by a partnership between the holy ones on Earth and mediated by the second power of heaven.

As a restored covenant, the same properties of the cloud, the radiance, glory, or presence of the Holy One of Israel would remain as components of the narrative.

Continuing with our examination of Old Testament references, we read:

> And it came about when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of *Yehovah*, so that the priests could not stand to serve because of the cloud, for the glory of *Yehovah* filled the house of *Yehovah*.[171]
>
> It came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were in one accord, heard in praising and thanking *Yehovah*; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised *Yehovah*, Who is good; for His lovingkindness in the *aiona*; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of *Yehovah*, and the priests could not stand in order to serve

[171] 1 Kings 8:10-11 modified NASB

because of the cloud. This was because the glory of *Yehovah* filled the house of God.[172]

> Your lovingkindness, O *Yehovah*, is in the heavens; your faithfulness is in the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are a great deep: O *Yehovah*, you keep safe both man and beast. How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge under the shadow of your wings. They will be exceedingly satisfied with the fatness of your house. And You will make them drink of the river of your pleasures. You are the fountain of life. In your light shall we see light. Oh, continue your lovingkindness for those who know You and Your righteousness to the upright in heart. Do not let the foot of pride come against me or the hand of the wicked drive me away.[173]

From Psalm 57, we read:

> *For the Chief Musician; set to Al-tashheth. A Psalm of David. Michtam; when he fled from Saul, in the cave.* Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me. My soul takes refuge in You. In the shadow of Your wings will I take refuge, until the attempt to destroy me has passed, I will cry unto God Most High. He will send *yeshuah* from heaven, and save me. He will eliminate my reproach.[174]
>
> *Selah*

God will send forth His lovingkindness and His Truth.

Although David's enemies set many traps for him, he resolved that he would remain steadfast in the presence of God Most High.

> My heart is unwavering, O God, my heart is unwavering: I will sing, yes, I will sing praises. Awake, my glory; Awake

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[172] 2 Chronicles 5:13-14 modified KJV

[173] Psalm 36:5-11 modified NASB

[174] Psalm 57:1-3 modified NASB

> psaltery and harp! I will wake myself up early, and I will give thanks to You among the peoples, O *Yehovah*, I will sing praises to You among the nations. Your lovingkindness is great unto the heavens, and your truth into the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; your glory above all the Earth.[175]

The term "gracious" which is repeated in Psalm 57 is from the Hebrew term transliterated *chennan*. It is a derivation of the term *chen*; which in the Hebraic frame of reference pertained to the faithful's place of standing in the protection of God Most High.

Although the two terms are completely unrelated in spelling with the exception of both having two letter *nuns* in Hebrew, in the reflection that earthly realities are related to heavenly ones, and because of a similar sounding pronunciation, I have wondered if humankind's place of standing in the *Aionios* Covenant—herein described by David as *chennan*—was representative in some way of God's promise to give them the earthly land of Canaan. With the understanding that the narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures began as an oral tradition, it could be that such a pre-existent understanding of this relationship existed before the manufacture of the written biblical texts.

> Sing to God! Sing praises to His name. Exalt Him who rides on the clouds—His name is Yahweh and rejoice before Him.[176]

> There is none like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides the heavens to your help, and in the clouds by His majesty. From the beginning, God has been your protection. Beneath his ancient arms, with the command "Be destroyed!" he drove out the enemy from before you. Therefore, *Ish-raah-el* is caused to dwell in security, and the fountain of Jacob is secluded in a land of grain and new wine; His heavens clouds of dew. Good-Worded or blessed are you, O *Ish-raah-el*;

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[175] Excerpted from Psalm 57:1-11, modified NASB.

[176] Psalm 68:4 HCSB

> Who is like you, a people saved by *Yehovah*, Who is the shield of your help, And the sword of your majesty! Your enemies will cower before you, and you will tread upon their high places."[177]

David offered a picturesque heavenly perspective of the war being waged in the realm of heaven while he was pursued by King Saul.

> And David spoke to *Yehovah* the words of this song in the day that *Yehovah* delivered him out of the hand of all His enemies, and out of the hand of Saul: and he said,
>
> *Yehovah* is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, even my; God, my rock, in Him will I take refuge; My shield, and the horn of my *yeshuah*, my high tower, and my refuge; My savior, You save me from violence. I will call upon *Yehovah*, who is worthy to be praised: So shall I be saved from my enemies. For the waves of death encompassed me; The floods of ungodliness made me afraid: The cords of Sheol were wrapped around me; The snares of death came upon me. In my distress I called upon *Yehovah*; Yes, I called to my God: And He heard my voice out of His temple, And my cry *came* into His ears. Then the earth shook and trembled, The foundations of heaven quaked And were shaken, because He was angry. There went up smoke out of His nostrils, And fire out of His mouth devoured: Coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down; And thick darkness was under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub and flew; Yes, He was seen upon the wings of the wind. And he made darkness pavilions round about Himself, gathering of waters, thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness before Him, coals of fire were kindled. *Yehovah* thundered from

[177] Deuteronomy 33:26-29 Paraphrase

heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice. And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and overthrew them. Then the channels of the sea appeared, The foundations of the world were laid bare, By the rebuke of *Yehovah*, At the blast of the breath of His nostrils. He sent from on high, He took me; He drew me out of many waters; He delivered me from my strong enemy, From them that hated me; for they were too mighty for me. They came upon me in the day of my calamity; But *Yehovah* was my shield. He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because He delighted in me. *Yehovah* rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands, He recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of *Yehovah*, And have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His ordinances were before me; And as for His statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also perfect toward Him; And I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore has *Yehovah* recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to my cleanness in His eyesight. With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With the perfect man You will show Yourself perfect; With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the perverse You will show Yourself as an opposition. And the afflicted people You will save; But Your eyes are upon the haughty, that You mayest bring them down. For You art my lamp, O *Yehovah*; And *Yehovah* will lighten my darkness. For by You I run upon a troop; By my God do I leap over a wall. As for God, His way is perfect: The Word of *Yehovah* is tried; He is a shield to all them that take refuge in Him. For who is God, except *Yehovah*? And who is a rock, except our God? God is my strong fortress; And He guides the perfect in His way. He makes my feet like hinds' *feet*, And sets me upon my high

places. He teaches my hands to war, So that my arms do bend a bow of brass. You have also given me the shield of Your *yeshuah*; And Your gentleness has made me great. You have enlarged my steps under me; And my feet have not slipped. I have pursued my enemies, and destroyed them; Neither did I turn again till they were consumed. And I have consumed them, and smitten them through, so that they cannot arise: Yea, they are fallen under my feet. For You have girded me with strength to the battle; You have subdued under me those that rose up against me. You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me, That I might cut off them that hate me. They looked, but there was none to save; Even to *Yehovah*, but he answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the dust of the earth, I did crush them as the mire of the streets, and did spread them abroad. You also have delivered me from the strivings of my people; You have kept me to be the head of the nations: A people whom I have not known shall serve me. The foreigners shall submit themselves to me: As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me. The foreigners shall fade away, And shall come trembling out of their hiding places. *Yehovah* lives; And blessed be my rock; And exalted be God, the rock of my *yeshuah*, Even the God that executes vengeance for me, And that subdues people under me, And that brings me forth from my enemies: Yea, You lift me up above them that rise up against me; You deliver me from the violent man. Therefore I will give thanks to You, O *Yehovah*, among the nations, And will sing praises to Your name. Great deliverance He gives to His king, And shows

> lovingkindness to His anointed, To David and to His seed, those of the *aiona*.[178]

Although the last phrase is typically translated "forevermore," the case is made here that David was speaking of His spiritual progeny who would walk in obedience according to the voice of God. Such ones would be his spiritual children in the *aiona* and were identifiable as ones who were born of the *aiona*.

So then when Simeon mentioned the sons of David who were participants in the *Aionios* Covenant and the recipients of *Yeshuah*, the same sense of spiritual progeny is understood. Not all of David's physical children walked in the spirituality of David. Take note of Absalom.

Speaking through Elihu, God posed the question, could the righteousness of Job, his friends, or anyone else's ever possibly supersede God's righteousness? Making the comparison to the Son of man who was understood in the Hebraic Context as the Holy One riding on the clouds, Elihu continued, "Look at the heavens and see, behold the clouds. These are higher than you." "Can your imperfection ever be held against Him? Or, if you have many transgressions, how does that compare to Him? This rendering was extracted from Job 36.

The second power of heaven was sinless. The Holy One of Israel never transgressed the wishes of God Most High. The Son walked in purity or righteousness fulfilling every heavenly Law and requirement out of His perfect love for His Father.

> *Yehovah* was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.[179]

The Aramaic Bible similarly recorded:

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[178] 2 Samuel 22 modified ASV

[179] Exodus 13:21-22 NASB

> And the Word of the Lord led on before them during the daytime in a pillar of cloud to lead them on the way, and by night in a pillar of fiery cloud to give them light, that they might journey by day and night. The pillar of cloud did not cease during the day time, nor the pillar of fire at night, leading and standing in readiness and shining before the people.[180]

The Word of God Who abode in the cloud was the second power of heaven. In continuity, in chapter 13 the *Memra* of the Lord was speaking and leading the people.

In chapter 14:13-14, of the Aramaic Bible, Israel stood before the sea with Pharaoh in pursuit. We are told,

> the *Memra* of the Lord will wage battle for you; stand; be silent and give glory and praise to your God…Fear not; the Lord in the Glory of his *Shekinah* is the One Who Himself works your battle victories for you.[181]

It is pertinent to be reminded that the *Shekinah* provided a spiritual habitation for the ardent seekers of *Yehovah*. Verse 14 can be understood as equally conveying the synonymous concept of the *Aionios* Covenant, "the Lord, in the radiance of the cloud is the One Who Himself works your battle victories for you."

In the details of the Targum, we read what occurred:

> And the angel of the Lord who was ready to walk before the camps of Israel, in front of them, moved and stood behind them. And the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, and it went in between the camps of the Egyptians and the camps of Israel; and the cloud was part darkness and part light: obscuring darkness for the Egyptians and a light for Israel all the night. And one group did not draw nigh to the other for battle array all the night. [182]

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[180] Targum Neofiti 1, Exodus 13:21-22.

[181] Targum Neofiti 1, Exodus 14:13-14.

[182] Targum Neofiti 1, Exodus 14:19-20.

As an aside, think for a moment and ask, "What form of cloud do we commonly see standing as a pillar in meteorological phenomenon today? This would be a tornado. The pillar was a mighty rushing wind that was impenetrable.

As an aside, recall that a mighty rushing wind was present as the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost.

> As Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, and they looked toward the wilderness, behold, the glory of *Yehovah* appeared in the cloud.[183]

When the nation of Israel set out for the promised land forty years later, the covenant continued.

> They traveled from the mountain of *Yehovah* for three-days. The ark of the covenant of *Yehovah* went before them during those three-days to find a place to rest. The cloud of *Yehovah* was over them by day when they set out from the camp. Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Rise up, *Yehovah*! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you." Whenever it came to rest, he said, "Return, *Yehovah*, to the countless thousands of Israel."[184]

We understand *Yehovah's* protection as He went before them in the cloud to scatter their enemies and also how He safe-guarded the people when they rested.

In the days of the Latter Prophets, it is evident that Noah's covenant was still the same that had been embraced and had also been forfeited by the later kings of Israel.

> The Earth also is polluted under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, [and have] broken the *Aionios* Covenant.[185]

Speaking of the second power of heaven, *Yehovah* spoke through Isaiah:

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[183] Exodus 16:10 modified NASB

[184] Numbers 10:33-36 modified NIV

[185] Isaiah 24:5 ASV

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not fail or be discouraged until he has established justice in the Earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. Thus says God, *Yehovah*, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the Earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: "I am *Yehovah*, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. I am *Yehovah*, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them." Sing to *Yehovah* a new song, his praise from the end of the Earth! Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory to *Yehovah*, and declare his praise in the coastlands. *Yehovah* goes forth like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes. For a long time, I have held my peace. I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in travail. I will gasp and pant. I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbage. I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools. And I will lead the blind in a way that they know not, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level

ground. These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them.[186]

The patience exercised by *Yehovah* corresponded to what was foreseen and foretold by Daniel in 7:25. An evil rulership would oppress and make war against the holy ones of the Most High. They would be handed over for a time, times, and half a time, but eventually the Ancient of Days would pass judgment and allow His Holy One to act. At the proper moment, divine intervention would be authorized, and the *aionios* kingdom would be given to the holy ones—a people belonging to God (note Daniel 7).

The Assyrian and Babylonian captivities would end, and after a considerable length of time, God would re-establish the ancient ways of worship.

> And now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you, and called you by My name: you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and the rivers shall not cover you: when you walk in the fire, you will not be burnt, and the flames shall not burn in you: For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I have given Egypt for your atonement, Ethiopia and Saba for you. Since you became honorable in my eyes, you are glorious: I have loved you, and I will give men for you, and people for your life. Fear not, for I am with you. I will bring your seed from the east, and gather you from the west. I will say to the north: Give up: and to the south: Keep not back: bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the Earth. And every one that calls upon my name, I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, and made him. Bring forth the people that are blind, and have eyes: that are deaf, and have ears. All the nations are assembled together, and the tribes are gathered: who among you can declare this, and shall make us hear the former things? let them

[186] Isaiah 42:1-16 modified RSV

> bring forth their witnesses, let them be justified, and hear, and say, "It is truth."[187]

The mention of those with eyes and ears pertained to the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Jesus instructed His audiences to pray for eyes to see and ears to hear.

For Isaiah's world, a day of judgment was on the horizon. The blind and deaf would be separated from those who could see and hear. And this was the perspective offered in the Gospels. That which had been lost would once again be raised up.

> Thus says the Lord the redeemer of Israel, His Holy One, to the soul that is despised, to the nation that is abhorred, to the servant of rulers: Kings shall see, and princes will rise up, and adore for the Lord's sake, because He is faithful, and for the Holy One of Israel, Who has chosen you. Thus says the Lord: "In an acceptable time, I have heard you. And in the day of *yeshuah*, I have helped you, and I have preserved you and given you to be a covenant people, that you might raise up the Earth, and possess the inheritances that were destroyed: That you might say to them that are bound, "Come forth," and to them that are in darkness, "Show yourselves." They will feed in the ways, and their pastures will be in every plain. They will not hunger or thirst. Neither will the heat or the sun strike them for He that is merciful to them will be their Shepherd, and at the fountains of waters He will give them drink.[188]

In John 4:14, Jesus taught, whoever drinks the water that I give will never thirst; but the water that I give will become a well of water springing up into the life of the *aiona*. In chapter John 10, Jesus also identified himself as the Good Shepherd.

Isaiah spoke of the restoration of the covenant. What were to have been inheritances were destroyed. Israel had bound themselves to a covenant of death.

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[187] Isaiah 43:1-9 DRB

[188] Isaiah 49:7-10 modified DRA

"On that day *Yehovah* of Hosts will become a crown of beauty and a diadem of splendor to the remnant of His people."[189] As was the case with Daniel's vision, a remnant would survive. Whereas the propagators of Second Temple Judaism had put their trust in earthly riches, the remnant to be saved would instead treasure the second power of heaven dwelling among them. Rather than seeking the sparkle of diamonds, the glory and radiance of the One who ruled the angelic realm above the Earth would bring salvation, *soteria*, or *yeshuah*.

In chapter 28, Isaiah noted that the evil-minded in Israel had made a covenant with Hades and death. They put their hope in falsehood and trusted falsehood for protection.

In keeping with David's understanding of the second power of heaven being identified as a rock, Isaiah prophesied:

> Therefore, the Lord GOD said: "Behold, I have laid a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; the one who upholds faith will be unshakable."[190]
>
> Israel was warned:
>
> *Yehovah* will rise up as He did at Mount Perazim. He will rise in wrath, as at the Valley of Gibeon, to do His work, His strange work, and to perform His task, His disturbing task. So now, do not mock, or your shackles will become stronger. Indeed, I have heard from the Lord GOD of Hosts a decree of destruction for the whole land.[191]

Herein, once again, differentiation was made between God Most High as *Yehovah*, and the second power of heaven who is the Lord God of Hosts. The Latter Being was understood as the person of God Who was encountered by *Ish-raah-el*, and whose voice and radiance had been witnessed in the cloud.

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[189] Isaiah 28:5 modified CSB

[190] Isaiah 28:16 modified CSB

[191] Psalm 28:21-22 HCSB

It is noteworthy to mention that both God Most High and the second power of heaven were referenced as "*Yehovah*" in the Hebrew Bible. Sometimes *Yehovah* spoke to *Yehovah*. Because this concept has created a problem for the concept of monotheism, Orthodox translators have obscured these passages in their translations.

Those desiring to learn more on this topic should consult the work of Michael S. Heiser who earned a Ph.D. in biblical Hebrew. Since the Old Testament makes mention of two divine Beings sharing this name, it is important to keep this in mind in the interpretation of Scripture. Since Heiser and others have already gone to great lengths to exegete these passages, and to differentiate between God Most High and the Holy One of Israel, our job here is simply to move forward with the concept of the two powers.

The disturbing task was that He would provide Himself as a sacrifice to redeem Israel; once again allowing for the people to come into the presence of God as celebrants of the *Aionios* Covenant; inheriting the *aionios* life and peace with God as had been received by Noah.

> "For this is like the days of Noah to Me: when I swore that the waters of Noah would never flood the Earth again, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you. Though the mountains move and the hills shake, My love will not be removed from you and My covenant of peace will not be shaken," says your compassionate *Yehovah*.[192]

In verse 13, Isaiah understood, "All your children will be taught by *Yehovah*; and great will be the peace of your children."

> O people in Zion, inhabitants of Jerusalem, you will no longer weep. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you…Your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will see your Teacher. Whenever you turn to the right or to the left,

[192] Isaiah 54:9-10 HCSB

> your ears will hear the *davar* behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it".[193]

Jesus identified Himself as the second power of heaven and inadvertently as the One Who made—and would continue making—His appearance in the clouds.

> It is written in the prophets, "They shall all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. No man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. Very, truly, I tell you, he who upholds faith has the *aionios* life.[194]

As in the passage from Isaiah above, the *davar* was constantly compared to bread in the Hebrew Scriptures. The comparison was so dominant that even the *manna* was referenced as *davar*. And we have already noted that the *davar* was the second power of heaven.

Accordingly in John's Gospel, Jesus further identified Himself:

> I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. I am the living bread which comes down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live in the *aiona*.[195]

Furthermore, these ones would not die the second death. Both Moses and Jesus taught that man would sustain life not by earthly bread alone, but by every *davar* or Word that came from God.

Yehovah spoke through Isaiah saying,

> Open your ears, and come to me; listen well, and you will live. I will establish an *Aionios* Covenant with you, according to the steadfast love I gave David. Look and see, I have offered him as an example, a leader, and as a commander of

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[193] Isaiah 30:19-21 NASB

[194] John 6:45-47

[195] John 6:48-51 modified NASB

> the people. Because of this, I will call a nation to you that you do not know and that does not know you. They will run to you because of *Yehovah*, your God. For the Holy One of Israel will have glorified you! Therefore, seek *Yehovah* while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Return to *Yehovah.* He will have mercy. Return to our God. He will abundantly pardon. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares *Yehovah*. "Just as the heavens are higher than the Earth, My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. Just as the rain comes down and the snow from heaven, and does not return, but instead waters the Earth causing it to bud, so will my *davar* give seed to the planter and bread to the eater. My *davar* which goes forth from my mouth will not return to me without having accomplished what I desire. My Word will be successful in accomplishing my purposes.[196]
>
> God manifested His Word long ago to the fathers in the prophets in different portions and in diverse ways. However, in these last days He has manifested His Word to us by His Son, whom He appointed as the heir of all things, and through whom He made the world. The Son is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the Word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.[197]

Hebrews' author further mentioned those who had tasted the heavenly gift of the Word—having become partakers of the Holy Spirit. He continued completing the picture of the renewed *Aionios* Covenant and the Priesthood of *Melchizedek*.

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[196] Extracted from Isaiah 55:1-11, modified KJV.

[197] Hebrews 3:1-3 modified NASB

> For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the point of dividing soul from spirit, and joints from marrow; He is able to judge the desires and thoughts of the heart. And no creature is hidden from God, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to Whom we must render an account. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.[198]

Note that the generic pronoun "it" was replace by the personal pronoun "He" at the start of the passage. Common use of the term "it" resulted from early and continuing Orthodoxy's misidentification of the Scriptures as the word of God. Rather instead, today we have apprehended that the Word of God was none other than the second power of heaven—the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*—God's righteous ruler Who exercised His authority and power through those who upheld faith.

The way back into the heavenly *aiona* had been opened by the Holy One. If the eschatological perspective presented herein is accurate, Daniel's war in heaven was completed with the destruction of the illegitimate rulership of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by 70 A.D. The controlling regime of those who had created a counterfeit faith and spirituality was destroyed, and the kingdom was given back to the holy ones known as *Ish-raah-el-ites*. The faithful, having proven themselves worth of holy matrimony with the second power of heaven, obtained the *aionios* kingdom; taught of by Jesus.

If we link Paul's experience visiting the third heavens to the *aiona* of the *aiona* of the *aiona*, which perhaps had also been

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[198] Hebrews 4:12-16 NET

mentioned by Daniel as the tripartite division of the former Tent of Meeting or the temple, a few concepts are brought together which may not have been relevantly understood from the late first century onward. One thing is confirmable based upon the Gospels and the book of Hebrews; the veil was ripped in half and the way into the holy of holies was opened as Jesus' flesh was also torn.

Even if the suggested interpretation of Daniel 7 is not correct, that does not change the record of history or all of the prophetic and eschatological concerns of the Scriptures.

Isaiah looked ahead to the future; seeing a divine Protector coming to inhabit Zion. He would offer Himself to the children of Jacob, and these ones would repent of their rebellious deeds. Henceforth, these ones would inherit their namesake as *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Therefore the promise of placing His Spirit upon their future generations and to put His *davar* in their mouths would be fulfilled. The Light of the Lord would shine on them in comparison to darkness that covered other nations who would come seeking their light. The gates into the city would be kept open day and night by the prayers of the saints who would reap the reward of their time in the sanctuary. They would recognize *Yehovah* as their deliverer, protector, and as the powerful ruler of Jacob. Furthermore, peace would be restored.

The gates of a new Jerusalem, referenced as Zion, would remain open at all times; they would not be shut during the day or at night due to the prayers of the saints who would pray and worship without ceasing.

Yehovah foretold, "The children of your oppressors will come bowing to you; all who treated you with disrespect will bow down at your feet. They will call you 'The City of *Yehovah*, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.'" In this sense, the prayers of the holy ones would build Zion, open its gates and keep them open. And furthermore, the worshipers themselves would become the city and habitation of God Most High.

"Then you will recognize that I, *Yehovah*, am your deliverer, your protector, the powerful ruler of Jacob."

Here again, we take note of the expectation for the return of the Ancient Covenant of Peace formerly extended to the children of the Patriarch.

> Sounds of violence will no longer be heard in your land, or the sounds of destruction and devastation within your borders. You will name your walls, "Deliverance," and your gates, "Praise." *Yehovah* will be your permanent source of light. Your time of sorrow will be over. All of your people will be godly; they will possess the land permanently. I will plant them like a shoot; they will be the product of My labor, through whom I reveal My splendor.[199]

Whereas those who upheld faith in the pages of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament were promised occupation of Canaan, in the passage quoted from Isaiah chapter 60, the day was seen by the prophet when the faithful would actually be surrounded by the *Chennan* of the Lord. An eschatological day would arrive when all that any of them would know would be the *chen*, *charis* or the grace of God.

> You will be called, *Yehovah's* priests, servants of our God. I, *Yehovah*, love justice and hate robbery and sin…I will repay them because of my faithfulness; I will make an *aionios* covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations, their offspring [will be known] among the nations. All who see them will recognize that *Yehovah* has good-Worded or blessed them.[200]

> See what is happening! *Yehovah* has proclaimed to all of the Earth. Tell the daughter of Zion, that her *yeshuah* comes bringing His reward and restoration. And the nations will call them "A holy people, the redeemed of *Yehovah*. And the dwelling created for you in Zion, once again, will be sought after; a city not to be abandoned.[201]

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[199] excerpted from Isaiah 60:18-21 modified NET

[200] Isaiah 61:6, 8, and 9 modified NET

[201] Isaiah 62:8-12; note the context of chapters 59-62 modified NET

Individuals who are unfamiliar with the texts of the Old Testament dismiss its relevance on interpretation of the New Testament. However, according to some counts, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are quoted, or alluded to more than 100 times in the New Testament. This number only references three authors and does not include many other quotes or references from the other books. Furthermore, when we study the ancient biblical languages, this is when readers really have their eyes opened to the conceptual continuance of Hebraic eschatology which is unbroken between the pages of Genesis and Revelation. Material that has been translated into English, can only bring forth a very limited conveyance of what actually exists in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and *Koine* Greek texts.

We are reminded from *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* that there has never been a one-to-one translational equivalence between any two languages on Earth. Therefore, those who rely mainly on English texts and who perhaps occasionally consult original language lexical resources are tremendously limited in making relevant connections that exist throughout the biblical writings as a whole.

Section Three

Let me say from the start that my goal in refuting theology is not to prove that there is a better theology. Instead, it is intended to dismiss theologies that blind us from the spirituality that God hoped for each of us to embrace. We need to learn to understand why what we may have been taught is flawed so that we can set it aside and allow our minds to be conditioned by the ancient understandings of the Scriptures.

The Power of Ideas

In this section of *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel*, we are going to explore Historical aspects, interpretive ideas, and events within the rise of Christendom that led to the loss of many concepts of ancient biblical understanding. This has much to do with the imposition of rationalism upon the Scriptures—especially insofar as this concerned the development of Reformation Theology and the roots of Protestant Evangelicalism that were founded in dispensationalism.

Well-intended leaders in these movements imposed ideas upon the Scriptures which were foreign to the intentions of the authors. As a result, students of the Bible who grew up in denominational frameworks of knowledge quite often are unable to easily see any other means by which the Scriptures might have

been interpreted other than from the perspective in which they were raised.

The Parable of the Russian Immigrant

There was a man who emigrated from Russia and moved to a small town in the rural Midwest in 1909. He walked into a grocery store expecting to see shelves lined with many kinds of products. However, all that the store had to offer were cornflakes. This was far from what he expected, and he conversed with the owner. The proprietor explained that this was pretty much all that they had to live on. He received a new shipment each week and folks would line up to get a portion for their families.

The Russian asked with incredulity, what about nutrition? How can anyone survive without protein? The owner explained that on Wednesday night the store offered a time of instruction where the man could study and learn all about corn, how it was processed into flakes, why it was nutritious, how it might be seasoned, and most importantly, he would learn lots of very important facts about the Creator of corn. Those who were more serious about providing for their families would plan to attend regularly. The Russian understood that knowledge about corn and its Maker was power.

The proprietor gave the Russian a copy of their sacred book. But he also warned him, “Only read the few sentences here and there in the book that I underlined for you. See to it that you completely disregard all of the rest of the book. That was only written for people who lived long long ago and is now forbidden for those of us today.”

The store owner handed the Russian a second book and told him to read all of it several times. He explained, “This is exactly what everyone will need to learn in order to survive the coming plague.” The Russian balked questioningly with noticeable alarm, “the coming plague?” The store owner explained, “Yes, we know that this time of tribulation could begin any day now;” as he pointed upward at the clouds in the sky.

The Russian asked, “What about these clouds?” The proprietor explained, “Those are the signs of the times by which even any fool can tell that the plague is right on our doorstep. So it

is very important for you to participate in the study on Wednesdays and to come early every Sunday to help process the shipment and to prepare some of the flakes with sugar for the children. I will train you to teach the children and our neighbors in other communities about the corn and how to survive the coming plague." The store owner emphasized, "You need to direct others in the community to my market for their purchases to be certain they get the right kind of corn and the proper instruction. And one day when you die, your knowledge about these few specific facts concerning cornflakes that are taken from the verses in the sacred book that I underlined, will allow you to enter into heaven before the Creator of corn. All that you need to do while you are alive on Earth is to confess that you believe the factual truth regarding these doctrines about corn. But, I'm going to warn you, those who never knew anything about cornflakes are going to be burned up with the useless discarded corn stalks after they die, and the fire will torment them forever and ever because they did not have a precisely correct understanding of cornflakes as the Creator of corn had intended."

After several months the Russian had settled into the life of the store. He made many new friends who welcomed him very kindly into the community. He forgot about how odd all of this seemed when he had initially visited the store.

Under the guidance of the proprietor, he also invested a great deal of time becoming a meteorological expert—well-able to identify clouds. He intended to be prepared to instruct others when the end came. The lives of the people in the community revolved around watching the clouds intently in order to make predictions regarding the coming plague.

And the Russian very wisely began to store up extra cornflakes for the end. The signs of the time were quite evident.

The proprietor became the most expert evangelist regarding the coming plague. He wrote several books and made a great deal of money. From time to time his own predictions about the plague were proven wrong, but that really never seemed to matter. He always provided a suitable explanation to the congregation, and everyone continued to pay him for corn and his new books. His market flourished!

The proprietor always smiled upon the Russian with favor. The immigrant had paid him a wealthy sum for corn and books; which the man had also purchased as gifts for his friends. He sent many copies back to the people in his homeland.

However, at a certain point, the Russian began to have doubts regarding where he would spend eternity. As he reflected, it seemed odd that simply having become privileged to have learned half a dozen knowledgeable facts regarding corn was all that was necessary to gain entry into the afterlife with the Maker of Corn. The proprietor of the store reassuringly explained that whenever he might doubt, all he had to do was to tell himself the truth about the doctrines concerning corn. By doing so, the Russian would be participating in the ongoing work of the spirit of corn. There was nothing more for anyone to do except to trust in the facts they had been taught. The store owner comforted the Russian that he should never question his standing before the Maker of corn again, because he had fully embraced the truthful facts about corn.

One day, the Russian heard a nasty rumor about the proprietor having an ongoing sexual affair with a woman who volunteered each week at the store. Although he refused to believe such things about his respected leader, soon he made the alarming discovery that several men and women lived in adultery with individuals inside-and-outside the-tight-knit faith-community. The Russian met privately to discuss the matter with the Proprietor, however, what he learned was quite unexpected.

The store owner scowled and angrily demanded, “Have you been reading the forbidden sections of the sacred book?” After several moments of deafening silence, the Proprietor settled down and admonished his convert, “Look, my young Russian friend, the only act of disobedience or immorality for any of us to possibly fall into is the snare of believing that we are living in sin.”

The man went on listening in silence as the Proprietor continued. “We must understand that because of the Maker of Corn’s sacrifice for us, we are forgiven no matter what, and should never feel guilt for any reason.”

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After a pause to see how this information was settling in on the Russian, he went on explaining, “So then today, you may do whatever you want with anyone. The most important thing is that you always remind yourself that you are forgiven.”

The store owner examined his pupil and emphasized, “To feel guilt is the only sin anyone could possibly commit after having been forgiven. We live in an age when we are supposed to enjoy the bounty that the Maker of Corn allows to come before us. Just remember this one fact. No matter what you choose to do in this life, whenever you feel guilt for any reason, just obey the will of the Maker of Corn and tell yourself the truth regarding the fact that you are forgiven. Remind yourself over and over again by repeating, ‘I am forgiven;’ until it sticks in your mind and you no longer feel guilt.”

Although the Proprietor had severely warned against it, the Russian had in fact read the remainder of the sacred book. The immigrant discovered something completely different: The writings from long long ago promised to provide the way into the divine kingdom where sincere seekers would discover the ancient life of the Creator. The stern warning was given that the way was narrow and that very few would discover the means to enter. It came down to the matter of choosing life. In the ancient tradition, on the last day of a three-day journey, sojourners who had become like their Heavenly Father as defenders of the helpless, feeders of the hungry, and providers for the needy could be raised up into the kingdom. From this vantage point, they were able to see a far and distant land and receive new life before the throne of the Creator in the celestial realm. The ancient sustenance of the Word would be provided to those who chose to walk in lives of loyal faithfulness with their Heavenly Father while they yet dwelt upon the Earth. A daily feast was prepared and awaited those who tread upon the mountain of the Lord and who dwelt in its high places. Having counted the worldly costs, those who chose to walk in reverence to the Creator, sought solely after the bread of heaven while they yet lived in this world.

An ancient prophet named Isaiah had much to say which seemed very important for those who would ascend the hill of the Lord.

> *Yehovah* of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of fine aged wine, choice pieces with marrow. And on this mountain, He will heal the blindness which is over all peoples and take away the veil which is stretched over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the shame of His people from all the Earth; For *Yehovah* will have made known His *davar*. And in that day, the people will cry out with joy, "Everyone look and see; this is our God for Whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the Holy One for Whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His *yeshuah*![202]
>
> And a highway will be there, a roadway, and it will be called the Highway of Holiness. Fools and those of poor character will not travel on it, but it *will* be for those who walk *in the* ways of *Yehovah*. No lion will be there, nor will any vicious beast go up on it; These will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk *there*, And the ransomed of *Yehovah* will return, and come with joyful shouting to Zion with *aionios* joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, and their sorrow and sighing will flee away.[203]
>
> Do you not know? Have you not heard? The *aionios* God, *Yehovah*, the Creator of the ends of the Earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to *him who* lacks might, He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for *Yehovah* will gain new strength. They will mount up *with*

[202] Isaiah 25:6-9 modified NASB

[203] Isaiah 35:8-10 modified NASB

wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.[204]

Hope and joy began to rise up in the Russian and he continued to read.

As the Russian considered more of the ancient writings, it seemed to the immigrant that the store owner had severely misunderstood, greatly distorted, and had completely misrepresented the teachings of the sacred book.

Somehow, all of what the Russian had seen going on at the store seemed very, very wrong. Eventually, the time came when the disillusioned Russian began questioning his inheritance of cornflakes in the community. He began to hunger for the bread of the heavenly realm spoken of by Isaiah.

Shortly thereafter, his continuing critical questions were viewed as a threat in the community, and the Proprietor asked him to leave.

The passages quoted in The Parable of the Russian were excerpted and paraphrased using the New American Standard Bible.

Although I consider myself to be Evangelical, as I examine history, this parable underscores what happened to faith under Evangelicalism. Herein, cornflakes are compared to theoretical religious doctrines. The coming plague speaks of Evangelicalism's concept of the last days or the end times; which is falsehood and leads to misdirected spirituality. These were not intended to have been understood as the expected inheritance for God's children. Suffice to understand that there is far more to be obtained in God's store than cornflakes.

My compassionate cry is that we have to identify bad seed for what it is, root out and burn all of these weeds it has produced, and then move forward to maturity of faith.

We have to walk in the genius of Einstein, who advanced in discovery because he was courageous enough to question the well-established assumptions of his contemporaries.

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[204] Isaiah 40:28-31 modified NASB

The Harsh Rationalism of John Calvin

After examining some of the ideas of John Calvin that set the stage for the firm establishment of Reformed theology, and contrasting these to the Hebraic paradigm, we are going to move on to a discussion of John Nelson Darby and his powerful influence on Protestant Evangelicalism.

Grace is translated from the term *charis*. Although Calvin studied Greek, his theological conclusions demonstrated a non-existent biblical comprehension of *charis* as it was contextually used by the authors of Scripture. He moved forward in the development of a theological paradigm based upon the discussion of his predecessors.

While primarily depending upon misinformed historical discussion combined with logical deduction, John Calvin concluded that God's grace was an irresistible divine power which caused individuals on the Earth to intellectually accept and confess what were thought to have been correct theological doctrines. The concept has been popularized as "irresistible grace."

Because of Calvin's maniacal intellectual emphasis, this definition helped Darby develop his own thoughts. As we consider the source of the doctrine of irresistible grace, the term maniacal is purposefully used to underscore John Calvin's extreme perspective that adoption of incorrect theological doctrine was punishable by death. John Calvin did not consider it to be tolerable for anyone to disagree with his doctrines and yet maintain the right to live.

Case in point: Michael Servetus, who held to differing doctrinal convictions, traveled to Geneva Switzerland in order to hear and to create a dialogue with the Reformer. However, when Calvin discovered that Servetus was in his church, he incited a mob of thugs and together they dragged Servetus from the building and burned him alive. When some of his contemporaries called Calvin to account for the brutal murder, he remorselessly accused them of being too harsh.

Calvin was known on his better days for only having had parishioners beaten for smiling during baptisms. It is difficult to understand how his ideas could ever have become respected, but it

would not be the first or the last time that the loudest, most menacing, intolerant, weaponized, threatening individual in the room would get his way.

As mentioned earlier, many biblical terms have been grossly redefined by well-intended individuals during the progression of Christendom. Each of us brings who we are and what we have been taught to the pages of the Bible. Because our minds are defined by an intellectual bubble of limited knowledge and because our lives have been shaped by limited kinds of experiences, these become a determining factor for how we will read and limit what we may discover.

What we think we know and who we have become is the lens through which we interpret the Bible. Our conclusions become the prescription for spirituality.

Rational deduction combined with limited or errant background assumptions shuffled into noncontradictory hierarchical thinking has led to contaminating foreign ideas that have nothing to do with the interest of the authors of Scripture. Nevertheless, these became the foundations of Orthodoxy's creeds and doctrines. As theological discussion continued, multiplied layers of error upon error have resulted.

As compounded mistakes were further superimposed over the Scriptures, as was done unwittingly by John Calvin and many others, concepts in the Bible such as *chen*, *charis*, or grace became grossly distorted.

Distortions interrupt the authors' trajectories of thought. Vital ideas that would have been necessary to comprehend the ongoing discussion in the biblical narrative are lost. Broken continuity leaves readers with many *non sequiturs*. Resultantly, the course of interpretation has been sidetracked into an entirely different direction far, far, away from the Hebraic paradigm.

This is what happened with *charis* being interpreted as favor, *soteria* being interpreted as deliverance from hell, *pisteuo* being interpreted as cognitive belief, with *aionios zoe* being interpreted as "eternal life," and the inspired *Torah* being set in opposition to the Gospel.

Compounding the problem, election was equated with salvation and was further identified with having been marked by predestination, which supposedly ensured the inevitability of afterlife in heaven. And so, we see how theology becomes a house of cards, each delicate king, jack, and joker holding one another in place. If one moves, the others crumble.

Every example mentioned became foundational to the intellectual gnostication of Orthodox Christianity. Rather than surviving as a passionate active walk with the Living Redeemer, faith became a lifeless spirituality of knowledge; revolving around mental acquisition and acceptance and confession of factual truth.

Just as Second Temple Judaism had gotten rid of subjectivity with the second power of heaven, so also, Reformed Orthodoxy accomplished the same.

John Calvin extracted his concept of grace from Augustine who lived between 353 and 430 A.D. Augustine was a North-African bishop who taught the intellectual conceptualization that grace was God's favor; which could not be earned. Please pardon the run-on sentence as we explain how the house of cards works. Grace was a divine empowerment and intervention which caused fallen individuals to accept and believe doctrine, so that they could receive salvation, which was deliverance from hell, and so that they could go to heaven when they died, which was eternal life. This perspective was labeled as "prevenient grace."

Building upon the thoughts of Augustine, John Calvin taught that humankind was bound to sin in such a way that they could not choose to do good. This was called, "total depravity." Calvin's remedy was referenced as God's "irresistible grace." It was a stronger understanding in that those chosen by God to receive grace could not thereafter lose their salvation. Later, this became foundational to John Nelson Darby's ideology of grace which has been embraced by much of Protestant Evangelicalism.

What we see in all of this is that the *chen*, *charis*, or grace that was discoverable through inductive study of the Scriptures was lost and forgotten. Coterminously, knowledge of the existence of the *Aionios* Covenant and living by the subjective voice of God was gone. Knowledge of the second power of heaven, Who was known

as the Word, had already been erased in the second century of the Christian Era by Judaism; who by then had condemned any such interpretation of the Scriptures to be heretical. Along with the loss of other biblical concepts like *pisteuo*, and *soteria*, Christianity became a different religion than that which was taught by Jesus and that was practiced in the first century. Tangible concepts pertaining to daily life were converted into theological theoretical ideas.

Since theologians arrived at the point where their brand of salvation could not be lost once having been obtained by embrace of intangible ideas, this also wiped away any sense of divine-human accountability. The notion of mutual divine-human faithfulness was also eliminated. God became a distant being, watching over the world and weeding out the supposed elect.

If a person embraced the correct thoughts, she or he was understood as having been predestined and among the elect of Earth—who were chosen by God to get into heaven after death. During and after the Reformation, intellectualized doctrinal conceptions of grace, salvation, predestination and election, were all rolled together into tightly packaged bundles of dreamy hypothetical fabrication that ensured life after death in heaven—no matter what.

Sick men like John Calvin viewed themselves as being free to engage in acts of brutality, immorality, and even murder; having become convinced that they were predestined and among the elect and therefore were free of eternal consequences with regard to their actions on Earth. The blood of Michael Servetus, who was burned alive by Calvin—because the man held to differing theological opinions—cries out from the ground condemning the grace that sanctioned his murder.

All of this became a devastating mutilation of Jesus, biblical faith, and the spirituality lived out by Noah, Abraham, Jacob, the prophets, David, and countless others in the Christian era.

Selah

Calvin emphasized the important witness of intellectual agreement with his doctrines, as this stage had been set previously since the time of early Orthodoxy. Unlike the Hebraic faith and spirituality of Jesus, Christianity had become newly focused upon

the acquisition of correct knowledge from the time of the third and fourth century bishops.

Further hardening this position, Reformation logic basically stated that if anyone had intellectually accepted the correct doctrine and had confessed agreement, ones such as these were considered to have been under the grace of God. Such individuals had yielded to irresistible grace, and by doing as much, they indisputably proved that they were counted among the elect of God; who had been predestined before the creation of the world. The implication was that these select individuals were forgiven, otherwise they would not have been able to confess intellectual agreement with the correct doctrines.

And so, Calvin's supposed irresistible grace, created wiggle room or leeway regarding culpability for possible future ongoing reprehensible behavior. Darby found this questionable area of the possibility for ongoing bondage to sin to be useful in the formulation of his own ideas.

For his own part, Darby felt as if continuing Orthodoxy had not taken the embrace of correct doctrine far enough. Thankfully, unlike the case of John Calvin, there is no record of Darby ever killing anyone who disagreed with him. Theologically speaking, however, Darby fully intended to complete the mission and to obtain success wherein continuing Orthodoxy and the Reformers had fallen short. According to Darby, receiving eternal salvation was entirely predicated upon accepting only half a dozen or so academic facts pertaining to dispensationalism, the Gospel, and grace; with the addition of one minor caveat. Darby was going to entirely redefine the concept of morality—completely disconnecting this from personal choice and free-will. Once and for all, Darby was going to sever Protestantism from Moses' Law and Jesus' instruction—thereby providing the masses with, so-called, freedom in Christ to provide healing of the soul.

With respect to Calvin's supposedly correct teachings, those who were subject to irresistible grace and had subsequently accepted his doctrine had done so according to God's choice of predestination for them before the world was created. Accordingly, in the Reformation paradigm of thought that continues today, there

supposedly has never been any such thing as free-will. Therefore, those who might never confess agreement with Calvinistic or Reformed doctrines proved that they had been predestined toward hell by God even before their births. This abhorrence has become known of in theological discussion as “double-predestination.”

Personally, I think all of this sounds horrible. I cannot reconcile God who is Love creating people intentionally to send them to hell.

I had a friend in my Ph.D. studies who was a dyed in the wool Calvinist. To test his fortitude regarding predestination and the supposed lack of free-will in the world, I considered kicking him in the shin as hard as I could with my steel-toed boot. Keep in mind that he was much bigger and stronger than me; and probably could have torn me limb from limb! I reasoned that if he jumped at me swinging, I could desperately shout, “God predestined me to kick you! I lack free-will! I didn’t have a choice!” Nevertheless, as I said, he was my friend. I thought it was best not to risk bursting his theological bubble if that is what gave him faith to continue seeking the Lord.

For those who are interested, Michael S. Heiser Ph.D. offered valuable instruction identifying the error of equating election or the concepts of predestination and salvation. As an Orthodox thinker, Heiser still identified salvation as getting into heaven after death. However, his incomparable understanding of the biblical languages is invaluable. Heiser earned a Ph.D. in Biblical Hebrew and by nature, examined the Bible inductively. He explained the use of biblical terms and provided examples from Scripture demonstrating that God’s foreknowledge and predestination were changeable.

Reformers typically root their arguments in the fabricated concept of “original sin.” They ignore the Bible which teaches that humankind was created in original innocence and that after Eden, those who found themselves living in a desperate world chose to call upon God Most High for help, rescue, or *yeshuah*. Although Moses commended that the Israelites should “choose life,” today Calvinists remove the concept of free-will from that admonition. They rely upon the circular reasoning that only those predestined to

choose life could actually have chosen life because these ones were supposedly among the elect.

The reason Calvinists decided that humankind could not make the decision for themselves to freely choose to follow God is that this choice and action could then be construed as the work of individuals themselves to obtain salvation from hell. Therefore, hardline Calvinists, who perhaps represent 99% of Calvinists, do not allow that there can be any possibility for free-will or independent human choice. Otherwise they fear that salvation could be the result of works. So then, even though innumerable individuals in the Scriptures are presented with choices, purist Calvinists accept that all of the choices and behaviors of humankind from Eden onward were pre-ordained and willed by God. Some that I have discussed the matter with find no problem in the concept that this perspective places responsibility upon God for evil choices and acts of wickedness. So then, according to Calvinism, when God punishes anyone for their behavior, this was actually supposedly His decision for them to begin with. This is a terribly perverted perspective! May it never be! And I repeat, may it never be!

As ridiculous as this may seem to some, there have been ongoing church splits based upon these supposed doctrinal absolutes.

Rather than trying to reason with a Calvinist, maybe perhaps instead, just try kicking him in the shin. Then either run as fast as you can or challenge him regarding the existence of free-will. No, really, I am just kidding to make a point. Hurting people is wrong. Somebody wise once reflected, “In a world where you can choose to be anything, always choose to be kind.” And for the sake of properly interpreting the Bible, never forget that God gave each of us the ability to choose. Moreover, as we learn from innumerable examples in the Bible, God is going to hold each of us accountable for our choices.

Some of my dearest friends are Calvinists. They are kind, loving, thoughtful, helpful brothers and sisters. Nevertheless, the harsh Aristotelian rationalism of Orthodoxy seems to have gotten a few of them into a bind that is out of touch with reality.

One of my Reformed pastors commented humorously to me, “Some of us are Reformed, but there are other churches in the denomination that we say are ‘truly Reformed.’” He would not say that the extremists were wrong, but instead diffused the conversation with humor.

The fact of the matter is that many people have become so indoctrinated by fundamentalism in their factions that they will never consider having a look outside the religio-political bubble that has led to deafness and blindness. To admit that even a single thread of Calvinism has been in error causes the entire paradigm to collapse. Many books have been written explaining the errors of this religious movement.

I hope not to have sounded mean in presenting John Calvin or Calvinism. Furthermore, many individuals in Reformed churches have little or no idea of the actual details of the doctrinal formulations. However, when men are being culled and are selected from the congregation to become elders, perhaps many years after their families have been members and they are firmly situated in the community of the church, they are confronted with the doctrine. When this happens, there are no negotiable points; and they are expected to agree intellectually with all of what has been labeled here as the “dark-side of Calvinism.” If these men reject the doctrine, they might not be asked to leave the congregation, but they are probably finished insofar as being selected for positions of authority or influence. Moreover, by rejecting the Calvinistic doctrines, they demonstrate that they have not received God’s supposed irresistible grace.

And to be realistic, this dynamic is not solely endemic to Reformed churches. There can be almost no doubt that your pastor expects agreement from the congregation with regard to the church’s statement of faith. However, these doctrines seldom have anything to do with anyone’s actual spiritual commitment to the Lord. Nevertheless, this has become the way of churchianity. As the world heads into post-modernism, increasing numbers of individuals find this to be a problem.

A Few Comments on Martin Luther

The Reformer, Martin Luther, who lived between 1483 and 1546, took an extreme position against the role of works in obtaining salvation. Of course, Luther was speaking of the Orthodox concept of receiving deliverance from hell through the cognitive activity of belief. Because of this he was convinced that the book of James did not belong in the Bible. James taught in the second chapter that faith without works is dead, but this went against everything Luther believed. As Reform influences have grown over the centuries, today there must be a dozen or more theological justifications arguing against and dismissing what James had to say. It is amazing how rationalism is powerful enough to dismiss the obvious instruction of the Scriptures.

An enduring phrase characterizing the Reformation was "sola *fide*;" which is translated from Latin as "faith alone." This statement and standing of the Reformers was a reaction against Catholicism. Without taking sides, the Hebraic perspective changes how we read the Bible. It does not find itself stuck in the ruts of Orthodoxy. Instead, Hebraic study is rooted in the inductive observation of biblical terms in the contexts in which they were used. The goal is to recapture the background knowledge of faith and spirituality that was lost shortly after the first century A.D. This Ancient Eastern Abrahamic worldview eliminates many *non sequiturs* such as Luther's argument against works. The Bible itself is allowed to become the authority.

Of course, the method of inductive study almost entirely changes Orthodoxy's definitions of salvation, grace, and faith. Nevertheless, in the Hebraic paradigm, the texts of Scripture become harmonized. The problem is that theological opinions have usurped the authority of the Bible. Much of Churchianity only wants to know what the Scriptures teach so long as none of this interferes with their doctrines.

Luther and Calvin used the theological opinions of Orthodoxy to determine what the Bible was saying, and they created a lot of problems. They were exclusive instead of being inclusive. They drew lines of demarcation, which they dared anyone

to cross with the promise of repercussion. They were men of violence.

My dear friend who is a Lutheran Pastor and a well-studied Luther scholar once said that "to disagree with Luther was to make him hate you." The bottom floor of Luther's home in Wittenburg, Germany has a museum containing many of his writings and tracts encased in glass. Examination of his productions reveal much about the rancorous character of Luther. When I visited and saw the artifacts, I was disappointed with the discovery that Luther was not such a nice guy as I might have formerly presumed.

Generally speaking, it seems that many of the Reformers could not disagree with others apart from tangible expressions of vehement murderous hatred.

The peasants of Germany looked to Luther to help them, and he initially indicated his support stating, "Every peasant should be recognized as an autonomous being equal to any lord in the eyes of God."[205] But then later, while attempting to preserve his respect by the Rulers of Germany, he turned on these lower class, disadvantaged people and wrote the treatise "Against the Murderous, Thieving Hordes of Peasants." Resultantly, Noble forces slaughtered more than 50,000 peasants between 1524 and 1525.

In contrast to Martin Luther's vitriolic hateful treatises, John the disciple of Jesus brings us this Hebraic reminder:

> We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have the *aionios* life abiding in them. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet

[205] Gary McGath, "The Peasants' War and Martin Luther," *The Reading Room*, *Online Library of Liberty*, January 26, 2024, https://oll.libertyfund.org/publications/reading-room/2024-01-26-mcgath-peasants-war-martin-luther.

> refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.[206]

Luther wielded a very powerful pen. With his high degree of influence, it seems that the Reformer could have taken action to help his less fortunate brothers and sisters in the faith; but he chose instead to stir up authorities to kill them. In the least, he could have attempted diplomacy.

In 1543 he wrote the antisemitic treatise, "On the Jews and Their Lies," demanding destruction of Jewish places of worship, confiscation of their property, and approving their deportation. With this realization, can anyone wonder about the foundation of Hitler's motivations?

Luther's popularity is enormous in the world due to the fact that almost nobody knows anything about his scandalous history. Someone wise has said that a people who forget about history are bound to repeat the mistakes of the past. And here we are today once again with lunatics burning down synagogues while bigoted governing authorities look the other way. God have mercy!

Anyone who truly loves Jesus cannot hate his neighbor.

John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, was very clear on the matter.

> Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.[207]

And it does not matter if we are talking about Jews or any other people group. Acts of hatred have no place in the lives of those who claim to uphold faith in God.

How can any of us follow the teachings of anyone who acts with hatred toward others? Should we respect a man or the fruit of his lips when we know that he was blatantly antisemitic?

The Apostle Paul taught:

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[206] 1 John 3:14-18 NRSV

[207] 1 John 4:20 NRSV

> Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, wrath, factions, divisions, envying, drunkenness, reveling, and behaviors such as these. I forewarn you, even as I did before, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk.[208]

A Hebraic Understanding of the Law and Grace

The dynamic historical development of supposed correct doctrines of grace was set in place by early Orthodoxy's bishops' errant interpretation of *charis* solely as favor, which they naturally assumed from their Classical Greek educations. Due to their hatred of the Jews, the bishops chose to ignore Old Testament Bible concepts and unwittingly were led to read interpretive assumptions from their Platonic, Aristotelian, and Homeric upbringings into the Scriptures as they defined terms and constructed doctrines.

In my own nine month contextual inductive study of *charis* during my Master's Degree program, I looked at 256 terms containing the *chari* word stem in the *Koine* Greek New Testament. In a few instances, the contextual definition of favor was appropriate. However, in the vast majority of instances the *chari* terms were identifiable as the divine gift of the manifest presence of God. And since the occurrence of miracles seemed to surround various terms containing *chari*, it was reasonable to understand that *charis* was the means by which signs and wonders were given to God's children. Prior to writing this book, with more detailed study of Hebrew and Greek Old Testament passages, it became more evident that *chen*, *charis* or grace pertained to individuals who listened to and obeyed the voice of God. The Old and New Testament findings were complementary to one another.

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[208] Galatians 5:19-25 modified ASV

Orthodoxy set the discussion of *charis* or grace far off course, and dominant theological discussion has continued in the same errant direction until today.

Furthermore, despite Tertullian's warnings in his writings against Marcion, early Orthodox leaders firmly embraced Marcion's opposition of Moses' Law with the Gospel and grace; wherein he also had followed in the common Classical Greek definition. Marcion also hated the Jews. His movement existed for more than a century before the rise of Christian Orthodoxy, so it is evident where the initial influence and hostility came from. Even the Orthodox fellowships and worship mirrored the pre-existing Marcionite churches to the degree that traveling bishops were warned to pay close attention, lest they find themselves worshiping alongside the Marcionites.

Compounding error upon error, due to their antisemitic agenda, in complete ignorance of the Old Testament concepts of *yeshuah* and *soteria*, early Orthodox Greek bishops defined salvation as getting into heaven after death. They further equated salvation with approximations of the phrase *aionios zoe*, which is translated into English as eternal life.

The Greek phrase *eis ton* is used hundreds of times in Scripture and is most literally translated with the phrase, "in the."

With the majority of its usages, authors follow this by stating a location. Consequently, what we see in the Bible is that *eis ton* is followed by any kind of place; such as in the house, in the heavens, in the river, in the brook, in the pit or in the dungeon, etc.

And yet, rather than considering that *eis ton aiona* might also have referenced a heavenly setting, the bishops never seem to have given translation any other consideration and moved forward in the intellectual momentum of their deductive assumptions.

In the Hebraic understanding, whenever *Yehovah*, the Holy One of Israel, or the angel of the Lord, etc., was involved in the context of the narrative, the nouns *yeshuah* and *soteria* and their corresponding verb forms, *yasha* and *sodzo*, had to do with the saving actions of God's deliverance, provision, miracles, and divine help. *Yeshuah* or *soteria* were typically imparted through various manifestations of the Word; known as the *davar*, or as *Memra*.

As a result of their dependence upon early Orthodoxy's interpretive errors, and because they were oblivious to the historic Old Testament attempt to rid the world of the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek* and its Abrahamic divine-human participatory spirituality, Reformation thinkers like Calvin and Luther built upon a tremendously flawed foundation rooted in the intellectual acquisition of religious knowledge. They had no idea what the Apostle Paul was teaching in most of his epistles regarding *charis* or grace; as individuals experienced the miraculous Presence and the gifts of God. In the Scriptures, in more than a hundred instances, various forms of *charis* indicated divine-human personal encounter. It was used as a participatory experiential term.

Despite Calvin's firm conclusions, none of the *chari* terms bore any evidence of having been a miraculous force of God that caused individuals to intellectually accept the veracity of Calvinistic doctrines. In other terms, the New Testament lacked contextual evidence to demonstrate or prove that the divine imposition of grace caused anyone to believe religious facts.

Nevertheless, early Orthodoxy's conclusions misguided the Reformers to assume that Paul was teaching sterile intellectual theology—rather than comprehending that the apostle was facilitating their embrace of ancient Hebraic spirituality. They were blinded from the realization that Paul was combating the influences of Second Temple Judaism; which sought to remove divine-human subjectivity from Israel. And so, to a large degree, men like Calvin and Luther thought they were pleasing God by establishing an untainted, pasteurized, mentally consumable doctrinal religion. And remarkably, in keeping with the goal of Second Temple Judaism and the agenda of early Orthodoxy, the overarching sentiment of the Reformation also served to further remove divine-human subjectivity from the Christian faith. Reformed Christianity is centered upon the accepted knowledge and the confession of supposedly correct theological information. Accordingly, the Westminster Confession is the hallmark of Reformed faith.

These concerns lead up to the concept of greatest importance which is the New Testament presentation of being saved by grace.

Examining the context of Ephesians 2:1-3, we read:

> And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.[209]

Herein we find a description of the general condition of humankind after being ejected from Eden. Paul was concerned about individuals' choices to walk in the lustful ways of the nations that were motivated by entities in the spiritual world.

> But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).[210]

In the Hebraic paradigm, it was by the *chen*, *charis*, or the grace of God that the faithful received daily help and deliverance from God. They sought after, listened and obeyed His voice. Examination of every instance of *soteria* or *yeshuah* in the Old Testament supports this understanding. This can be repeatedly proven by extensive inductive contextual analysis of the term.

Moreover, in the New Testament, *charis* is identifiable in many contexts as the gift of the manifest presence of God; through Whom signs and wonders were given. These were the means by which Paul's listeners were receiving salvation. In Paul's perspective, this had nothing to do with the intangible theological concepts of obtaining deliverance from hell or of getting to go to heaven after an individual died. Rather instead, the Hebraic concept of salvation can be provably defined as *Yehovah's* tangible deliverance, provision of needs, miraculous intervention, and innumerable forms of divine help. Those whom the Apostle

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[209] Ephesians 2:1-3 NASB

[210] Ephesians 2:4–5 NASB

addressed were experiencing the same divine-human phenomena as had been realized from the days of Noah.

Early Orthodox bishops failed to understand these concepts because of their biased disposition combined with the ingrained perspectives of their own formal educations. They grew up reading the theoretical writings of Homer, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. They did not need to study any further to determine the meaning of *charis*. By the time of their adulthood, they knew that grace was favor. And that was that. So when they read the term *charis* in the New Testament, it was only natural for them to superimpose the common Classical Greek definition over the texts of Scripture. Instantly, one concept was replaced with another.

By contrast, Jesus' disciples were manual laborers. Although Paul had been educated in the orthopraxy of the Second Temple by Gamaliel and in the legalities of the second *torah* traditions of the elders, he was a tentmaker by trade. However, the bishops interpreted the Bible under the assumption that the Roman, Ephesian, and Corinthian audiences had been seeking theological knowledge and were taking note of the Apostle's instruction as if they had been highly educated theoretical interpreters of doctrine.

Rather instead, all of Paul's listeners had been experiencing the Word of God in His multifaceted appearances—using dreams, visions, and angelic visitations. A reading of the Luke–Acts narrative clearly demonstrates that Paul was explaining the Hebraic heritage of this grace in contrast to the falsehood of Second Temple Judaism and the tradition of the elders. Luke's narrative began with the explanation that he intended to write about all those who were eyewitnesses and who became servants of the Word. In four instances in Acts, Luke reported to his readers that the Word was advancing and increasing His presence throughout Israel, Asia, and the rest of the Mediterranean world. Orthodoxy misinterpreted these statements errantly thinking that references to the Word pertained to preached messages.

However, when we engage in detailed study regarding Luke's primary concerns, in the advancement of the Word, individuals were experiencing divine manifestations. It is not that preaching was expanding. The fact of the matter was that the

second power of heaven was advancing through His own mysterious divine means.

There was no record of anyone studying theology in the New Testament. We do not find individuals debating theoretical principles about God in the narratives. And no example was set for employing Aristotelian reductionistic logic or imposing hierarchical thinking and the law of noncontradiction over the Bible in order to extract correct doctrines. Rather instead, that was the mindset and agenda of the third and fourth century world into which the Greek bishops were born—several hundred years after the life of Jesus, His disciples, and the original apostles. By contrast, these first century seekers who became servants of the Word were living out lives of mystical encounter with the Holy One of Israel.

When we come to passages contrasting the law to grace, we have to apprehend the history of the Apostle Paul's life. He formerly served the regime of Second Temple Judaism and was an enforcer of the traditions of the Elders or the second *torah*. He had letters from the chief priests allowing him to arrest individuals who celebrated the subjective spirituality that had been restored by Jesus. However, after he encountered the Word of God on the road to Damascus and was struck blind, he was confronted with the life-long error wherein he had misplaced his allegiance. After being miraculously healed of blindness through the prayer and laying of hands by Ananias, he traveled to Arabia, where—according to Barker's research—the Abrahamic refugees who fled from Josiah had settled. Three years later he returned with an entirely different perspective.

During His visionary experience, the Holy One identified Himself as Jesus—which was revolutionary to Paul's sterile objective religious adherence to the *takkanot*. After his return from Arabia, he propagated the faith and spirituality of the ancient *Ish-raah-el-ites*—that was centered upon encounter with the Word and tangible experience with spiritual gifts.

It is important to reconstruct a dichotomy if we are to understand the instruction of Paul. Although he appeared to contrast the Law to the grace of God, which leads Christians today to reject the inspired *Torah* of the Ten Commandments, Paul was

speaking of the *takkanot*. Two concepts that should have remained distinct from one another became merged together. The terms *Torah* and *takkanot* were rendered as a single concept in Greek using the primary term *nomos*; which leads to our present-day confusion. Because Paul recited and affirmed several of the Ten Commandments in Romans 13, we are able to comprehend that Paul was not rejecting Moses' inspired *Torah*. Ultimately, these kind Fatherly instructions were fulfilled as ones tangibly and sacrificially loved their neighbors in the same way that they loved themselves and when they loved God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Those who Luke identified as having become eyewitnesses and servants of the Word in the New Testament were walking in the ancient life or the *aionios life of the prophets*.

Whereas the Gospel writers wrote of the restoration of the Word, Paul emphasized the same concept using the term grace.

Whereas Saul had formerly walked in dead fundamentalist legalism, he was renamed as Paul with his discovery and commitment to a mutually faithful relationship with God. Luke taught in Acts that the Apostle lived in divine-human fellowship with Him through various manifestations of the Word. Not only did he travel on the Earth, but he understood in very real terms that he had been made alive in heaven—and even described his personal birth into the spiritual realm.

Concerning his angelic identity which transcended the veil between Earth and heaven, Paul explained:

> I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—he was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how he—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into Paradise, and he heard inexpressible Words, which no man is permitted to speak. On behalf of him will I boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to *my* weaknesses. For if I do wish to boast I shall not be foolish, for I shall be speaking the truth; but I refrain, so that no one may credit me with more than he sees *in* me or hears from me. And because of the

> surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself!.[211]

We understand that Paul was speaking of himself in the *aionios* experience and not someone else from verse 7 afterward when his physical earthly identity was buffeted by a thorn in the flesh to help maintain his humility. We also perceive by his grammatical use of the third person that he was grappling to make sense of his own heavenly transformation.

While living out the *aionios* life, it is clear that Paul continued to embrace the moral behavioral aspects of the Law by which sin and disobedience before God were definable. However, Paul came to recognize that daily, lifeless, rote, legalistic obedience to the human invention of the *takkanot*—which had its beginnings in the era of Josiah and that became tremendously more oppressive under the rule of Second Temple Judaism—had never been *Yehovah's* intention for humankind. Jesus taught and modeled the same stance, which contributed to the murderous desire of the Priests.

With this perspective and because of his personal experiences, he wanted his audiences to comprehend that they were not under Second Temple Judaism's adherence to the traditions of the elders that comprised the second *torah* as the goal of their spirituality, but instead they were under *chen*, *charis*, or grace. In the most ideal sense, if each person sought, listened, and obeyed the voice of God throughout their daily lives, each one would never violate the Ten Commandments. Nonetheless, by their imposition of the *takkanot*, the pharisaical religious leaders had placed a burdensome yoke upon the necks of the Jews. By contrast, the presence and empowerment of God—which had always been the inheritance of those entering into the *aionios* covenant relationship with the Lord since the time of Noah—was the same birthright which Jesus had come to re-establish. By confession and

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[211] 2 Corinthians 12:2-7 modified NASB

forsaking sin, cleansing with water, and by re-enlivening the sacrifice, the faithful children of God were given new birth and heavenly standing places in the *aiona* of God's presence.

When we come to grips with the tremendous historical influence of the whore of Babylon, which was the imposturous defiled form of Judaism that had assumed power over the Jerusalem Temple following release from the captivities, Paul's divorce from this monstrosity helps students of Scripture to make sense of the living, active spirituality of *charis* from God.

Those who were eyewitnesses and who became servants of the Word, were no longer the slaves of the lifeless second man-made *torah*, but instead had become the servants of the manifest presence of God. Furthermore, by turning away from the traditions of the elders, they had effectively removed themselves from the authority and hypocritical judgment of the Temple rulers and lawyers. With the dismissal of the *takkanot* and the embrace of God's voice in *chen*, *charis* or grace, for all intents and purposes, there was no need for earthly priestly rulership. Since individuals could once again enter into the presence of God on their own and find heavenly mediation through the King of Righteousness—Who in ancient times had been known as *Melchizedek*—the need for an institutional religious hierarchy was greatly diminished.

Accordingly, those whose spiritual eyes and ears had been opened, and who were walking with the Holy One in the *aionios* life, also discovered His mysterious miraculous intervention in their daily affairs. Signs and wonders characterized their lives. They had been born again *into the aiona*—the heavenly angelic realm of God's presence.

Jesus' atonement allowed those who were humbled and who would turn from wickedness, confess their sins, and be washed with water—the right to bless the bread and wine in order to re-enliven the sacrifice and to break the bread in order to open the pathway into the holy realm. In the Old Testament era, the individual sacrifices had done the same. Again, we reference Paul's statement on this matter.

In 1 Corinthians 10, in a context discussing eating the bread and drinking the wine to celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus' body and

blood, the apostle challenged his New Testament audience, “Look at the nation of Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?”

We should pause momentarily to reflect upon the fact that many contemporary Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Charismatics are going to balk at the idea that what is available today was available in the Old Testament era as well. This reaction is due to the pervasive blinding impact of dispensationalism—a topic we are going to delve into ahead.

Entry into the *aionios* life had always been the inheritance of the faithful from the time of Noah as a step back toward the divine-human relationship in Eden. Although humankind was dead after being cast out of Eden, they could be made alive once again by entry into the presence of God in the *aiona*. The *aionios* or the ancient life was also described as entry into the kingdom. Cleansing with water and becoming covered with innocent blood was of necessity for entry.

Therefore, we continue reading in Ephesians 2 that God,

> raised us up with Christ, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *realm*, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming of the *aiona*, He might show the surpassing riches of His *charis* in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.[212]

The *takkanot* could not renew anyone to the ancient life of Eden, nor could it provide entry into the *aiona* before the presence of God. However, this was possible because of the sacrifice.

Therefore, Paul further explained: For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9.

Even as Paul had been healed by the manifestation of a gift of grace, this was the Hebraic concept of having been saved. Recall that *sodzo* was translated from *yasha*, which was the verb form of “*yeshuah*.” The first century *Ish-raah-el-ites* were being saved or helped by manifestations of *yeshuah*” because of their faith. Herein,

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[212] Ephesians 2:6-7 modified NASB

we understand that because they had become faithfully dedicated to the Lord and were carrying out His interests in the world, that God was also watching and taking note of their needs. Resultantly, He was intervening and providing divine help.

By contrast, in its vast loss of perspective and *misunderstanding*, early Orthodoxy wrongly interpreted Paul's statement according to its revised definitions of *pisteuo*, *soteria* or *sodzo* and *charis*. In a complete and utter loss of all Hebraic definitions of these terms, they re-cast Paul's statement making him instead say that because of God's favor, individuals would get to go to heaven after death because of their belief; which was the knowledgeable embrace and affirmation of supposedly correct religious information. The Orthodox interpretation is what shaped Christendom, because the early bishops had forsaken the necessity of using the Old Testament to interpret the New Testament. They completely removed themselves from any consideration of the ancient meanings of *pisteuo*, *soteria*, *sodzo,* and *charis*; as these had been translated from Hebrew and Aramaic and as these were used in the Septuagint.

This was the crux of the shift between a practical orthopraxy and a theoretical gnostic orthodoxy. Reformation, Evangelical and Fundamentalist thinkers in these streams of Christendom followed in the errant mindset of early and continuing Orthodoxy. As a result, large segments of the contemporary church ignorantly stress the primacy of "belief" in doctrines rather than participation with the mysterious *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God. These denominational factions typically condemn divine-human interactive practices as nonsense or mysticism. In fellowships of this type, one would never say, "I heard the voice of God speaking to me," without raising hair on the back of the necks of the leaders. They would be marginalized as mentally unstable people. A person might get away with this kind of rhetoric and maintain their respect—perhaps only if they closely linked hearing the voice of God to something they had *read* in Scripture or if they reference part of the priest or pastor's spoken message. Those are commonly understood as safe means of hearing God's voice. However, if anyone pressed the matter claiming to have had visionary or other-worldish kinds of

encounters, they might invite indictment and condemnation for pursuing demonic activities. And the term “demonic” was used by early Orthodox bishops to judge and eliminate subjective spiritual practices.

In my own history of experience in churches that bear these denominational labels, more than once I have heard elders pejoratively criticize and stigmatize individuals who claimed to have heard God’s voice, “How do we know it was not a demon speaking to you?” The question is not an inquiry, it is a searing condemnation. Similarly, in preemptive teachings against the perceived threat of mystical experience, leaders have warned, “You never know if it is a demon speaking to you.” And yet, by contrast in John 10, Jesus taught that His sheep would hear His voice. In fact, this was the hallmark of every *Ish-raah-el-ite*. Speaking in this interest, Jesus instructed His audiences with the practicality, “Pray that you would have eyes to see and ears to hear.”

What we take note of embodied here is the age old philosophical war between objectivity and subjectivity. And it should be understood that the accusers have typically been those who lacked divine-human experience. This was the case of the early bishops whose lives were hundreds of years removed from those of Jesus’ disciples who lived day-by-day in the grace of hearing, being challenged by, and either obeying or disobeying the voice of the Holy One. Reform movements have typically arisen confronting what they labeled as “religious excesses.” They attempt to shift the scales heavily weighting the priority of doctrine based upon verses such as Ephesians 2:8. And they assume that they are protecting Christianity by making every effort to eliminate any and all discussion of divine-human encounter. And so many of these institutions exist as control structures; exactly like Second Temple Judaism.

So then we understand that in Orthodox theology, grace is no longer connected to hearing and obeying the voice of God. By comparison, in Reformed Orthodox theology, grace still has nothing to do with mystically hearing the voice of God, but instead is a divine compulsion which is irresistible. In this perspective, God imposes grace upon individuals to make them act in certain ways

and to cause them to believe doctrinal facts—which are supposedly correct. And in the minds of some Reformed and Evangelical individuals, which might also include some Pentecostals and Charismatics, grace is the unmerited favor of God. Certain individuals take this understanding of grace to extremes thinking that because they have the unmerited favor of God, they can walk in willful disobedience—perhaps allowing them to engage in consensual fornication or adultery. Darby's version of Evangelical grace is the most scandalous of all—allowing individuals to harmfully lie, cheat, steal, rape, molest, etc., while yet in the same instant remind themselves that they are forgiven. Darby—and even many Evangelicals today—assume that because Jesus died for the sins of the world—it is no longer possible to commit any of the acts of immorality that were identified by Paul. For the most part, only in some forms of Charismatic and Pentecostal understanding is the concept of grace connected to spiritual gifts. This connection should be intuitive based upon contextual inductive study of the Scriptures and due to the fact that in *Koine* Greek the gifts of grace are the *charismata* (χαρίσματα). The spelling of *charis* and charismata makes this obvious. It is simple to see in Greek that the *charismata* is a derivation from the Greek term *charis* (χάρις). Moreover, it should be logical to understand that those who hear God's voice and obey are going to walk in His gifts.

If more people were able to read the Greek Bible, it would be unnecessary to point out the basic relationship between these terms. And moreover, in strict Reformed thought regarding grace, there is no choice to obey because there is supposedly no such thing as free will. Grace is a power of God which is imparted to make human beings do whatever it is that they do. Most notably, grace is the divine impartation that causes individuals to believe correct doctrine. God is the One Who supposedly retains the right of choice. Either He decides to give a person grace, or He supposedly decides not to give them grace. And supposedly, if God chooses not to give a person grace, thereby not allowing them to believe the correct religious doctrines, they are going to spend eternity in the fire of hell. In the Reformed paradigm, eternal destiny depends solely upon God's choice.

For the record, once again, I label this gnostic abhorrence that maligns the character of God as "filthy hog-wash." Some of my friends are not willing to walk in the genius of Einstein and they are not willing to look outside of the intellectual bubble that has contained them. And in the worst cases, some of them live lives as slaves to sin with the fatalistic conclusion that their inability to overcome temptation is rooted in a destiny God has foisted upon them.

So then, a problem each of us faces as we read Paul's letters, is that we have to free ourselves from the misinformation of churchianity that has programmed our minds and once again interpret the apostle's discussions according to the experiential and participatory ancient understandings of these terms.

Paul was not teaching theoretical gnostic theology lessons; he was taking what he had learned by real living divine-human experiences combining this with his understandings of Old Testament spirituality; in order to instruct individuals in how they could walk with God. On this note, he told the Romans that he longed to visit them so that he could impart spiritual gifts—desiring that they might be established. These were commonly spread through the laying on of hands as was the case with blessing or good-Wording in the Old Testament.

Furthermore, Paul conveyed an identical idea to the Romans in 10:17 explaining that "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

Many well-intended but misinformed English translations mistakenly render "hearing the Word of God" as having something to do with listening to a humanly preached message about the Gospel.

Interpreters and translators of these renditions appear to be unable to contextually identify the Word of God as the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. They are completely ignorant of the concept of the Word as was presented in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*; the understanding of which was derived through contextual analysis of the Old Testament. They do not realize that the Word, who was the second power of heaven, was moving

throughout the faith community, just as He was in the days of Abraham.

Not only have they followed in the aforementioned compounded errors of Orthodox, Reformed, Evangelical, and Fundamentalist thinkers, but they have also read the Bible through the humanly contrived interpretive lens of dispensationalism. We will delve into this problem ahead.

The miraculous events of divine provision, deliverance, and help spoken of in the Old and New Testaments were the salvation of God and were the result of each individual's pledge of loyal faithfulness and renewal of the marriage covenant with God. Unlike the whore who invented her own sterile religion and was rejected, the bride tangibly embraced her Husband and was received and invited into the life of *Yehovah*.

Examining another passage of similar concern written by Luke, we read in Acts 15:10-12 that Paul and Barnabas were being called to give an account for their refusal to impose Second Temple Judaism's circumcision upon Gentile converts.

They argued,

> Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the *charis* of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.[213]

Remember that the concept of being saved had nothing to do with getting into heaven after death. This was a reference to having received God's divine miraculous help; as was noted by the ongoing manifestation of signs and wonders.

In other terms, Luke and Paul contended that trimming the foreskin off of one's genitals had no bearing upon receiving the daily help of God's *Yeshuah*. Moreover, they refused to make this a prerequisite of divine-human experience.

Earlier, I invited Jews and Christians to participate in an identical act of spirituality, while acknowledging that I was probably

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[213] Acts 15:10-12 modified NASB

going to lose some friends in the process. I hold to the understanding that the Lord does not place prerequisites upon those who seek Him with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength. By contrast, churchianity has trained its constituency to think that learning and acknowledging the correct religious doctrines is somehow mandatory prior to experiencing God's presence.

As the Word spread throughout the Mediterranean, many Greeks were encountering the Lord. Paul probably had a hard time in his travels; keeping up with the workings of the Holy One. The point here is that divine-human experience was outpacing circumcision. And moreover, none of those who were encountering the Word in the first century had ever studied Orthodoxy, Reformed, Evangelical, Fundamentalist church doctrine.

The outpouring of the spirit, which mirrored the experience of the 70 elders of the ancient *Ish-raah-el-ites*, which occurred because Jethro the priest of *Midian* had advised Moses in the matter, was happening with increasing frequency to men having foreskins. Because the actions of God preempted the legislated rules of the temple, the *takkanot* was demonstrably inessential.

My earlier exhortation to both Jewish and Christian readers was in keeping with the instruction of Jesus.

The overarching point here regarding Paul's instruction was that nobody can set up rules about how God can or cannot graciously reveal Himself or manifest His power. Who do any of us think we are if we think we may allowably front-load a relationship with God—making this dependent upon works or doctrine? That is absolutely preposterous. And furthermore, it is ridiculous to think that any religious movement can make eternal salvation depend upon theological cognition or aptitude.

Luke and Paul had seen that the Holy Spirit was being poured out on both Jews and Gentiles alike. And in their interest, this happened without the Gentiles ever having been baptized. And in the current context of discussion, we have to maintain the understanding that the divine outpouring took place long before any of the theological ideas of the aforementioned religious movements existed. Their doctrines, dogmas, and certainties were not yet to have been invented for hundreds of years!

Moreover, circumcision was not a requirement of the Ten Commandments. In Greek, Paul referenced this using the term *ethos* (ἔθος). It seems that this category regulation had been grafted into the *takkanot*, which was more exactly what Luke and Paul were confronting. They argued that the Gentile converts should not have legalistic regulations imposed upon them.

And with this, I would also contend that none of us has any God-given right to impose doctrine on those who are seeking *Yehovah's* presence with clean hands and pure hearts. We cannot do this. And if we place roadblocks in the way of seekers, woe are we for shutting the gate of heaven in an effort to prevent others from entering in! Those who commit such crime are under indictment for teaching the exact opposite of Jesus.

And for my Jewish friends, I offer the admonition that the argument works both ways. If individuals are encountering *Yehovah* and His *Yeshuah*, well then, who are any of us to impose burdensome rules and regulations upon those who are already hearing His voice and walking in faithfulness, as they choose to obey and do what is good in the sight of God.

Accordingly, Luke continued writing, and all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

The point was that divine manifestations of signs and wonders, which were the gift of God, testified to His presence among the Gentiles, just as this had been the case with individuals such as Abraham, Sarah, Hannah, Samuel, Elijah, Esther, David, etc. This was the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. Miraculous manifestations came as a result of the faithful's standing in the *aiona* before the presence of God; both seeing and hearing His mission for each one in the world.

Paul wrote in his second letter to Timothy, in 1:3-6,

> I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience <u>the way my forefathers did</u>, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your

> grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that *it is* in you as well. And for this reason, I remind you to kindle afresh the *charisma* of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.[214]

Timothy was under grace because he had turned to God in faithfulness, however, through the hands of the Apostle, Timothy received even more gifts.

> For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with *me* in suffering for the Gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and *charis* which was granted us in Christ Jesus from the *aiona*.[215]

As we elucidate the Hebraic paradigm of faith being represented in these passages, hopefully the picture is becoming clearer. Again, recall that God's saving action specifically pertained to providing His divine help through life on Earth. The holy calling can be understood in two ways, either as the Word of God coming into the Earth from the holy realm, by which God has always spoken, or to the faithful ones themselves hearing God's voice and recognizing the Lord calling them into the holy realm of God's presence.

Embracing the *aionios* life was never achieved by anyone through effort in keeping the *takkanot*, because human inventions do not provide a stairway to heaven. The mistake of the traditions of the elders was just like the error of Babel. By contrast, within the inspired *Torah*, the means was given to enter into the kingdom through the *kiddush* at the start of the Sabbath.

And so we understand why Jesus directed those seeking the *aionios zoe* to heed the Ten Commandments. Before His crucifixion,

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[214] 2 Timothy 1:3–6 modified NASB

[215] 2 Timothy 1:7-9 modified NASB

He taught them at the start of the Sabbath that re-enlivening His presence took place through the *kiddush* breaking of the bread. Because 99.999 percent of Christendom never heard of the *kiddush*, and because so many have remained ignorant regarding the Hebraic concept of "remembering," as this was conveyed with the term *zachar*, so called "believers" were taught to celebrate the ceremony of communion. And if this was intended by any mainline denomination to have been understood as the tangible means of visible and audible entry into the throne room of God, it has been a well-kept secret.

Because well-intended among the Orthodoxy, the Reformers, Evangelicalism and the Fundamentalists have done such an excellent job of confusing the message of Scriptures, the "how to" part of entry into the kingdom has been lost.

Generally speaking, Christians were taught to throw out *Torah*, because ignorant bishops of early and continuing Orthodoxy never identified and divided the inspired *Torah* from the man-made *takkanot*. They might not have made this vast error had they heeded the warnings of Tertullian against Marcion. Resultantly, the Sabbath was made irrelevant and its intention was forgotten. The Sabbath was replaced by a different day that became filled with religious and largely ceremonial observance. For many, it became a day of going through the motions that included dressing up and playing nice. It became a day to make oneself look good to impress one's neighbors. Am I wrong? I think it is valuable to respectfully state things as they are.

And some may ask, "What is wrong with dressing up?" My initial response would be the observation that the *takkanot* provided very specific instructions for dressing up. Yet one's outward appearance was not what mattered to God. He looked for ones dressed with humility, washed with water, clothed with righteousness, and for those who were sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice. Those who adorned themselves like Solomon were no better off than anyone. If individuals wanted to decorate themselves with their "Sunday best," at least, they should not pretend that this effort was something that made them pleasing to

God. It was just a component of the Christian *takkanot* that has been developed for centuries by Christendom.

In all of this, we have to understand a huge contrast between early Orthodox, Reformation, and Protestant Evangelicalism's theologically intangible, almost theoretical concept of grace and the very palpable concept of *charis* in the Greek New Testament. Life in the Bible lived under *charis* was affirmable by signs and wonders. God was speaking, moving, and living among His people. Entry into His abiding presence and hearing His voice were miraculous gifts. Neither of these could be earned by keeping the rules and regulations of the traditions of the elders in Second Temple Judaism. However they were discoverable by those who, following the instructions of Jesus, broke the bread understanding that they were embracing the sacrifice that was broken for them in order that they might enter into the holy realm. Breaking the bread was tearing the veil. This is what was meant by the comment in the Ten Commandments, "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy." Much is lost, even in this simple translation due to our lack of familiarity with *zachar*, *kiddush* and *qodesh*, each of which were and remain as key elements of entry into the kingdom.

Mere intellectual remembering, which has been the dominant focus of the church, is very different from Hebraic re-enlivening—just as acting holy is entirely at variance from entry into the holy realm.

Jesus' lesson, known as the Beatitudes, lists the character traits of those to whom the pathway into the *aiona* will be opened.

> Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil things about

you falsely on account of me. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven, for they persecuted the prophets before you in the same way.[216]

Thinking back upon the likes of Hagar, Jacob, Hannah and David, many of those who were despised individuals seem to have caught the attention of God in the scriptures.

Those who entered the kingdom of God, typically went through a process which included confession of sins—which will break just about anyone—forsaking wickedness, pledging loyal faithfulness to the Lord, washing with water, appropriating the sacrificial blood, and baptism in the spirit or into the realm of the spirit. This second birth, spoken of as being born-again in Jesus' discussion, was the means of entry into the *aiona*, the kingdom, or the holy realm. Accordingly, the Second Temple Pharisee, Nicodemus sought Jesus under the cover of night to determine how He and His disciples were performing signs and wonders. They had received David's keys, partaking in the same covenant, allowing access through the gates of heaven. Their inheritance was *soteria* or *yeshuah* which was the ongoing legacy of those who were recipients of the ancient or the *aionios* life. All of this miraculous life was the gift or the *charis* of God.

Refer to *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* for a lengthy inductive contextual study of the Greek term *charis* as it was used by the authors of Scripture.

Personal Aside—A Reform Experience

I spent many years of my life finding fellowship with wonderful brothers and sisters of faith in Reformed Presbyterian churches. I thank the Lord for my pastors and my family among those fellowships. They were wonderful people!

I had one pastor who always preached on the teachings of Paul; usually relying upon his epistles to the Romans or the Ephesians. His goal, of course, was to do what he could to make

[216] Matthew 5:3-11 NET

certain that his parishioners embraced the supposedly correct doctrines of John Calvin.

After about a year of listening to what seemed like the same message, I asked him if he would consider spending some time teaching on the parables of Jesus. I was really curious about Jesus' teachings. Although my pastor did not seem to have a dispensationalist mentality, his reply revolved around an explanation that the parables and Jesus' teachings were not of primary importance in making sense of the New Testament and the mission of the church. For my own part, I just went with the flow of what he said, taking it all in, and trying to understand.

My pastor was a very kind, loving and seemingly reasonable man. He reflected the love of Jesus and the mission of Abraham to bless unfortunate neighbors in our community. I miss him as I fondly recall his infectious smile and think of his tangible care for others.

Nevertheless, I was shocked when he presented the unbending harsh Calvinistic concept commonly discussed using the acronym T.U.L.I.P. Recollecting his presentation to our men's group, I think I felt as if I would vomit. For those who appreciate the flavor of severely burnt toast soaked in gasoline and seasoned with iodine, they can study TULIP on their own time.

Suffice to understand that Calvin's tremendously flawed reductionist interpretation of the Scripture, and his final conclusions elucidated in the darker side of Reformed theoretical assumptions, incriminated the Being of God as One who is not Love. In this paradigm of faith, the Father supposedly did not offer His Son as a sacrifice for the whole entire world; as Jesus taught in John 3:16. Neither did God authentically desire for all individuals among humankind to come to a knowledge of the Truth, as Paul had synonymously reiterated to Timothy.

Instead, Calvin powerfully influenced Reformation thinkers to conclude that Jesus' sacrifice was supposedly only made for those who would eventually prove their election and supposed predestination for heaven after death by their acceptance and confession of Calvinistic Reformed doctrines. So then, if a person agreed and confessed that Reformed doctrines were accurate or

true, then this is what proved Jesus had died for their sins. Of course, I am not the only individual in history to find that Calvinistic circular reasoning is only the tip of an iceberg of error and an embarrassment to inductive contextual biblical interpretation of the Scriptures.

Essentially, in the paradigmatic thought of Reform theology, Calvin's doctrines usurp and replace the instruction of Jesus.

Simply put, TULIP is a travesty, which not only maligns the loving character of God, but moreover ignores the entirety of the Scriptures.

Interestingly, my pastor who so vehemently supported Calvinism, openly admitted that the entirety of the Reformation was an act of rebellion. Because of this, there was a measure of ambivalence in his perspective. Looking at history through a spiritual lens, he wondered at how open rebellion might have arrived at theological truth.

The appeal of Calvinism and TULIP is rooted in the unwavering embrace of Aristotelian deductive rationalism. A select collection of Scriptures are aligned in such a way that when a logical set of interpretive rules are placed upon these, the single absolutist horrific conclusion becomes legislated in the minds of its victims.

Of course, the predominant arguments I have heard supporting Calvinism in my own lifetime have all been based upon the reading of translated texts of Scripture. Many of these were made by individuals who could not read Greek and had almost no comprehension of the Hebrew or the Aramaic texts from antiquity—which in an earlier era had informed the penning of the Greek Scriptures. Furthermore, Calvinistic perspectives are sometimes perpetrated upon congregants with very limited biblical comprehension; except perhaps what they may have learned in Sunday school or from the pulpit. The end result is that such ones trust in theological rationalism instead of a comprehensive understanding of the Bible; especially as it was written in the original languages.

And so those who think they understand the Bible, are coaxed into readily accepting ideas that actually never had anything to do with the intent of the authors of Scripture. And when select

male parishioners have announced intellectual agreement with these precepts, they are now eligible for candidacy as elders.

A deceptive dynamic is the rationale that if the pastor, the denomination, or the religious tradition says it is true, then it must be true.

I should briefly pause here to mention that several individuals mentioned in the dedication section of this book either currently serve as elders in Reformed churches or have in the past. I am unspeakably grateful for each of them. As much as I am critical of Reform thinkin—due to what I see as Calvin and Luther's ignorance, malfeasance, and abuse of power—the reason it is necessary to address the theological problems is that when knowledge is ignorantly accepted by those who are unable to properly evaluate what they are receiveing, this will further affect the spirituality of those who they will lead. This may create a good-ole-boy-club who may do more harm than good.

Jesus taught that it was because God loved the world that He sent His son to be a sacrifice providing restoration of divine-human intimacy. The text of John does not read that God sent His Son for just a small segment of the world. The Bible also teaches that God desires for all of humankind to come to Him in order that they may receive His *yeshuah*. It does not teach that His desire was only for a select group of individuals. If people prove by their own choices that they love the darkness rather than the Light, well then, that is indeed very sad.

> I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and the calling forth of grace, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high places; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and respect. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who desires for all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.[217]

It was in that Reformed church that I met my first friend who assumed that because he had a supposed elect status by

[217] 1 Timothy 2:1-4 modified ASV

having embraced the supposedly correct doctrines of Calvin, that he could remorselessly pursue immoral lascivious relationships. He rationalized that because of his doctrinal security, intellectually believing and verbally confessing hardline Calvinistic rhetoric, his predestined or supposedly saved status allowed him to move forward in the wiggle-room allowing for sin referenced earlier. And what was more shocking was that his desire was to become a pastor.

I personally understood these temptations as a young man and failed to perfectly live according to the righteous calling of the Lord. However, it seemed clear enough in my mind that the Bible taught against fornication and adultery, and so I struggled with the effort to maintain my standing in the Lordship of Jesus as a child of the Father. I found myself crying to the Lord for forgiveness when I fell. My own understanding of the plain teaching of Jesus, made it difficult for me to grapple with the idea that a supposed church man, and especially one preparing for seminary and a pastorate, could wholeheartedly justify behavior that Jesus condemned.

One friend told me that his wife had a dream that she said was from the Lord. In the dream, she saw her husband looking at a pornographic magazine. She confronted him about this and he humbly confessed that this had been a matter of ongoing bondage.

I asked him if her dream was the Word of God. After careful consideration, he smiled and reluctantly partially conceded that the dream had been God's Word, but the term word had to be spelled with a lower-case "w." Ironically, it was the lower-case w, word of God, that was the powerful living dynamic starting point of his freedom from slavery; rather than the upper-case "W" of his Reformed preached messages. The information contained in his highly espoused Reformed Confessions were unable to provide deliverance. Instead, it was through a mystical encounter with Jesus, Who exists as the upper-case "W," Word of God—whereby he was helped and saved from a lifetime of secret bondage. The pulpit was powerless to accomplish what had been set in motion through a subjective divine-human encounter.

Tangible liberty came through a divine-human supernatural experience that was followed by verbal confession of sin. God has a

way into freedom and into His presence. All of my friend's ceremonial church experiences could not do, what the Holy One of Israel could do. Although he was not open to even considering that divine dreams were possible, apparently his wife was. When she confronted him, the sin that haunted him day in and day out was exposed. He tasted death in his confession. Even though he still did not want to admit that His wife's experience was an encounter with the Word of God that had come in a dream, he could not deny that the Word was spot on.

My friend had always read Hebrews 4:12 thinking that the term "word" referenced the Scriptures or perhaps the preached message from the Scriptures. He struggled to consider that the verse spoke of the Holy One of Israel.

> For the Word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.[218]

This interpretive dilemma, objectifying the Word instead of comprehending that the Word is the personal abiding voice of God, is rooted in the unbending intellectual commitment of Christian theologians who have been swayed by the assumptions of Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy's mission, of getting people into heaven after death, superimposed its dominance over reading of the text rather than allowing the context in which these passages were written to give definition to the Scriptures. Because the bishops of Orthodoxy understood that it was their goal to provide the world with saving knowledge to keep them from hell, when they read the New Testament, they interpreted biblical statements and concepts as all centering around this identical interest.

And as a small continuing example of this dynamic of biblical interpretation, which had a huge impact that we will discuss just ahead, after John Nelson Darby heard the term rapture from Margaret McDonald's prophetic utterance, he read this concept into Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. And the Hebraic

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[218] Hebrews 4:12 modified ASV

concept of meeting with the Holy One in the clouds that had spanned the pages of the Old and New Testaments, thereafter, was erased and replaced with an entirely new concept that lived on to errantly reshape the collective mind of Evangelicalism. The Bow in the cloud, Who many times appeared to ones becoming *Ish-raah-el-ites* by this experience and participation in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace, was lost and forgotten. Despite the fact that there is no *Koine* Greek term for "rapture" anywhere in the pages of the Bible, the lives and spirituality of hundreds of millions of Evangelicals are now preoccupied with concerns of the supposed soon-coming rapture; every single day.

So then, the Evangelical movement stacked their "beliefs" on top of the Reformer's "beliefs" which were stacked on top of the understandings of early Orthodoxy to keep people out of hell. And what we have ended up is a mess of ideas that had almost nothing whatsoever to do with entry into the presence of God, here, now, and today. By and large, we no longer hear God's voice, dream prophetic guiding dreams, or walk in the realm of the *aiona* and see the works of the second power of heaven so that we can re-manifest these in the realm of Earth; just as my friend's wife had done. Instead, we read the Bible and listen to good sermons. We are taught to live by principles extracted from summarized passages of the Bible. And a lower-case "w" word of God has become an imposturous idol that has replaced divine-human interactivity with the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Seminarians learn how to wave their hands when they speak and are taught to practice a variety of facial expressions in order to keep their parishioners interested in the lower-case "w' message. As a result, the instructions of Jesus are misconstrued, misunderstood, or ignored. And churchianity stands in place with its interest revolving around ceremonial ritualistic practices which were not the concerns of Jesus or His disciples.

I had to chuckle when my reformed friend told me about his wife's dream because I immediately knew that any such occurrence was far outside of his comfort zone. In fact, if he had gone to his fellow elders and had made a big case about the importance and relevance of divine dreams and their connection to deliverance, he

probably would have been hushed and asked to keep this to himself.

The question each of us is forced to grapple with is whether or not we will give authority to the Bible to mean what it plainly says in its historical and literary contexts, or will we instead bow to church doctrine and traditions that have lost sight of the Way of the Scriptures; the foundation of which was set in place in the fourth century A.D. It takes courage and humility to go against the grain of Orthodoxy and to do so with respect.

The upper-case "W" Word of God was the object to be sought after by *Ish-raah-el-ites* in the *aionios* life.

Changing the biblical phrase "eternal life" to a different concept of the "ancient life" suddenly called into question related terms, statements, and allusions that permeate the canon. All that I was doing was reading the Gospels in Greek. I wasn't trying to pull the rug out from beneath anyone. After all, if the beloved doctrines are based upon a New Testament that was written in Greek, why can't we allowably examine the Greek text upon which these are supposedly based. Furthermore, why can't we allow the Hebrew background understandings to inform what we read in the Greek Scriptures that were written later?

Although some of my friends—who are staunch practitioners of objective belief—contend that their practices are rooted in the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, this is only because they have superimposed the Orthodox definitions of *davar*, *pisteuo*, *soteria*, *aionios zoe*, and *charis* over what they read. And so while asserting that their conclusions are rooted in the biblical languages, they are unwilling to honestly admit that Orthodoxy changed these concepts in accordance with their religio-political agendas and due to the ingrained Classical Greek linguistic term definitions which were common to their formative educations. Herein, the case is made that we have to go back to contextual investigation in order to find out what these terms meant from the time between Noah and Jesus.

To be straightforward, if "eternal life" which is focused on getting to heaven after death is read instead as the "ancient life" which pertained to the ancient Hebraic faith community, then the

concept of “salvation” as deliverance from hell, also comes into question, and so on and so on.

Really, what we are dealing with here is needless fear and insecurity.

Fear not! God is still God. God is still on the throne. Even Orthodoxy’s canon has left posterity with the witness that He speaks in mysterious ways. He helps and delivers those who cry out to His name. Quite often this involves mystical and unexplainable intervention. So what is the big deal?

Can we afford to let God actually be God, or are we going to attempt to shackle Him with doctrines? Should we put on blinders and pretend that He only can speak to us through verses of the Bible, when this has certainly not been the case for individuals all throughout the Scriptures?

These questions are not posed in order to win an argument or to prove who or what is incorrect. But instead, the hope is that individuals can come to grips that God is very much alive and that He desires that we would cheerfully walk with Him in a way that the nations around us will see something in each of us that they also desire. Are we going to hand them a book of doctrines? And with particular respect to stringent Reformed theology, are we going to openly march around proclaiming that God has already chosen who is going to heaven and going to hell for all of time?

In my own experience, I have seen my Reformed brothers remain silent about the essential components of T U L I P, while all of us worked to plant a church. It was only a significant time later, well after the congregation was established that any of this was presented and then only to a small group of men. Traditionally, Reformed churches do not allow women places of ministry except to teach young children in Sunday school or other women.

In the case of our Reformed church plant, the pastor began the establishment of his local assembly by using the core group of a female-led prayer group which had been established in the community for many years. With disappointment, a year or so after the church had grown, the female founder was told privately that she would have to step down. No matter how she or anyone else felt, she could not possibly be allowed to remain as the leader of

the prayer group; which shortly thereafter was disbanded and replaced by a men's group.

The whole deceptive commandeering of the prayer group is only a side note. Nevertheless, it adds fuel to the question of integrity. Why didn't the pastor tell all of us on Day-One that a woman would not be allowed to continue as leader of the group. And on that same note in a wider context, if Reformed thinkers feel so strongly about the concept that God predestines individuals to go to hell when they die, why not be open and honest about this from the pulpit each and every Sunday? How about putting up a notice in the lobby?

Of course, I am joking, but the answer is obvious. Only those who thought they were predestined to go to heaven after death would probably ever return. Had my much beloved pastor been straightforward from the start, few if any participants in the prayer group would have embraced his desire to plant that church.

Through the prayer group, which existed 10 years, innumerable individuals saw their prayers answered, solid discipleship took place, and 35 individuals were raised up and sent into the mission field. The tree bore much fruit before being cut down. By contrast, at our first meeting of the men's group, we were handed folders containing doctrine, and we went straight to the task of learning about TULIP; so that some might become prepared as elders in the church. Looking back with some sadness, my observation is that this church took hold of, sacrificed, and exterminated a thriving community of fellowship after having used it as a stepping stone. Everything that once was had been lost. Joy was replaced by ceremony.

And of course, just as this took place more gradually, but on a grander scale, with the establishment of Orthodoxy, this is what happens in the world. I was naïve. We need to learn from the mistakes of the past and keep our eyes open.

My own very dearly beloved Reformed pastor was willing to tell a small group of men this doctrine of TULIP behind closed doors and only after a year of church building. His disclosure came only after the families of the prayer group were vested in the religious

community. Even if half of the people left, he had accomplished his purpose.

Although people get hurt and crippled by these sorts of dynamics, this does not have to be the end result of disappointment. I still love this man and his family and I would try to do anything possible to help him if he called me. He was just doing what he was trained to do by his tradition. Although many people were undoubtedly happy with his church in the community, I lament that a group of subjective practitioners of faithfulness was transformed into an objective group of cognitive believers.

Beyond all of this bad history, it still saddens my heart to think that some individuals can call themselves Christians but utterly reject and dismiss the moral teachings of Christ. It is also consoling, however, to understand that we are in different places during our lives and that the Lord is working to draw all of us to Himself; in spite of our failures and misunderstandings. None of us gets to heaven on the basis of theological knowledge. Graduation beyond the pearly gates is the result of having walked in a living relationship with God; in spite of all of our theological misconceptions.

When I told my pastor that I had realized God's calling to go to seminary, he was very encouraging and supportive. He offered to pay my way if only I were to attend a Reformed seminary of his choice. He was very kind, but I explained that I knew the Lord had spoken clearly to me about attending another school.

The buck stopped there.

Being as honest as I can be, I think I may have been disappointed by the sudden end of his offer to help. However, whatever hurt I might have felt over that matter is gone now. And I knew the moment I was called, that the Lord was going to need to provide the finances. Being the idealistic human that I am, I was just hoping that the financial arrangements would have been easier.

Each of us needs to follow the Lord's leading with a clean conscience. And that goes for all of us. I sincerely believe that my pastor acted with a clean conscience. Even if I seem not to like what happened as I look back; we have to respect how the Lord may lead each of us differently and continue to trust Him along the way. We

have to endeavor to do this with respect and kindness all throughout the short pathway of life on Earth. God will honor those who love their neighbors; and who love them despite all of our differences. The way may not be easy, but we should not walk through life thinking anyone owes us anything.

Today looking back, however, I better understand that his goal was one of simply spreading the Reformed rhetoric and mission. I do not blame him, but there is a lesson in all of this. I am blessed to have been useful to him in building his church. When we give, we should never expect anything in return. I love this man and his family very much. I am grateful for his kind influence in my life.

I am so grateful for those who supported me along the way of my education. One individual from that church gave sacrificially and another Presbyterian church, which I had held membership in for many years, also helped tremendously. There were lots of others who provided for me. Some friends I had not seen for years came to visit me at school and unexpectedly purchased a new laptop to help with my studies. Going back to school in the middle of my life was a journey of faith. I did not know where the money would come from. I used up my savings, retirement money, and worked a variety of different jobs.

I took my time earning the Master's degree allowing myself time to study, think, and to research. My professors were outstanding. I had made a positive impact on some of them as well. Following those years, I was awarded a teaching fellowship in a Ph.D. program and studied and worked among these professors for several more years. God is good, and I am grateful for the tangible love and finances from those who loved me and also for those who responded to my pleas for their prayers so that my brain could absorb all of it. I have been blessed in this life to pursue the mission I am convicted that the Lord has set before me. Praise be to God Most High!

My advice in the pursuit of your calling is not to wait for anyone to step forward with a million dollar check in hand. When Jesus called Peter to walk on water, He was asking him to step out of a boat on to water and to trust God to provide support.

And to be honest, I was afraid because I have never considered myself as being very smart. Somehow though, I held on tightly to Jesus and trusted that He would make the mountains before me a level path. And that is exactly what He did. It was a great deal of work and it was a time filled with God's blessings. I completed my Master's of Divinity Degree and was accepted into the new Ph.D. program in Renewal Studies in the Biblical Theology Track. And even more exciting than that, I received a teaching fellowship and my tuition was paid.

All was going well and I was making great headway with my own research along with completing readings and course work. Then one day the unthinkable happened. Due to the university not having included the focus of biblical theology in their application for accreditation, the biblical track of the program was dissolved overnight. This affected about a third of the students. I would be lying if I said it was not painful to give up obtaining my Ph.D. Nevertheless, at the very start of the program I had prayerfully said, "I just want to complete my research." I felt that I had discovered quite a number of important concerns that had been lost and forgotten that were of tremendous importance. There was quite a bit more to my reasons for leaving the program, however it was clear that the Lord was closing the door. Nevertheless, I completed my course work, greatly furthered my research, and a short time later published The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom. And here we are!

A wonderful friend reflected to me a short time ago that she thought it was best that I had not taken a career track as a professor. She admonished me, "You would never have been given enough time to complete these books." I totally agreed. Now I am grateful for the path that the Lord has given me through life. My prayer is that we all finish well!

Hebraic Biblical Interpretation

Having come this far, readers should now be gaining perspective on the unrecognized influences of the rise of Second Temple Judaism supplanting the Abrahamic faith with a counterfeit religious institution, the religio-political agendas of continuing

Judaism destroying the knowledge base of the second power of heaven, and the theological errors resulting from early Orthodoxy's inability to identify its mistake in not giving consideration of the Hebraic background of the Bible. These combined factors have led us to where we are today. The Judeo-Christian world has many different flavors of religion to choose from; however, we seldom see the power of God that was the treasure of Jacob and the heritage of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*. And we see the devastating impact of these institutions which has resulted in faulty interpretation of the New Testament and ignorance regarding the faith and spirituality of the Bible.

The writing of the entirety of the New Testament was situated in the background understanding of the Abrahamic faith and spirituality which dominated the land of Israel prior to the reign of Josiah.

The Hebrew Gospel of Matthew helps us to differentiate between *Torah* of the Ten Commandments and the *takkanot.* Since the Orthodox bishops were illiterate in Hebrew and because they had rejected all things Jewish, choosing instead to depend solely upon the Greek New Testament texts, they remained ignorant regarding the existence of the second man-made law. Their ignorance was passed down through the development of Reformed Protestantism and the Evangelical movement.

From Hebrew Matthew, we understand:

> The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their *takkanot*; for they say *things*, and do not do *them*.[219]

Note that the term "deeds" from the New American Standard Bible translation in Hebrew is *takkanot*. If Greek translators of the New Testament had maintained the differentiation, this might have preserved a beneficial understanding of the inspired *Torah*.

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[219] Matthew 23:2-3 modified NASB

The extant clarification in the text of Hebrew Matthew clarifies Jesus' differentiation of both laws and provides great help for interpreters of Jesus' teachings.

Jesus did not dismiss the divinely inspired Law handed down from Moses. In fact, He raised the bar making this far more relevant and applicable to individuals' motivations and thoughts in their hearts. For example, *Torah* provided the general instruction that a man should not commit adultery, however, Jesus asserted that any man who even looked at a woman with lust in his heart had already violated her.

Jesus taught, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill."

In contradiction to Jesus, Darby and other enduring generations of dispensationalists use the phrase, but to fulfill in order to dismiss the Ten Commandments. In the same way they use Jesus' statement on the cross, "It is finished," to assert that the dispensation of the Jews had ended. This gives way to their anti-Christ teachings which directly contradict Jesus' teaching:

> For truly I say to you, until heaven and Earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.[220]

In other terms, we might understand that those who comprehended and who walked in the pattern conveyed in the fourth commandment, would become participants in their intended ancient heritage; rather than wasting time with cold dead ceremonial religion.

Examining the instruction of Jesus, we ask, "Have heaven and Earth passed away?" If we look around us, the clear answer is a resounding "No, of course not!" Has *Torah* then passed away? To assert as much is to contradict the instruction of Jesus. According to

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[220] Matthew 5:17-19 NASB

Jesus as long as heaven and Earth remain, then so does the biblical *Torah* of the Ten Commandments.

Jesus came to fulfill the Law in that He highly valued and lived obediently according to the kind, beneficial instruction of His Heavenly Father, *Yehovah*. He made it clear that He had no intention of ever dismissing the relevance of *Torah* handed down by Moses.

The ancient gateway into the realm of God's holiness would not be opened by cheaters, murderers, frauds, or adulterers. Many individuals settling for doctrinal religion have faltered through life by the sweat of their brow, whereas those who join themselves to *Yehovah* in a faithful relationship of marriage, have been given the keys of David. Therefore, the Ten Commandments, you shall not murder, bear false witness, covet that which belongs to your neighbor, etc., remain as the Lord's kind and relevant instructions for those who today pursue the living active Word of God.

If anyone willfully disrespected the teaching of Jesus, which was the teaching of Moses, none of them should expect entry into the *aiona*. Hence, ones such as these were and remained as "least in the kingdom."

In many instances, Jesus upbraided the religious leaders for not revering Moses' teachings, for not keeping *Torah*, and for not observing the Sabbath. In John 7:19, "Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law?" Furthermore, Jesus pointed out that they lacked proper judgment to discern how it was that the Sabbath should have been kept: "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?" In Mark 7:8-9, Jesus confronted the Scribes and Pharisees for "laying aside the commandment of God" to instead keep the traditions of men. In Matthew 23:2-3, Jesus brought to light that although the Pharisees had chosen to sit in Moses' seat, they did not observe Moses' teachings. By contrast to their choices and practices, Jesus admonished the crowds to actually carry out the concerns of the leader of ancient Israel; whose namesake we might add was to be "raised up above the water." Moses' namesake and His teachings were the foundation of Hebraic spirituality which

revolved around entry into the *aiona* of God's presence. Later in Matthew 23, Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of the Second Temple who meticulously tithed their spices but had neglected the more important concerns of justice and mercy. Verse 23 contained this warning, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" In John 5, Jesus conveyed the fact that proper observance of the Sabbath revolved around seeking the Word of the Father and by working the works of the Father by becoming a son of God by birth into the realm of the *aiona*. The events of John 5 concerning the Sabbath were built upon chapter 3 with respect to learning how to perform signs and wonders. In other terms, the Sabbath was made for entry into the *aiona*, wherein individuals became the actual children of God through birth into the spiritual realm. Therein, they were miraculously empowered and received divine direction for their daily lives. For those with further interest, take note of Matthew chapters 4, 12, and 15 as well as Luke chapter 6. Understand that there are more references that could be cited.

If revering Moses' instruction, keeping *Torah* and observing the Sabbath had not been a vital component of the faith and spirituality Jesus was teaching, the authors of the Gospels would not have stressed the importance of these concerns.

Furthermore, removing the legalistic aspect of practicing religion by rote, Jesus clarified that all of Moses' Law was fulfilled by loving the Lord with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength and by loving one's neighbor as oneself. Herein we take note of the restoration of Abraham's calling, by God Most High for His faithful ones, to good-Word or to bless his neighbors among the nations.

Second Temple Judaism had developed the *takkanot* in order to insulate themselves from the calling of God and used this to invalidate the spirituality and calling given to the Patriarch.

Jesus confronted the Second Temple Pharisees:

> You completely invalidate God's command in order to maintain your tradition! For Moses said: Honor your father and your mother; and Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death. But you say, "If a man tells his father or mother: 'Whatever benefit you might have

> received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift committed to the temple), you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother." You revoke God's Word by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many other similar things.[221]

Connecting the enduring significance of the Ten Commandments, with the faith practices and the calling of Abraham, which had been abandoned by Second Temple Judaism, Jesus further explained:

> The Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since then, the Gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.
>
> But it is easier for heaven and Earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.
>
> Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day. And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame. But Abraham said, Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and

[221] Mark 7:9-13 modified HCSB

> you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us. And he said, Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment. But Abraham said, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." But he said, "No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!" But he said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.[222]

In this passage from the narrative of Luke, the concepts of entry into the Kingdom, the relevance of Moses' *Torah,* and the calling of Abraham are combined into the renewal of Father *Yehovah's Aionios* Covenant of Peace with humankind.

Although Hezekiah was remembered in the Hebrew texts of the Bible as being a good king, his actions of destroying the altars dedicated to *Yehovah* were a precursor to the genocide of Josiah.

The text of Isaiah begins explicating his encounter with the Word wherein the prophet witnessed a vision that concerned 4 kings of Judah; including, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah; who we understand shared in perpetuating the sins of Josiah.

> *Yehovah* proclaimed: "Listen, O heavens, and hear, O Earth; For *Yehovah* speaks, Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me. An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master's manger, Israel does not know. My people do not understand. Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned *Yehovah*. They have despised the Holy One of Israel. They have turned away from Him.[223]

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[222] Luke 16:16-31 NASB

[223] Isaiah 1:2-4 modified NASB

In chapter 36, Sennacherib king of Assyria laid siege to all of the cities of Judah. On his behalf, Rabshakeh led a large army to Jerusalem to confront King Hezekiah. We hear the voice and judgment of *Yehovah* condemning Hezekiah's actions. The first indictment was that he had rebelled against the God of Israel and instead relied upon help and deliverance from Pharaoh in Egypt. Rabshakeh declared that Hezekiah had put his trust in nothing. Speaking on behalf of *Yehovah*, the Assyrian demanded,

> What is this confidence that you have? I say, "Your counsel and strength for the war are only empty words. Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me? Behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed of Egypt; on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.[224]

Rabshakeh continued, judging Hezekiah for his hypocrisy and treachery against the Lord.

> You make the claim, "We trust in *Yehovah* our God," and yet is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, "You shall worship *instead* before this altar?".[225]

As we proceed, it is important to take note of the fact that the concept of high places has been looked upon negatively as expositors have not understood these according to the Hebraic paradigm of faith.

Mount Zion was understood as a high-place of worship. Moses sought God, not in a valley, but instead after ascending a mountain. The "mountains of Jerusalem," where *Yehovah* was known to have dwelt, should be understood as high places. *Peniel*, where Jacob was baptized and born into the angelic realm of the Word, where he wrestled with the Holy One of Israel, and where he saw the presence of God and Bethel, then later repeatedly sought God Most High, were all high places. Although evil kings sought to

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[224] Isaiah 36:4-6 NASB

[225] Isaiah 36:7 modified NASB

cast the high places as being locations of false worship, this was not accurate. Priests like Jethro who had given refuge to Moses proved themselves as being the servants of God Most High.

As *Yehovah* spoke through Rabshakeh, Hezekiah's great evil was exposed through the mouth of his enemy. In the research of Margaret Barker, we piece together that just like his predecessor a few generations earlier, Josiah attempted to destroy what is spoken of here as the faith and spirituality of Abraham that had been rooted in offerings made to *Melchizedek*. Furthermore, Josiah attempted to make the altar in Jerusalem the only approved place of worship. However, as we note in the later prophets, much of the worship in the Jerusalem temple was nothing more than lifeless, ceremonial lip-service.

The fleshly appearance of the Holy One of Israel, in the earthly coming of Jesus as the Word of God, was intended to put an end to the false institution of the Second Temple. If interpreters of the New Testament keep the primary focus of *Yehovah* in mind, concepts such as the restoration of the Word that provided *yeshuah*, which was the Gospel, re-situated the faithful seekers of the Lord in the *Aionios* Covenant, the ancient life, and the kingdom of God. Whereas *Yehovah* had turned His face away or had withdrawn His presence from Israel because of their adultery in more ancient times, at the start of the first century, He was once again extending His hand in marriage.

When we examine the life and teachings of the Apostle Paul, who dispensationalists and Reformers often set in opposition to the plainly spoken teachings and mission of Jesus, and if we hope to understand what Paul taught in context, we have to embrace the transition he went through in his encounter with the Word that interrupted his trip to Damascus. We understand, initially in the context, that he had been traveling in order to punish and jail those Jews having chosen the subjectivity of the Abrahamic Hebraic faith and spirituality taught by Jesus.

> May *Yehovah* answer you when you are in trouble; may the God of Jacob make you secure! May he send you help from His temple; from Zion may He give you support! May He take notice of your offerings; may He accept your burnt

> sacrifice! (*Selah*) May He grant your heart's desire; may he bring all your plans to pass! Then we will shout for joy over your victory; we will rejoice in the name of our God! May *Yehovah* grant all your requests! Now I am sure that *Yehovah* will deliver his chosen king; he will intervene for him from his holy heavenly temple, and display his mighty ability to deliver. Some trust in chariots and others in horses, but we depend on *Yehovah* our God. They will fall down, but we will stand firm. *Yehovah* will deliver the king; He will answer us when we call to him for help! *For the music director; a psalm of David*.[226]

In the manifestation of the kingdom today, those who participate by entry into the *aiona*—and who bring God's rulership back into the Earth—can be considered in some sense as rulers. This is nothing to be prideful about. The calling forth of grace that we read in Psalms like this one, was not solely passed down to posterity to be interpreted as having applied only to David. Instead, David modeled prayerful action which was to have been adopted by those who would become *Ish-raah-el-ites.* Those who realize their standing as *Ish-raah-el-ites* are in fact priests.[227]

Paul spoke of this as the priesthood of the faithful. Luther—at least in his rhetoric—understood and conveyed the idea in the New Testament era, that through baptism, all believers had been consecrated as priests.

Reacting to what he opposed in Catholocism, in 1520, Luther composed *An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, writing,

> It is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate; princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the temporal estate...all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is among them no difference at all but that of office...This is because we have one baptism, one Gospel, one faith, and are all Christians alike; for baptism,

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[226] Psalm 20:1-9 NET

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> Gospel, and faith, these alone make spiritual and Christian people...Thus we are all consecrated as priests by baptism.[228]

Although God had desired to raise up Israel as a nation of priests at Mount Sinai in the wilderness, the people were not ready and pled with Moses to be their human-divine mediator. Nevertheless, this desired event of *Yehovah* was re-enlivened at Pentecost following the crucifixion of Jesus. And the concept of re-enlivening is specifically used because Luke referenced that those gathered in the upper room—as a matter of daily habit—had been breaking bread. We note the ongoing practice of the *kiddush* as they gathered together, "day by day."[229] They may not have even been waiting for the Sabbath in their breaking of the bread, but rather instead seem to have been fighting to gain entry as Matthew had explained in 11:12. Just as Jesus had promised, "When two or three of you gather together in My name, I am in your midst."[230] In continuity, David explained that when brethren dwelt together in unity, that God commanded the blessing of the life of the *aiona* to come down upon them and compared this to the anointing oil poured over Aaron's head that ran through his beard.[231] When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were surrounded by a whirlwind and encountered the Holy Spirit. In light of previous discussions of meeting with the second power in the cloud, keep in mind Luke's detail regarding the meteorological phenomena which they experienced. Those who only moments earlier had understood their presence in a chamber of the Second Temple, suddenly found themselves participating in a heavenly spiritual experience as the veil was torn back.

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[228] Martin Luther, "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 44, *Christian in Society I*, ed. James Atkinson, trans. Charles M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 127–129.

[229] Note the narrative in Acts chapter 2.

[230] Note Matthew 18:15-20.

[231] Note Psalm 133.

Each individual who chose to walk in faith, and endeavored in the breaking of the bread, opened the way into the holy realm, and with washing of their feet, they gained standing places before the Lord. They could listen and hear His voice. As God permitted, they could witness His glory. As priests and rulers, they were qualified by authority to bring God's reign back into the world. Empowered by the good-Word, they became vehicles of the Word and were able to miraculously bless others. This was the life of the *Ish-raah-el-ites.*

While some of us desiring this kind of spirituality might be quick to shout, "Sign me up," to be honest, this may be a little frightening. The prophets were greatly humbled and in some cases struck with fear when the veil was opened and they encountered angels. Although we do not know the form or by what means the Word had come to Jonah, he was terrified and attempted to run away. So then we should approach the throne of grace with both confidence and trepidation. If anyone runs around egotistically proclaiming their kingship and priestly standing before the world, this is probably a mistake that also exposes character flaws. Still though, as we mature, we need to occupy the positions of authority that God has given to us as mediators of His will between the *aionios* and the earthly realms.

John Nelson Darby

In general, the upcoming discussion of Darby (1800-1882) will help Jewish readers to better understand how Evangelical Christianity became what it is in form as it exists today. As Jews or others embrace Evangelicals, they should be aware of some ideas that have gained a dangerous foothold in the church that are in direct opposition to Jesus' teachings. Purveyors of these ideas have been conditioned by many generations of Christians who unwittingly accepted that just because a concept, doctrine, or theory was linked to certain set of Scriptures, that the idea actually came from the Bible.

Most Evangelicals alive today have never heard his name, however, John Nelson Darby is responsible for a wide variety of beliefs that are held very dear by the majority of Evangelicalism.

When a person does not understand the origin of an idea, or even the character of the individual who invented the idea, and they unwittingly accept that the idea came straight out of the pages of Scripture, assuming it originated from the lips of Jesus, Peter, James, Jude or Paul, they have already become ensconced in several layers of deception. Bad seed produces bad fruit. When a person confidently moves forward in a life prescribed by an idea that never had anything to do with what an author of Scripture intended, that person naively walks in a counterfeit spirituality that is foreign to the teaching of the Bible. What they have embraced is going to lead to a very different outcome than the powerful spirituality celebrated by ancient Israel. And moreover, when this person becomes an evangelist of non-biblical spirituality, she or he spreads misinformation, which like a crippling virus, will infect the minds and further subdue the lives of others. The seed of briars produces only briars. This is ignorance. Ignorance leads to repeated and multiplied cycles of ignorance. One bad seed produces hundreds and thousands and millions of bad seed. Much of contemporary Christianity is the product of many generations of bad seed and is rooted in ignorance. Because they have never been instructed regarding their inheritance in the spirituality of ancient Israel, many participants in contemporary forms of Judaism and Christianity will never find their way back to the intentions of the authors of Scripture. No man in history has been so responsible for such vast error in the church as John Nelson Darby. The ideas of John Nelson Darby were the germ of bad seed. It may seem to be a radical claim, since most people alive today have never heard his name, but many of Darby's ideas and the spirituality he led Evangelicalism to embrace is anti-Christ. Mind you, I am not saying that Darby was the Antichrist. But as you read, you will begin to understand how Darby subverted and discarded the teachings of Jesus, and set Evangelicalism on a gnostic and fruitless path of spirituality with a life consuming focus on the supposed, soon-coming end times. And it is not just that Darby made some mistakes that set Christendom mildly off course. Adoption of Darby's thoughts and ideas and the interpretive dispensationalist lens, through which he wanted Christians to read the Bible, have lived on

to prevent Evangelical Christendom from ever understanding or embracing the spiritual power of the Hebraic tradition.

The Problematic Ideas of John Nelson Darby

Darby's highly influential topics of concern that pertain to our discovery of Hebraic Spirituality, and which might set us off course from ever discovering our intended inheritance in the kingdom of God, include the soon-coming rapture of the church, dispensationalism, and Darby's view of grace. It is necessary to examine each of these so that we can differentiate between the spiritual path taken by much of Evangelicalism and the path which was left to posterity by all of the authors of the Bible. We are going to identify mistaken ideas which have led many kindhearted, well-intended Christians into enduring cyclical ignorance; causing them to not only waste much of their lives and resources on fruitless endeavors, but moreover, to miss out on the inheritance intended for them from the foundation of the world.

Apart from understanding how Darby influenced interpretation of key ideas in Scripture, we will be unable to make proper sense of statements made in the Bible. These were originally intended to point the way to concepts in Hebraic spirituality related to the practicality of grace as walking according to the voice and empowerment of God and the three-day journey. Apart from becoming aware of Darby's tainted influences on how we interpret the Scriptures, we will be thrown off course and will not be able to see what the authors of Scripture intended for us to have embraced.

Every component of Darby's beliefs lead naïve Christians away from the faith and life of Father Abraham that was also the life blood of humankind in Eden. The single facet that prevents believers from embarking on the three-day journey, concerns biblical interpretation of the phrases "last day" or "last-days" and the virulent concept of the supposed end times. This specific interpretive error did not begin with Darby, but he strongly propagated the concept with his theory of the rapture of the church. Suffice to understand at this point, that the biblical concept of the last day has absolutely nothing to do with the end times,

apocalyptic notions of the Antichrist, or the end of the world. Unless we train our minds to re-understand the concept of the last day, it is likely that we will never correctly interpret key passages of Scripture and that we will not discover important references to the concept of the three-day journey.

The Era of John Nelson Darby

Jesus taught that misinformed religious leaders in His own day prevented sincere seekers of *Yehovah* from entering into the reign of God. He condemned them for shutting the door on others and for not entering in themselves. I would judge Darby in the same light. He was very sincere—but so are those who would pick your pocket with a smile. He lived in the age of showmen, who made their livings or fortunes by gathering crowds of people together to hear sensational teachings.

Darby understood the dynamic and found several means of sensationalizing the Bible. He was neither polite nor diplomatic as he attacked religious opponents. Part of who and what Darby became, as a factious individual, was the animosity and hatred between the political ruling parties of the Whigs and the Torries of England during his life. He lived in an intellectual age of war, and all sides in politics and in the church were gathering armies. If there were peacemakers among any of them, they avoided the fray, and their voices went largely unheard.

In that timeframe, at young ages, children went off to work on farms, in factories, or in the shipping industry. Unless their families might have been counted among the wealthy aristocracy, formal schooling was uncommon. It was a fighting age, and individuals fought their ways into social dominance. Argument and rhetoric were the tools of survival. If ones were loud and forceful enough, their voices might be heard so that they might garner support. It was not only a politically charged world, but moreover, these influences controlled the religious climate. Churchianity revolved around the embrace of monolithic religious dogma. Everyone who was anyone proved who they were by the numbers that rallied behind their ideas.

In a world that revered individuals for their dominance, Darby became a proficient rhetorical fighter, and it was more than just an act to find his way in life in order to prove he was someone important. Darby actually believed that his teachings were the unequivocal, authoritative truth of God that had never before been embraced by Christendom.

Because formal education was rare, men of an educated status were more highly regarded. If they had learned how to cogently argue a point with acuity, they eliminated those who might have disagreed and did not have the intellect or means to countermand their teachings. Darby was highly educated, and as can be seen in his extant writings, he was an orator with whom it was difficult to contend. Much of this had to do with his rhetorical methodology which was less than straightforward. He intentionally made himself and his ideas difficult to pin down. He argued boldly. His presentations were triumphal, convincing, and very misleading. Few individuals were educated or articulate enough to call Darby into question. Even fewer were able to keep up with his mumbo-jumbo of partially quoted Bible verses all mixed up with his persuasive sounding quasi-dominant authoritative appearance.

By using a tricky method of presentation, Darby could say one thing and mean something entirely different. Innumerable church leaders confidently agreed with his teaching without ever catching on to the fact that Darby had just said something completely different than what they thought he was saying. And perhaps, there were many who merely dismissed Darby as just another irrelevant, haranguing, cacophony of misplaced ideas with whom they did not want to invest their efforts or waste their time. They were the lucky ones!

When I think of Darby's character, I am reminded of the 1962 cinemagraphic musical entitled "The Music Man." Around the turn of the century, the traveling salesman and con man, Professor Harold Hill, set about fleecing communities as a supposed talented musician; selling uniforms and instruments to the unsuspecting. The difference between Darby and Hill was that Darby's story has never had a happy ending.

Darby also lived in an important era when new ideas and influences were beginning to move more quickly around the globe. News had become a valuable commodity and the world was hungry for new ideas. Shipping, ocean travel, and the expanding railroad systems made international travel affordable and efficient. The telegraph and newspapers made it possible to spread information at great distances. And if one newspaper thought a story was important enough to print, you better believe that there were dozens more who had to run the same story. The book publishing industry had gained steam and had become a powerful machine; able to churn out thousands of books in short periods of time. Literary works were easily moved around the globe. And let us not forget about the exceeding influence and long-reaching voice of embellished gossip!

Darby and The Malevolence of Bad Ideas

The character Dom Cobb, in the movie Inception, asked, "What is the most resilient parasite?" Inquiring further, he suggested, "Is it a bacteria, a virus, or an intestinal worm." Then Cobb answered his own question, taking the discussion into a different realm of consideration, "No, it is an idea that is resilient and highly contagious! Once an idea has taken hold of the brain, it is almost impossible to eradicate. When an idea becomes fully formed and fully understood, it sticks."

We need to hone in on the teachings of John Nelson Darby because some of his ideas changed the way that the majority of the Protestant Evangelical world interprets what we read in the Bible. No person in history has had such a wide influence on Bible interpretation and Christian spirituality. With these remarks I introduce the highly influential and malevolent ideas of John Nelson Darby.

Darby was a passionate spokesman and traveled between Europe, America, and Australia conveying his ideas to hungry listeners. He was a sensationalist in many respects and captivated his audiences. Sensationalism sells big, and Darby capitalized on this with his claim of having the definitively correct understanding of the end times that was all wrapped up in his interpretation of

Daniel and Revelation. Almost anyone, alive in Darby's lifetime, who claimed authoritatively to be able to explain such matters, immediately found willing audiences with itching ears. Since the vast majority of individuals in the world had not received any formal education, sensational ideas were swallowed uncritically; hook, line, and sinker.

Darby seemed to situate what he had to say in the teachings of the Bible, however, as we will see, he grossly twisted identification of biblical concepts like morality, purity, and perversity. In Darby's theological schematic, biblical terms such as these would never again be used to speak of an individual's moral character or behavior. And there is a great deal of irony in the voracity with which Protestant Evangelical denominations consumed Darby's ideas. One of his foremost teachings was that all denominations had become defiled and were ruined; that is, of course, with the exception of his own denomination, the Plymouth Brethren. And yet, Darby was invited to speak in churches all around the world!

Later, however, when leaders within his own ranks among the Plymouth Brethren began to understand what he was actually saying and rejected his teachings, he cast them aside and began a new sect of the denomination. Darby always had followers who fell prey to his approval; which is probably always a mistake for any of us.

Despite Darby's pejorative denunciation of their institutions, leaders within the myriad of condemned denominations around the globe still willingly invited Darby to speak at their gatherings. His ideas became intoxicating. Later, Darby became scandalously popular, and Evangelical leaders supported publication and re-publication of his work. This was largely because Darby convinced leaders that he alone had unlocked the means to interpret the Bible. Darby's conclusive ideas spread like an all-consuming wildfire that throughout history and by now probably have influenced a billion interpreters of the Bible. That number will be justified ahead.

What made Darby immediately popular was his claim that he had definitively figured out what John, the disciple of Jesus, was talking about in the book of Revelation. This in itself was a

phenomenal assertion, but as he added conspiracy to the formula regarding the role of the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church, listeners who were not equipped with a knowledge of the Scriptures, and who were uninformed about the history of these kinds of assumptions, and the specific origins within Darby's teachings, became misguided in the conclusion that he spoke as the definitive authority.

What made Darby even extremely more compelling, was that he was able to prove that Jesus was about to return at any moment! Therefore, urgency was instilled in his teachings. Nobody could afford to wait to hear what he had to say, because it just might be too late if they did. But what could Darby possibly present that would make his followers and his denomination different than all other defiled Christians and denominations? As we will see, there were several concepts which set Darby apart from all others. And Darby's ideas became a virulent infection in the collective mind of Evangelical Christendom.

Dispensationalism and Biblical Interpretation

Dispensationalism is a mindset of biblical interpretation that divides the Bible into periods of history wherein God, supposedly, chose to deal differently with individuals living in various time periods. The rationally deductive snare attached to dispensationalism is the underlying assumption that, only select portions of the Scriptures are applicable to the supposed individualized dispensations. The final result is that most of the Bible is not applicable to persons of faith living in the present dispensation. Herein, dispensationalism is always used to limit the authority of the teachings of the Bible and ultimately to limit the authority of God in the lives of humankind. Dispensationalism allows those who embrace its malignant ideologies to usurp the throne of God. The concept of actual Lordship with divine-human accountability for choices and behavior is completely nullified.

Whereas Reform thinkers negated human choice in the decision of believing supposedly correct doctrine, labeling this as God's power of grace, Darby moved this concept progressively forward, not so much caring about the impetus of belief, but

understanding that grace was a condition which was entered by intellectual agreement with doctrines; making it so that personal behavior no longer mattered. Earlier, I made the case that the Reformers created moral wiggle room regarding questionable behavior with the teaching that once a person was saved, in the Orthodox paradigm of salvation, there was nothing that could interfere thereafter with this status. Darby added the dispensationalist reinforcement that teachings regarding biblical morality no longer applied to believers who were willing to confess agreement with 3 or 4 religious facts.

Dispensationalist theories often have the appearance of correctness in a similar way that lining up drawings of chimpanzees, monkeys, orangutans, gorillas, and Neanderthals, along with humans, seems to substantiate the theory of evolution. Pictures can be set in a particular order to make it appear just as if one species or lifeform might have magically evolved into another; until simple lifeforms supposedly progressively became human.

In like manner, dispensationalism often has the appearance of being correct, as supposed biblical ages are set in order, but in reality, these are merely schemes laced with agenda. Ultimately, dispensationalism also serves the desire to limit human accountability to God.

A popular dispensational conjecture might divide Scripture into a set of supposed covenants and timeframes; like the Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, etc. With the proper presentation, the theory of dispensationalism can appear to be perfectly reasonable and sound. Dispensationalist ideologies can be captivating; and the ways in which these are presented, by design, can be very convincing. However, poisons can also be flavored with mouth-watering sweetness.

The logical progression presented in dispensational schemas can appear to make sense, but dispensationalism is never taught by the Bible. Dispensationalism is something different from what the Bible actually teaches.

Quite astoundingly, Darby taught that the teachings of Jesus had no relevance to Christians living between Jesus' resurrection

and the time of the soon-coming rapture. All of Jesus' instructions had only been relevant during the dispensation of the Jews.

From the start, closer examination reveals a logical flaw. Considering that all 4 of the Gospels were not written until after the resurrection of Jesus, why would Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John go to all of that effort to record the life and teachings of Jesus after His resurrection in Darby's supposed age of the Church when none of these points of knowledge would ever be relevant in their own lives or for the rest of all time? It is like the rationale of 4 people who love baseball sitting down over the next year in order to write books predicting which team will win the 1972 World Series. Will somebody please get that project started right away? I just can't wait to see who these guys think might win a set of games that took place more than 45 years ago! Wouldn't that be a ridiculous waste of time, pen, and ink? Nobody would do that! Therefore, according to Darby's schematic, the Gospels were already irrelevant when they were still being written!

Despite all of the rational, logical apologetics, like this one, which should make it evident that dispensationalism is a deception, to this very day, errant, dispensationalist concoctions still infect the minds of Bible interpreters. Many of these ones use the framework to free themselves from the teachings of Jesus, to condone licentiousness, to intellectualize the Gospel, or in order to justify lives of immorality. All four of these were the case with respect to Darby's paradigm. Darby did not allow that God could any longer convict individuals of sin, because supposedly, the teachings of Jesus had become completely irrelevant. Embrace of Darby's Gospel boiled down to simple acceptance of a few supposed facts that he had derived from the New Testament.

The second century teacher Marcion's pitting of the Law against the Gospel and his identification of the wrathful God of the Old Testament as a Being who was supposedly different than the benevolent God of Jesus is an early example of dispensationalism. Marcion threw out not only the Old Testament, but most of the New Testament with the exception of a small portion of Luke's writings and Paul's letters. Quite notably, Darby considered that almost the identical set of writings were all that remained relevant

in his present age of the church. Moreover, just as Marcion further edited these to remove Judaic references from the texts, Darby relegated large portions of New Testament material that would have undermined his theology to his supposed age of the Jews. In so doing, he rejected any and all passages that obviously described moral behavior thereby coining the phrase, "rightly dividing the word of truth." Both Mar-seeon and Darby's dispensational perspectives provided the license to discard all aspects of Moses' Law and their editorial efforts allowed them to decide which ideas should permissibly live on to shape Christian theology and spirituality.

Although Marcion's confused perspective that the God of the Old Testament and the New Testament were different was rejected, early Orthodox leaders wholeheartedly embraced the notion that Moses' Law was set in opposition to the Gospel. Darby strongly embraced this continuing error; which the early Church theologian Tertullian had fought unsuccessfully to correct in the second and third centuries of the Christian era.

Marcion's creation of a rift between the Law and the Gospel was a poisonous seed that became the foundational element of Orthodox dispensationalism. Early church bishops such as Epiphanius and Athanasius expanded upon Marcion's groundwork with a particular brand of dispensationalism that was later labeled as cessationism. The bishops agreed that the time for the Holy Spirit to speak individually to members of society had ended, and with this, they asserted that the time for the expression of miraculous spiritual gifts had also ceased. This was plainly articulated in Bishop Epiphanius' lengthy and vitriolic treatise of the *Panarion*.

We should understand that John Nelson Darby did not invent dispensationalism, but he fell prey as a victim to the viral mental contagion. He not only used this to design a simplistic rational model of the Gospel, and an enduring framework of the supposed end times, but moreover, Darby sought to prevent God from ever convicting anyone of sin; thereby supposedly providing an antidote for guilt. Although Darby might be more strongly remembered for his theory of the rapture, the primary objective of

his life revolved around contriving a theological paradigm that would bring an end to guilt and shame in the world.

There were probably several hundred thousand strong-minded apocalyptic dispensationalist thinkers between the first century and the 1800s. Many of these involved their efforts in predicting the time of the return of Christ, or the identities of the Antichrist, the False Prophet, the Beast, and the Whore of Babylon from John's Revelation. Along the path of its development, end times dispensationalist models became enflamed by conspiratorial accusations by theorists who were consumed with hatred aimed directly at the Roman Catholic Church. The institution became an easy target, as the Papacy was repeatedly pegged as supposedly playing a vital role in cooperation with the Antichrist.

Nobody could deny that the political system in England and Europe was religio-politically charged with both Protestant or Catholic biases. By maligning the Roman Catholic faith, Darby had half of the crowd in his pocket from the start.

A Dictionary of Writers of the Prophecies

J. W. Brooks published an extensive bibliography of dispensationalist works entitled A Dictionary of Writers of the Prophecies: With the Titles and Occasional Description of Their Works. Also an Appendix Containing Lists of Commentators, Annotators, Etc., on the Holy Scriptures, published by Simpkin, Marshall, in 1835. The text is available free and was searchable online at Google Books when I worked my way through it several years ago.

It would seem that a component of the proving ground in Darby's time period was to establish one's own persuasions regarding the end times. In the 1800s, as the fervor regarding the end times heated up, Brooks' dictionary added fuel to the fire and was circulated throughout Europe. His bibliographic citations dated from the early 1300s up to the early 1800s.

For untold generations, there had been innumerable ongoing predictions that were all very strongly supported with supposed Bible evidence of the apocalypse and the second coming of Christ. Countless numbers of authors, spanning a 500-year period

of time, often with multiple publications each, foretold the certainty of the end. These confident theologians built their unstable interpretations upon rickety foundations, taking verses out of historical and authorial contexts. Furthermore, they made assumptions that people in their own political and religious settings were identifiable as the Antichrist, the False Prophet, the Beast of Revelation, or the Whore of Babylon, etc. They interpreted contemporary events concerning the Jews, the rise of political leaders, wars, and matters concerning the Papacy, meteorological events, etc., in light of the texts of Scripture, supposedly proving their points definitively. Some even imposed numerological ciphers upon passages of the original language text, which proved the exact identities of the bad guys.

I am compelled to reflect upon the very real problem that there is a kind of insanity that seems to possess people who get involved in study of the end times and reach the conclusion that they have finally figured out the correct dates and identities of those who will be involved. They write books, give lectures, stir up frenzies, all until the date of the supposed second coming of Jesus comes and goes, or their supposed Antichrist passes away. Incredibly, many of them are so enslaved to conspiratorial mindsets that they just move on to a new Antichrist or predict a new date and their followers continue supporting all of the madness. Sometimes the failed predictors are forsaken and are asked to leave their churches.

What is it about the books of Daniel and Revelation that compel individuals to start freakish, unpredictable religious movements over their predictions? How does such deception get started in their minds? It only takes one bad seed. It only takes one maligned individual such as Darby to whisper the tainted suggestion that we need to consider the signs of the times; which are, of course, evident just by listening to the news. And a hundred naïvely deceived people will nod together in agreement. The malignancy spreads, multiplies, and continues to grow unchecked. It infects the minds and lives of all those who give themselves over to fear. It reshapes their priorities, causing many to miss their potential, and utterly destroys the lives of some. In Brooks' bibliography, hundreds

of authors had each become convinced that they had definitively figured out the end times. Some of these supposed interpreters of prophecy became so fixated, for example, that a certain political leader such as Napoleon Bonaparte must assuredly have been the Antichrist that they became completely blinded to reason and criticism. In fact, nearly every major, world-influencing, political leader throughout time has been identified as the Antichrist. As errant theorists, driven by conspiracy, read the Scriptures, nearly everything they interpret, confirms what they supposedly already knew to be true about the end times.

And so, hundreds of dates were predicted and publicized for Jesus' return from the second century onward. Examination of history demonstrates how the confident blind have been leading the naïve ignorant for two millennia. Although the gamble of predicting of the supposed end times and the identities of its supposed leaders had been a losing game for 100 percent of those listed in Brooks' documentary, Darby confidently stepped into the proverbial casino and placed his money on the prophetic roulette wheel.

Darby's Deceptive Rhetorical Method

Before discussing the origins of Darby's theory of the end times and what caused it to become irrefutably embedded in Evangelicalism, it is important to understand how Darby's dispensationalism was constructed to narrow down the Scriptures that were applicable to Darby's age and to identify his motivations.

Darby existed as a theological island. He was convinced that all denominations had become ruined except for his own, which was the Plymouth Brethren. Later, when leaders in that denomination rejected Darby's teachings, there was a split, and he established the denomination of the Exclusive Brethren. Denominations are founded upon ideologies, such as being mission-oriented, educational, evangelistic, etc., and upon doctrinal conclusions. This is what makes each denomination different.

With his assertion that every denomination had become ruined, what Darby was really saying was that they all had

subscribed to incorrect doctrinal conclusions which set up congregants to walk in an incorrect kind of spirituality.

For Darby, the evidence was that Christians continued to suffer with guilt. Up to the time of his own life, Darby's assertion was that the church had never found any definitive means of curing guilt and shame. Darby alone had the exclusive answer.

Because narcissists usually set themselves apart, their radical tendencies are easily identified. They are often stigmatized and marginalized, and their maligned ideas are dismissed. Although the label could possibly apply to Darby, he was saved by the invention of his rhetorical method of teaching.

Darby used a very deceptive means of making it seem as if his ideas were affirmable by the historical tradition of the Bible-believing Christian community. Darby used a convoluted rhetorical method. Rather than alienating his audiences with conclusions, which in fact, could not have been those of Paul, Darby confidently mixed up collections of quotes and paraphrased ideas. To be fair, he sounded as if he were teaching straight from the Bible. However, by using fragments of scriptural quotes that were taken out of context and randomly jumbled together, Darby sounded as if he had something valuable to say. Darby actually produced supporters from a constituency who would have otherwise rejected him and abandoned his teachings.

Today this kind of rhetoric is referred to as a "word-salad." When political leaders in America are asked questions that they are unable to answer, rather than being honest, they concoct lengthy responses combining all sorts of irrelevant information that had nothing to do with the questions being asked.

If anyone reads a few of Darby's articles in a cursory, somewhat disinterested manner, without applying much critical thinking to the theological equations laid out in his explications, it is easy to come away with the conclusion that he was just full of the same old churchianity talk of the early 1800s that everyone else believed. Perhaps his voice was a little more demanding and his rhetoric was a little more compelling. Nevertheless, when one examines Darby extensively and critically, it is evident that by using his engaging, misleading, triumphal, convoluted method, that it

only sounds as if he might have been a traditional thinker. He quoted the Bible and made repeated statements that nobody could probably ever disagree with. However, much of it never seems to add up to anything substantial.

Darby used his plethora of Pauline quotes and rhetoric in order to ostensibly convince audiences that his ideas were well supported by Scripture and the Orthodox tradition. Nevertheless, when he did present creative conclusions, he twisted and contorted biblical concepts into new, very different and often completely incompatible ideas that no churchman had ever conceived.

Some of Darby's writings are available online, and I am going to give a few references if anyone wants to observe his rhetoric. However, I am not going to waste time sorting through long quotes because it gets messy trying to follow his diatribes. Instead, I want to get down to the brass tacks of Darby's dispensationalist conclusions regarding the Gospel, the role of grace, and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

The Theology of John Nelson Darby

At first, Darby's ideas might sound pretty good; but the implications quickly become quite scandalous. It may be difficult to accept that so many Evangelicals latched so firmly on to Darby's ideas when they are openly understood. However, Darby never conveyed his actual convictions clearly, because the masses would have rejected him; just as had been the case with the Plymouth Brethren. By contrast, I intend to present Darby's real interests as faithfully as I understand them and with honesty and integrity.

Darby was an artful dodger, delighting and convincing audiences and church leaders that he was a friend who was eager to provide them with all of the answers. In actuality, Darby played a theological shell game, and he was an admirable master of deception in his teaching; if ever such a person could exist.

Darby insisted that from the resurrection of Jesus up to the time of the rapture of the church, that believers lived in the dispensational age of the church. Some Evangelical leaders afterward and today describe this as the age of grace. There might have been as many as six or seven dispensations which Darby

identified in the Bible; partially depending upon if anyone counted the dispensation of the kingdom age following the rapture. Really though, all that mattered was our present age and the very small selection of biblical writings that we needed.

Reminiscent of Marcion's conclusions, for Darby, the only Scriptures continuing to have relevance to the church age were mainly those of Paul. However, not all of what Paul had to say was useful to Darby in the supposed dispensation of the church. In fact, much of what Paul had to say concerning immorality would have contradicted Darby's ideology. Nevertheless, Darby found several means of preventing any contradictions.

Despite what Darby may have sounded like when he taught, he rejected all of the teachings of Jesus and everything that Jesus said before the resurrection. Darby taught firmly that those teachings belonged to the dispensation of the Jews. Since that imaginary dispensation had supposedly passed away, now, there was a new much smaller relevant segment of the Bible that would apply until the day of the rapture of the church.

We should pause to understand, that although Darby's audiences were Bible-believing Christians, he never intended to lead anyone to Jesus. Rather instead, Darby's anti-Christ dispensationalist theology was designed to lead Christians to ignore every facet of Jesus' instruction.

Those impacted by the incredulity of this observation are no doubt compelled to question, "How in the world did anyone with this kind of agenda have such a far-reaching influence upon Protestant Evangelicalism?" Let me ask, have you ever hidden a bitter pill in a hunk of tasty meat to medicate a pet? This is exactly what Darby did with his ideas.

Darby was a showman who preached with triumphalism. However, theological conclusions should always be considered carefully and either be accepted or rejected on the basis of coherence with Scripture and the context of history—not on the basis that someone has the alluring ability to move the crowd. Triumphalism is a rhetorical, psychological tool that is used to keep individuals from critical thinking. Moreover, triumphalism can set the stage for development of religio-political social structures.

Some pastors, teachers, priests, and supposed contemporary prophets work their audiences into agreement—not on the basis of substantiable facts, but on the basis of supposed camaraderie. Others intimidate or manipulate the naïve with fear.

It is wise to beware when any so-called Christian teacher or other kind of salesperson riles up listeners with triumphalism. Always think critically before responding to the question, "Can I get an Amen?"

Darby made himself appear to be an authoritative, kind, considerate teacher with all the answers. He was a salesman who knew how to make his buyers feel good about what he was selling. Because very few were highly educated critical thinkers, most of them lacked any context from which to evaluate his ideas. Therefore, Darby was accepted and applauded by those he made to feel respected and appreciated. He captivated audiences, garnering their support; while quietly twisting and churning biblical concepts to suit his own needs and conclusions. Darby was very clever; understanding that his first calling was to prepare his audiences to receive what he had to offer. He was good at this, and many fell prey.

And even if anyone did decipher what he was really teaching, well, Darby had an ace up his sleeve which was his enticing, fearmongering, and definitive explanation of the end times. This was his hook. And everyone had better believe what Darby had to say about the last days, because he was the world authority on the rapture which was just about to occur right before their very eyes. And if anyone was not prepared, guess what was going to happen? They would be left behind and would be tortured to death by the Antichrist!

Darby's bluff about the rapture gave him the upper hand. This was extremely manipulative information, and it could not be ignored. Whether anyone fully understood or completely agreed with Darby, nobody wanted to face agonized torment under the rule of Antichrist. And Darby eagerly made new friends everywhere he traveled by generously offering his theological conclusions in an effort to keep anyone he could from being left behind.

For contemporary readers who may be familiar with the Left Behind movie series, this kind of fiction was inspired by Darby's ideas, and are of no use whatsoever in understanding the Bible, God's intentions for humankind, or Hebraic spirituality. This series of movies, as they are entitled, is better off, just being left behind. Soon we will dig into the suspect origins of Darby's theory of the rapture.

Darby was manipulatively clever in conveying his teachings. He did not merely present a set of ideas which could be accepted or rejected. Instead, he offered participation that would supposedly affirm the astuteness of his potential converts. He gave them roles to play which provided a sense of empowerment. With respect to selling his idea of the rapture, he gave audiences the noble sounding job of identifying the signs of the times. With respect to selling dispensationalism, he provided listeners with the seemingly admirable responsibility of rightly dividing the word of truth.

Identifying the signs of the times ostensibly proved that his followers could intelligently interpret the world around them. Rightly dividing the word of truth supposedly empowered believers to make sense of the Scriptures; giving Darby's followers a strong triumphal sense of control over their spirituality.

By treating audiences as if they had something valuable to contribute, he imparted acceptance, respect, and admiration. Darby knew how to work the crowd and how to make them feel good about themselves. His presentations instilled confidence in the minds of those who would listen and made them eager to hear more.

Nevertheless, Darby was sneaky with what he was saying. In reality, Darby himself had already decided upon the dispensations, and he had previously divided up the Scriptures into the supposed different eras to which these applied. Therefore, Darby had not actually empowered anyone to do anything meaningful at all. That job was finished before he enlisted his followers. The seemingly meaningful tasks that Darby offered were little more than smoke and mirrors. In actuality, all that Darby offered were his own prescriptions for what anyone was about to believe. Nevertheless, as Darby made it appear that he was vesting Christians with highly

valued responsibilities, the crowds from several continents flocked to his teachings.

Ha!

By leading Christians to believe in themselves, and that they were worth something, Darby made himself irresistible. In a largely illiterate and uneducated society, he imparted a new triumphal, celebratory identity to his confident interpreters of the Bible. Believers were finally given a sense of authority to think for themselves. However, the vast majority of Darby's spectators were unable to critically evaluate his chicanery and the highly questionable nature of his teachings.

First and foremost, Darby was selling himself. He realized that if he could win the trust of the masses, he would lock in supporters who would very likely never have the mental fortitude to leave.

What the phrase "rightly dividing the word of truth" actually meant may come as a surprise; especially to those who today have heard the phrase highly revered in their own churches. In practicality of application, rightly dividing the word of truth was the obligation of believers to discern which fragments of Scripture were applicable solely to the age of the church. Without saying as much, this also meant they should discern for themselves which portions of Scripture were to be discarded.

Darby did not begin his discussions openly by boldly telling listeners that they should discard the Old Testament or that they might as well just rip the Gospels out of their Bibles and throw these in the trash can.

Darby masqueraded as a Bible-believing Christian. Even though he was not anything close to that in reality, these were the people upon whom he would cast his spell in order to perpetrate his ideas; and from whom he intended to derive his support. Darby's following swelled around the world. Whether or not his conclusions were compatible with the intentions of the authors of Scripture, Bible-believing Christians became the unwitting pawns who would make it so. And these ones would continue to pass along Darby's ideas to all of posterity. And so today, Evangelicals

have proven themselves to have become the champions of Darby's success.

Influences Upon Darby's Gospel and Grace

Recall from *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* that Tertullian identified the root of Marcion's error before more fully confronting his ideas. Marcion hated the Law and this provided his enormous motivation to sever Judaism and the Old Testament from his narrow collection of writings that comprised his supposed partially Lukan and Pauline New Testament.

Comparably, Darby's motivation was the hatred of guilt. The problem with Eden was that there was divinely ordained regulation that provided humankind with a standard of righteousness. Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had been forbidden by God. When the rule was broken, this resulted in shame. According to Darby, God had created a massive problem. It was also His divine obligation to fix it; so that humankind could live in a world that provided freedom of conscience.

And so, in the Scriptures, Darby taught that various covenants made with Noah, Abraham, David, and others, represented failed attempts by God to provide salvation to humankind in order to make things right.

There is no possible way to sugar coat this. Darby blamed God for creating a world where it was possible to feel remorse or shame. In Darby's perspective, God was not omniscient but made many mistakes; as was supposedly proven by the ineffectiveness of each covenant to resolve the problem of guilt in the world.

According to Darby, each of the subsequent covenants represented yet another dispensation in which God was unable to fix the problem; that is until completion of the covenant of the New Testament due to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

In keeping with the primacy of Darby's purpose in providing the means of freeing individuals from guilt, Darby explained pertaining to Mary Magdelene, in his commentary on John, chapter 20, that <u>healing of the conscience was the ultimate gift of God</u>. According to Darby, the problem of Eden was not that humankind had disobeyed, those actions were only reasonable and were to

have been expected in consideration of God's alleged burdensome requirement for obedience.

Darby taught that it was God's unreasonable demand of righteousness that drove humankind out of the Garden. Adam and Eve proved by their willful choice to disobey, that they could not live under such intolerable duress.

I am compelled to comment that I find Darby's convictions to be repulsive. To impute evil to God is blasphemous.

According to Darby, the construct of a world in which it was possible to violate rules or laws was entirely unacceptable. And so, this unconscionable problem which God had created needed to be fixed so that members of humankind could find peace and freedom in their souls. Darby accused God of malevolence for creating a world in which there was any standard for righteousness that could in any way cause individuals to feel guilt or shame. This was the twisted voice that controlled the mind of John Nelson Darby, and he became determined to solve this problem for which he blamed God by using a dispensationalist theological construct.

Although early and continuing Orthodoxy dismissed the relevance of the Law, in continuity with the pattern set for them by Marcion in the second century A.D., the sentiment continued onward through Catholicism, Reformed Protestantism, and Evangelicalism. Marcion had first diametrically opposed the Law against the Gospel. What made this point stick even further during the Reformation was John Calvin's view of grace; which was extracted from the limited understandings of Augustine. Calvin lived between 1509 and 1564, and his theological conclusions highly influenced the famous Westminster Confession of the Reformation which received final approval in 1648.

In order to accomplish the feat of eradicating guilt and shame in Christendom, Darby was forced to redefine a variety of terminologies pertaining to morality, righteousness and other related concepts.

Darby determined that the dispensation of the church, or the age of grace, began with the resurrection of Jesus. Rightly dividing the word of truth into dispensations allowed him to dismiss all of what was said or that had taken place prior to Jesus'

resurrection. Henceforth, Darby eliminated the problem of Jesus and His quotes of Moses' teachings. Therefore, any references to the Law, the beatitudes, parables, or even the Lord's Prayer no longer had any relevant application in Christianity. Case closed; at least according to Darby.

Instead, all that mattered were a few smaller segments of Paul's writings which Darby would quote completely out of context. Since the whole of Paul's larger body of writing would have contradicted Darby's conclusions, he rightly divided the word of truth in order to dismiss anything with which he might have disagreed. Because Paul constantly taught on the topics of character, morality, righteousness, and behavior, in keeping with *Torah*, Darby conveniently redefined all of these concepts. Neither Jesus nor the Apostle Paul were going to get in the way of Darby's agenda.

When it came right down to the brass-tacks, there were only three extracted ideas from the New Testament which were absolutely essential components of Darby's theology. First, Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins. This statement comprised Darby's understanding of the Gospel. Second, the Apostle Paul stated that believers were not under the law but they were under grace. Third, the continuing work of the Holy Spirit was only that of reminding believers of the first two points.

Darby stated, "No authority must for a moment be allowed to cast a shadow over the full grace of the Gospel."[232] Keep in mind that Darby was not affirming the Gospels or the teachings of Jesus with this kind of rhetoric as his audiences might have assumed.

Furthermore, like Calvin, Darby demonstrated absolutely no contextual biblical understanding of the Greek term *charis* from which the English term grace is translated. Instead, Darby depended upon a theological derivation rooted in Calvin's idea wherein grace was understood to be the activity of God causing individuals to

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[232] John Nelson Darby, "Possibles," STEM Publishing, accessed December 15, 2023, https://www.stempublishing.com/authors/darby/Magazines/JND_possibles.html.

choose correct doctrine. When anyone confessed "belief" the action thereby proved they were counted among the elect and were saved. This was ingrained in Orthodoxy's non-Hebraic interpretation of Ephesians 2:8-9.

> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast.[233]

The fourth century bishops misunderstood that salvation was defined as being saved from hell and going to heaven after death. This was solely the gift of God and was based purely upon belief and confession of the doctrines of the Church. For Darby, the only matter of concern to be extracted from the Gospels was the concept that Jesus died for sinners, and this was done specifically to free them from guilt.

In order to get to that place of standing under grace, was a matter of a few easy intellectual steps. Each person must first understand the simple factual truth of the Gospel, that Jesus died a sacrificial death for their sins. After agreeing to intellectually believe that this precise Gospel was true, each person was to take a second step in confessing that they were sinners.

It is important to understand that Darby did not want anyone to confess individual sins. There were no longer any sins because in the dispensation of the church, under grace, there was no longer any Law. According to Darby, for anyone to have confessed specific sins represented grave theological error and demonstrated a slip back into Judaism. A single holistic statement was all that was necessary and then as a third step, each person had to ask for forgiveness.

Darby Explained:

> Until there is confession of sin, and not merely of a sin, there is no forgiveness…When our hearts are brought to recognise God's hand, it is not merely, then, a question of what particular sin, or of what particular iniquity may need forgiveness; God has brought down the soul, through the

[233] Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

> working of His Spirit on it, to detect the principle of sin, and so there is confession of that, and not merely of a particular sin. There is then positive restoration of soul.[234]

If anyone had heard Darby's ultra-simplification of the Gospel and had gone through these steps, that was all they ever really needed to understand. They were no longer under the Law but instead were forever thereafter under grace. Darby made the process very simple, painless, and suspiciously convenient. Anyone having followed these steps had become a "believer."

Similar to Calvin's theological construct, the eternal fate of so-called believers was sealed. Nothing could prevent them from getting into heaven after death.

Furthermore, the work of the Holy Spirit was limited solely to the intellectual task of reminding believers of their freedom in Christ. Any time that the thought of being in heaven after death crossed a person's mind was counted as evidence of having obtained eternal salvation and the final remedy to guilt.

Darby's schematic did not allow for anyone to think that the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit could possibly have anything to do with the conviction of sin, miracles, or any other tangible accomplishment in the physical world. According to Darby's paradigm, the Holy Spirit did not give individuals empowerment to overcome sin or bondage. Rather instead, the work of the Holy Spirit in the age of the church was well-defined and limited to the activity of convicting believers of doctrinal error.

Darby explained, "error in doctrine rather than evil in practice is the subject of the Spirit's censure."[235]

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[234] John Nelson Darby, "I Will Guide Thee With Mine Eye," in *The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby*, ed. William Kelly, vol. 16, *Practical 1*, digital edition hosted on *Plymouth Brethren Writings*, accessed November 25, 2023, https://plymouthbrethren.org/article/11423.

[235] John Nelson Darby, "Remarks on Failure," *SermonIndex*, accessed November 25, 2023, https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=41018.

Herein, Darby further gnosticized Christianity. The only remaining subjective participation in the work of the Holy Spirit was the mental activity of agreeing with the Holy Spirit that one had been forgiven, that they were free from guilt, and that they were never again, under any condition, to confess a sin. Every other aspect of the works of the Holy Spirit that anyone might have read about in the pages of Scripture had supposedly passed away with Judaism.

Quoting Darby, we read:

> Judaism has disappeared for the moment, and as far as the old covenant is concerned; and the full effect of Christ's work, according to the settled purpose of grace, is revealed; believers are placed there by faith, and we possess the knowledge and power of it by the Holy Ghost which has been given to us, …The Holy Ghost, descended from heaven, was to reveal to them the objects of faith, and lead them. Here, that which they receive is the spiritual and subjective capacity to enjoy them, making them personally capable of running the race in which the Holy Ghost was to lead them… the salvation that Jesus had just accomplished, was characterized in its first application by the remission of sins, the first need of the sinner, if he is to be reconciled with God.

Darby's spirituality was a giant head-game. Running the race with the Holy Spirit was limited to intellectually participating in His personal reminders of forgiveness. And Darby's head-game was the exact means to eliminate guilt; whereby, "believers" in doctrine found freedom in Christ and healing of the soul.

Darby's Conceptual Distortions

Darby's paradigm almost seems to be politely acceptable, that is until anyone reads deeper and actually unpacks what Darby meant by all of this.

The Law was what prescribed any character trait or behavior of a person as being sinful, however, *Torah* belonged only to those alive during the age of the Jews. On the imaginary basis that the

Torah had supposedly passed away in the previous dispensation, it was now absolutely impossible for any believer of the correct doctrine to ever sin again. No matter what thoughts, illicit desires, or lusts anyone might have indulged in, none of this was definable as sin, because, believers were under grace. It did not matter if a believer suffered under heinous bondage or willfully chose to live a life of any kind of wickedness imaginable. The only valid concern was the understanding that Believers were under grace. The entire concept of indiscretion was gone because indiscretions could only have been identifiable as such if there were a law.

So, what about morality and perversity? Were they gone too? Darby newly redefined any and every concept that might get in the way of his theology of grace. Morality or moral behavior was agreement with the doctrine of grace. Concepts like perversity or unrighteousness were newly recast as the expression of doubt or disagreement with Darby's Gospel or his doctrine of grace. Purity was the activity of believing the correct doctrines.

For Darby, it was cognitive embrace of the doctrinal understanding of the Gospel of grace which, in and of itself, was the embrace of truth. Upon this understanding Darby explained, and I quote, "the corruption of the truth, which creates and sanctifies the church, is infinitely more fatal than a lapse in the walk."

According to Darby, the action of thinking of oneself as a sinner would have been a corruption of truth, and this intellectual slip up was infinitely more fatal than, for example, living in adultery. But there again, it was not possible for a believer to ever commit adultery according to Darby's schematic.

Therefore, Darby concluded that the problem with Christian practice in his day, and I quote: "[was the] laxity of feeling which prevails with regard to doctrine, in comparison with the moral walk."

Where Paul might have been explicit about sexual sin, Darby could dismiss the discussion into a different dispensation by rightly dividing the word of truth. Herein, Darby provided himself and others with the convenient means to dismiss, for example, Paul's condemnation of specific kinds of sexual immorality discussed in the first chapter of Romans, but then just a few pages later to

embrace a supposed doctrine of grace. Furthermore, wherever Paul might have continued to have spoken of immorality, Darby allowed Bible interpreters to conclude that Paul was thereafter speaking about the rejection of doctrine.

Essentially, Darby was playing a three card monte with his theological precepts, his dispensationalism, and his conceptual changes. Altogether these comprised an intricate set of psychological gymnastics, trickery, and delusion. Darby fraudulently worked the crowds as a highly educated and highly talented showman. To even think for a moment that it was possible for anyone who had previously become a believer to commit a fleshly sin in the age of the church, under grace, was an utter intellectual fallacy. It was an absolute contradiction of possibilities! In his effort to eradicate guilt, to provide healing of the soul, and to offer freedom in Christ, Darby used these manipulations to turn Christianity into a simple sterile form of intellectual gnosticism.

Armed with this understanding, Christendom had obtained a purely intellectual and foolproof means of becoming free from guilt. It was by telling yourself the truth of the Gospel that you had been forgiven. It was by knowing and reaffirming to oneself that one had been forgiven and therefore had been saved eternally. If any of this sounds anything like what you may have embraced as a Christian, it is because of Darby's influence upon Protestant Evangelicalism.

Darby could woo the crowds shouting for hours about the importance of Jesus and the Gospel. Unwitting crowds who would have assumed he had been speaking of the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels might shout, "Yes!" and "Amen!" all the while being none the wiser. He could preach convicting messages about the absolute necessity for purity and morality; and why would any among his Bible-believing constituents have had any reason to disagree? He compellingly rallied the crowds behind himself, not being open and honest about his conclusion that Jesus' teachings in the Gospels no longer applied to anyone on Earth. He did not explain that purity and morality had nothing whatsoever to do with sinful behavior as his audiences would have naturally assumed.

Because the Law had been relegated to the former dispensation of the Jews that preceded the age of the church, it was

not possible for anyone to be disobedient or to sin. Darby redefined morality and walking in righteousness as having accepted the correct doctrine that Jesus had died for the sins of humankind. Conversely, the only act of impurity, immorality, or unrighteousness left in the world was to reject the doctrine that Jesus had died a sacrificial death.

John Nelson Darby and some of his disciples, even today, are perhaps the most two-faced, dishonest individuals in the world to ever lay claim to the title "Christian."

Darby's Lack of Integrity

Darby could not afford to be open, honest, and straightforward to the Bible-believing Christians because he depended upon them for support and counted on them to preserve his ideas and to take these into posterity. Darby was not about to risk upsetting his support structure or else his life and mission would have been destroyed. Because Darby twisted and churned long-standing biblical concepts into completely new foreign ideas, many people thought they understood him and agreed; never realizing Darby had been addressing entirely different issues.

A Practical Application of Darby

The example we are about to present is going to sound outrageously absurd, but again we want to be as faithful as possible in a fair and accurate application of Darby's theology. This seemingly preposterous comparison is offered because there are numerous Evangelicals today who promote Darby's supposed Gospel and grace to find freedom in Christ; just as if it came from the lips of the Apostle Paul.

With regard to Darby's dispensationalist view of the Gospel and grace, even Jack the Ripper could have been and remained as a confirmed believer under grace; even while engaging in violent molestation and murder. So long as Jack the Ripper had acknowledged intellectual agreement with Jesus' finished work on the cross, which was His sacrifice for the sins of humankind, and if he confessed a single time that he was a sinner, and if he continued to participate in the work of the Holy Spirit by reminding himself

that he was forgiven, Jack the Ripper could unremorsefully continue to slaughter innocent women for the rest of his earthly life.

According to Darby's paradigm which was adopted by Evangelicalism, Jack the Ripper remained as a new creation on the basis of his intellectual agreement with the correct religious information; despite his continuing choice to engage in his crimes against humanity. Herein, we are given an understanding of how Calvin's so-called moral wiggle-room, regarding the supposed predestined elect, helped Darby in his own conclusions.

If, heaven forbid, Jack had ever felt the need to confess any individual sins at any time, during the rest of his life, well, that would have represented a slip back into Judaism. Doubting his salvation would be considered an act of immorality. Jack was free to proceed with life any way that he wanted completely guilt free because he might have confessed one time during his life that he was a sinner and thereafter had intellectually accepted the statement that Jesus had died for his sins.

Conveniently, the Reformation's position denying the existence of free-will among humankind, which was rooted in Calvinism, helped to confirm the supposed forgiven elect status in the lives of individuals who might live in the kind of wickedness explained with the example of Jack the Ripper. An actual modern-day example would be Jeffrey Dahmer who was put to death for his horrific acts of wickedness in 1994.

According to Darby's paradigm of faith, Jack the Ripper could actually be in the process of taking the life of an innocent woman while reminding himself that he was forgiven; and all the while only be participating in the subjective work of the Holy Spirit.

All that was necessary for the Jack the Rippers of this world to embrace Darby's Gospel was that each one should continue telling themselves the supposed truth of their forgiven status so that they would always under any condition, experience freedom in Christ.

According to Darby's horrifically perverted paradigm, the only possible way for any person who had previously confessed that they were a sinner to walk in unrighteousness, would be if they doubted that they were under grace.

However difficult it may be to accept, popular Evangelical teachers strongly affirm and avidly promote many of Darby's views today. As we continue to examine Hebraic faith and spirituality, this example should make it evident why Darby's ideas are completely incompatible with the understandings of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the former prophets, King David, the Latter Prophets, Jesus, his disciples and the Apostles. Such ones sought entry into the presence of *Yehovah* and also sought for the King of Glory to enter into their lives.

David asked,

> Who may ascend into the hill of *Yehovah*? And who may stand in His holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and who has not sworn deceitfully. Ones such as these will receive a blessing from *Yehovah* and righteousness from the God of His *Yeshuah*. This is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek your presence like Jacob [236]

In the reading of this passage, be reminded that the term blessing meant to be good-Worded. David's understanding was that a walk of integrity was related to entering the presence of God and receiving *yeshuah*.

> Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O *aionios* doors so that the King of glory may come in! Who is the King of glory? *Yehovah*, strong and mighty—*Yehovah*, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads O gates! and be lifted up, O *aionios* doors! that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? *Yehovah* of hosts—He is the King of glory!.[237]

The champions of faith in the Bible sought to walk in the ways of *Yehovah* and were empowered by the Holy One who dwelt among *Ish-raah-el*. Their angels who beheld *Yehovah's* presence

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[236] Psalm 24:3-6

[237] Psalm 24:7-10 modified NASB

had been washed clean from all guilt and shame before they entered into the throne room of God.

Darbyite Deception in Evangelicalism

Moving into present-day influences of Darby, as I was concluding the *chari*–study, , I was given the opportunity to converse with an Evangelical leader who was a disciple of Darby, and as I sadly discovered, in more ways than one. Later, we sat next to one another at a conference.

What bothered me, and I was honest with him about it, was what I saw as a lack of integrity in that he was unwilling to openly announce to the Bible-believing Christian community—from which he had earned his living—that he had utterly rejected the teachings of Jesus.

In private, probably because he initially viewed me as a potential convert, he had been explicit with me that all of the teachings of Jesus before His resurrection were irrelevant in our present-day because we are under grace. I challenged him specifically regarding the beatitudes and the Lord's prayer. He stated unequivocally that those teachings were totally out the window. None of these apply to so-called "believers" today.

I made it clear in our discussion that I was astounded that a person of his level of influence in the Bible-believing Christian world could utterly reject the beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer and not be open and honest about these matters right up front. To them he appeared as the quintessential born-again Christian. Do you think he may have regretted sitting next to me?

I made it evident that I thought it was dishonest for him not to admit as much about his disregard for the teachings of Jesus to the constituency that supported him. So then, it came as a complete surprise when he promised that in the next moments, when he was about to take over the microphone on the podium, he was going to openly confess to the 2,000 or so attendees that he did not believe that the Lord's Prayer was relevant for contemporary Christians. He was willing to do this as a forthright demonstration of his upright character and his honesty. I was completely astounded!

Less than a minute later he was introduced, and walked up to the podium. Smiling before the crowd, he never said anything about the Lord's Prayer or denial of the teachings of Jesus. He never commented about these being irrelevant in any way; he was obviously patronizing me.

Whatever the case might have been, we both knew from the moment he looked me in the eye and told me what he was about to do, making such a public confession would have sabotaged his credibility among his worldwide support group. There could have been little doubt, considering the leaders in attendance at the conference, that his announcement would surely have spread quickly, and such a disclosure would have negatively affected his following and financial support.

So then, here is an interesting question. Was he being dishonest?

If you asked him, he would probably reply with a firm response of "No."

The only dishonesty in the age of grace for a so-called believer would be the denial that Jesus died for our sins. Dishonesty might also be the assertion that it is still possible for individuals living under grace to tell a lie. In fact, there can be no such thing as a lie for believers in the age of grace because, according to Darby, a lie could only have ever been identifiable as a lie, under the law, in the dispensation of the Jews.

Humility is being openly known for exactly who and what you are. Humility is the willingness to honestly disclose your values. If anyone feels the need to hide something in order to maintain their reputations or financial earnings, there is a problem—even from a worldly perspective. During my introduction to *The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel*, do you recall my warning about some Christians being the most deceitful and ruthless individuals I have ever met? Here is an example of an increasingly prevalent form of Evangelical spirituality that allows individuals to walk through life without care or concern for matters of conscience.

Darby not only freed individuals from guilt, he provided all who would accept his doctrinal perspectives with licentiousness to act out any fleshly desire or crime without remorse. Accordingly,

some Evangelical leaders believe that their newfound freedom in Christ allows them to act in any way that they please. When you see clean-cut, well-dressed men and women who are respected leaders in the church smiling and affirming you, don't be fooled by their offering of approval.

Furthermore, don't let anyone's deceptive use of triumphalism sway your opinion one way or the other. Offer your Amens sparingly and only after critically and carefully thinking things through for yourself. When a person condemns immorality, first ask them for an example of immorality before offering your agreement. Protect your business dealings by getting everything in writing. Thoroughly read and understand each and every contract before signing. And never, never assume that because a person presents themselves as a Christian that they are trustworthy. Jesus did not entrust Himself to any man because He knew what was, in, man.

Hebraic Repentance at the Jordan

The message of freedom from guilt is powerful, and it sells. By young adulthood, everyone has participated in some unrighteous deed. And none of us was created with the capacity to carry the burden of sin, guilt, or shame. Everyone would go back in time to change their pasts if they could. However, we do not understand how this can be possible. To think that we could be separated from decisions wherein we did not choose life, but instead chose wickedness, and inherited its curse, slavery, and bad memories is more than some individuals can imagine.

Oh, to be cleansed and forgiven!

Clever-minded Evangelicals since the time of Darby have discovered ways to package his formula for forgiveness—commercializing religio-intellectual doctrines about Jesus. Darby attempted to provide an easy man-made shortcut to deal with guilt incurred by bad decisions—while rejecting the life giving practices of the Hebraic tradition and the teachings of Jesus.

Darby vehemently hated the Catholic Church and this blinded him from understanding the appropriate means of dealing with guilt and shame through confession of sins. Confession is

perhaps one of the most valuable treasures offered by the Roman Catholic Church.

It is by facing up to one's bad decisions and by verbally acknowledging the fruit of unrighteousness that the serum of healing is prepared for each of us. We determine that by God's help we will not be like dogs who return again to eat our vomit.

Darby abhorred any thought of confessing individual sins. He hoped to shirk responsibility in order to avoid enlivenment of guilt, shame, and embarrassment. Bringing acts committed in darkness out into the light could set in motion an ever-widening set of problems.

The avenue of avoidance in confessing that one had merely been a sinner eliminated both accountability and potential repercussions. And to be honest, most of us would rather die before ever confessing the most shameful acts of our lives to another person. Anyone who has ever confessed their individual sins, especially when this is done with the people against whom the sins were committed, knows that this is probably one of the most risky, difficult, and painful experiences possible in the human life. Ones such as these have tasted death.

Confession of sins is death. Ones' imaginary reputations and future potentials are laid down. Confession of sin is costly, but this is a step toward proper representation of oneself before others.

After a person confesses his or her sins to another human being, they are far less likely to commit that sin again. Nobody wants to face the same death repeatedly. Instead, they become conditioned to think twice before acting in ways that do not reflect perfect love of God and neighbor.

Fear of earthly indictment, incarceration, and restitution leads many to surrender to the lying voice of Satan. We give in, remain silent, and become slaves to the dominion of fear. Satan convinces us that earthly death would be better than opening our mouths and vocalizing our deepest, darkest secrets. However, surrender to the voice of the adversary ensures the continuation of bondage.

In the Hebraic tradition, individuals did not go down to the Jordan merely to confess the generality that they were sinners.

They brought to light their most shameful acts of wickedness, and there can be no doubt that it killed each person to do so. And then they were buried in the grave of water. When they were raised up, they embraced a new life. Their sins remained trapped below the surface of the water. The water that brought death to sin also cleansed and became the starting point of a gateway into the *aionios* life.

And here is the mystery of going back in time to change our lives today. As we pass through the water, Jesus' death on the cross provides a place not only in the water but in the realm of eternity for those repenting and turning away from sins to die with Christ and also to be resurrected into the presence of the Holy One of Israel.

The deadly wounds of sin and wickedness that characterized individuals' lives is lanced open so the infectious pus can be drained to allow the patient to once again find life. Authentic healing can take place. When shameful deeds committed in darkness are brought into the light through confession, the power of Satan is broken. His voice is silenced, fear is gone, and there is authentic freedom as the Truth of God's Being enters our lives in a new way. The confession of individual sins, as seemingly painful as it may be, leads to life and fruitful spirituality.

Instead, Darby offered hush-hush, intellectual, gnostic spirituality. It was an absolutely painless way to avoid the agony of confession and death at the cross with Jesus. Nevertheless, apart from accountability, shameful secrets remain sealed within; ensuring a never-ending mental battle and no tangible means to escape slavery to life-controlling wickedness. Somebody wise once reflected that each of us is as sick as the secrets we are keeping.

In the Hebraic Paradigm, it was by confession of sins and then by passing through cleansing, living water that people became prepared to enter into the realm of the spirit.

The Impact of an Idea

Consider that there are more than 8 billion people alive on Earth today. In 2016, when there were only 7.4 billion, the statistical calculation was made that there were more than 600

million Evangelicals in the world. Darby's most influential theory was the imminent rapture of the church. How many Evangelicals alive in 2016 had heard of or believed in the soon appearing of Jesus and the rapture of the church? Would 99 percent be an unreasonable estimate? How many more individuals have heard about the soon-coming rapture of the church in the last twenty years through print, radio, television, internet publications, word of mouth, and by evangelistic efforts? The actual count must be astronomical.

The rapture of the church has become a foundational teaching that is inescapable throughout the Evangelical world. Therefore, counting all of those who have already died believing this theory since Darby presented the idea in the 1800s, it is reasonable to consider that a billion interpreters of Scripture have unwittingly superimposed, not only Darby's view of the rapture over their reading of the Scriptures, but several of his other destructive doctrines.

The term destructive is used to convey the point that Darby's theological perspective now blinds between 700 million and a billion sincere and well-intended Evangelical and non-Evangelical Christians from ever realizing some of the vital facets of Hebraic spirituality, regarding entry into God's holy kingdom. Hebraic spirituality is a complete contradiction to those among the Evangelical churc—who either knowingly or unwittingly—have adopted their theological conclusions from Darby.

Moreover, Evangelicals very likely control a majority share of the world's wealth, making them one of the most influential religio-political constituencies of all time. The maligned ideas they have unwittingly adopted are probably not going to be corrected anytime soon. Problematically, it is perhaps impossible to divorce oneself from malevolent ideologies that remain unseen. Nearly everyone has forgotten Darby, but now many continue in deception; living in the assumption that his ideas are taught by the authors of Scripture.

Spirituality is comprised of one's daily actions. Each one's future hopes or eschatological beliefs shape their choices and condition where they go and what they become in life. How any of us chooses to live indicates what is taking place in the heart. Jesus taught that the measure of what we are is determined by what we do.

Within the stream of Evangelicalism, the more dominant contradictory view is that people are defined by information they believe to be correct. Many assert that what a person thinks defines their existence; despite their actions.

So then, let us consider the question: Is a rapist not actually a rapist simply because he thinks of himself as something different? If he goes on raping, how will God judge him? Has he escaped divine judgment and condemnation for being a rapist because he may have intellectually acknowledged correct theological doctrine? Or will God judge the rapist according to his continuing deeds?

Hopefully, from consideration of these matters, some of which sound like insanity, both Jews and Christians can understand my concern over a Jew converting to Christianity. Many Jews have, in fact, converted to Evangelical dispensationalism, which has nothing to do with the teachings of Jesus. In the counterfeit spirituality of their new life, they run around frantically trying to get individuals to accept information in order to avoid going to hell. Rather instead, if they followed the instruction of Jesus, they would be looking back to their own roots in the teachings of Moses wherein a way had been provided to enter into the *aiona* as an *Ish-raah-el-ite* seeing and hearing the voice of the Holy One. Entry into the kingdom based upon choices, behavior, and personal character was Jesus' primary focus.

If we accept the teaching of Genesis, humankind died when they chose to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were separated from the presence of God and were unable to continue in the quality of divine-human fellowship enjoyed in Eden. Nevertheless, they were not left without hope.

Accordingly, Jesus explained:

> Truly, truly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.[238]

According to Jesus, is God's judgment based upon an individual's intellectual beliefs or their actions? In the passage above, participation in the resurrection of life depended solely upon whether a person had done good or evil. Those who had done evil were going to become participants in a resurrection of judgment. Entry into the *aiona* or the hereafter depended upon individuals' faithfulness to *Yehovah* in choice and behavior.

None of Jesus' spirituality had anything to do with supposed religious facts that anyone had accepted as being true. None of this had anything to do with cognitive belief. The mistake of thinking that one's eternal destiny depended upon belief of doctrine was founded in the error of early Orthodoxy. Their interpretation of the Scriptures superimposed Aristotle's definition of truth as "correct information" onto the Scriptures, which they combined with Aristotle's definition of *pisteuo* as "cognitive belief."

And so it is important to come to a point of decision. Was Darby correct in making the teachings of Jesus irrelevant? If he was right, Evangelical dispensationalists should dismiss the teaching of Jesus, Who claimed that ones' deeds played a role in the resurrection to life. Or instead, was Darby wrong? If so, the entirety of the Bible remains relevant and applicable to everyone on earth today; this is the Hebraic view.

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[238] John 5:25-29 RSV

Jesus intended for His followers to embrace the Hebraic faith of the Patriarch Abraham. He was proven as the father of anyone's faith who replicated his actions.

As we judge the validity or invalidity of dispensationalism, we ask, did Moses, Jesus or anyone else in the Bible teach this concept? The answer is, "No." Instead, when we study the regrettable history of dispensationalism, we see that this is a human interpretive invention that is founded upon incongruity with the teachings of Moses and Jesus.

If we were to ask Moses, "Should people of faith today reject your teachings?"—what do you think He would say? And what if we asked Jesus the same question? Do you actually think Jesus would tell us to ignore the beatitudes, His instruction for prayer in Matthew, and all of His parables regarding entry into the kingdom? In the account of the rich man and poor Lazarus, Jesus affirmed that the teachings of Moses were still of inestimable importance in guiding individuals toward an eternal destiny with Abraham.

Darby taught that only the minute part of the Gospels that had any relevance to "believers" were the brief narratives following the resurrection. As was argued previously with the silly example of today writing a book predicting who would win the 1974 World Series, the Gospels were not written down until late in the first century A.D.; long after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Why would writers of the Gospels have bothered with recounting all of this information if it was completely irrelevant? And furthermore, why would individuals have risked and lost their lives prior to the reign of Constantine when Christianity was legalized; attempting to preserve this information for posterity.

Selah

The Evangelical perspective, wherein identity is rooted in ideological thinking, was taught by Darby. The appeal is the supposed exoneration from divine accountability and personal responsibility. This is incompatible with the teaching of the authors of Scripture.

Guilt and shame are incurred by choices and actions. Darby did not care what people did so long as they confessed intellectual

agreement with doctrines. What Darby actually offered was lawlessness and freedom from Jesus.

Jesus called some religious leaders in His day to account for their murderous hatred and for their plots to kill him. They were not the children of Abraham as they claimed, even though they proceeded from the blood-line of the Patriarch. It was their deeds which defined who and what they were from the perspective of heaven.

Jesus instead identified these malevolent ones as the children of Satan because of their hateful desire to kill Him. Satan was identifiable as a murderer because of his actions, and so were the corrupt Second Temple priests; no matter what they believed about themselves because of earthly family lineage.

Jesus plainly taught that bad trees bear bad fruit. A person is known by his or her deeds. Why was Jacob a cheater and a supplanter? It was because of his deeds. Why was he later named *Ish-raah-el*? It was because he wrestled to take hold of and saw the Holy One.

By contrast, when anyone buys into the idea that identity is fundamentally rooted in theology instead of actions, she or he has rejected Jesus and has bought into Darby. According to Jesus, what did we just read that will determine participation in the resurrection? Did Jesus make any suggestions about beliefs? No. Resurrection into life, according to the Hebraic tradition was clearly the result of good deeds by those Who acted in faithfulness with the Truth in their hearts. It may be time to burn some of our systematic theologies and self-help books and to begin wholeheartedly seeking the voice of the Holy One seen by Jacob. We must embrace the namesake of our faith—*Ish-raah-el*.

We can either <u>choose</u> to listen to Darby or we can seek a living divine-human relationship with *Yeshuah*; which includes all of the Bible and the testimonies of those who made costly difficult choices to travel the narrow road that led them to life in the presence of God.

We reiterate Jesus' teaching:

> A time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good things, to

> the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked things, to the resurrection of condemnation.[239]

In Hebraic thought, a person's identity and eternal destiny was made plain by her or his actions. What a person did was who they were. This is contrasted to contemporary Evangelicalism, wherein people often identify themselves with information which they believe to be correct. For example, a person who commits ongoing crimes against humanity can reference himself as a Christian if he has prayed the sinner's prayer or if he attends church. By contrast, labeling of faith in the Bible or describing the faithful was practically linked to their deeds, while contemporary labeling is theoretical. In a biblical sense, individuals were defined by their deeds.

For example, Jesus taught against those seeking to kill Him:

> You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the Truth, for there is no Truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.[240]

Note that the term "Truth" was re-spelled using an uppercase letter "T" in the print version of this book that does not appear in the NIV; emphasizing the interpretive understanding that God Himself exists as Truth.

If God or His name dwells within any of us, we will do the will of God. In contrast to popular misleading theoretical theological assumptions, our deeds prove whether or not we are the bearers of the image of God. If any of us takes the time to honestly study the teachings of Moses or Jesus, we realize that each of us will be judged by our deeds and these are the proof of our *aionios* identities. Although the Reformers rebelled against the concept of works being the ultimate judge of character, relying instead upon the catchphrase *sola fide*, James, the brother of Jesus, stated that it

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[239] John 5:28a and 29 CSB

[240] John 8:44 NIV

was nonsense for anyone to have claimed to have had a faithful relationship with *Yehovah* who did not produce His works in the world.

Although some of my friends who rely upon their doctrine instead of the Bible would say otherwise, the Apostle Paul clearly taught that individuals would be judged because of their deeds. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul wrote: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." In Galatians 6, he warned similarly using an agrarian metaphor: "A man reaps what he sows." Sowing to the "deeds of the flesh"—which included sexual impurity, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, selfishness, factions, and envy—would yield destruction while—while by contrast, sowing according to the Spirit would lead to the *aionios* life.

In Ephesians 5, Paul admonished this community similarly that those who involved themselves with obscenity, greed, immorality, and foolish talk would bring the wrath of God upon themselves. It should be obvious, but we reiterate the point that Paul was writing to those who addressed themselves as "Christians"—who yet were partaking in such malevolent decisions and behaviors.

Paul admonished the Colossians:

> Whatever you do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord you shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: You serve the Lord Christ.[241]

Accordingly, he instructed them in chapter 4, "Let your speech always be with *charis* (or grace), seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." In other terms, nobody should be speaking according to their own knowledge, but instead, according to that which they received from God's voice. Similarly he instructed the Ephesians, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart *charis* to the hearers." And this is how miracles were

[241] Colossians 3:23–24 ASV

called forth through Paul's words. It is because on his best days, the Words coming out of the Apostle's mouth were God's Words.

Speaking by God's *Chen*, *Charis*, or Grace

Paul's grace was the voice of God.

> …For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think...[242]

This he was able to say because God had personally spoken to him on the matter. By contrast, in First Corinthians chapter 7, regarding his advice concerning the management of virgin daughters, Paul differentiated what he said attributing his position on their potential marriages to his personal opinion.

> …Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: but I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy…[243]

In Romans 15, Paul explained that he was able to write confidently about certain topics because God had spoken to him.

> …but I write the more boldly unto you in some measure, as putting you again in remembrance, because of the grace that was given me of God…

In Romans 12, Paul explained the source of his instructional authority:

> …for I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think...

Regarding his instruction to the Corinthians Paul explained:

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[242] Romans 12:3 ASV

[243] 1 Corinthians 7:25 ASV

> …according to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it…[244]

Paul differentiated the source of His conduct and teaching from that of others: "…not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God..."[245]

In continuity with Jesus, through Whom grace was given according to John's Gospel, Paul carried out his ministry working signs and wonders through the impartation of God's grace.

> But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not found to have been in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.[246]

It was the Word of God who filled Paul's mouth with His teaching, and it was the Word of God, who worked through Paul's hands and words calling forth grace in order to impart healing. The Word of God was the essence of grace.

> …whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of that grace of God which was given me according to the working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ….[247]

When Jesus taught at the synagogue at Nazareth in Luke 4, the crowd marveled asking literally, where did He get these "Words of grace?" This was a prophetic messianic fulfillment of Psalm 45 which in Hebrew pertained to the *chen* of God: "Grace or *chen* is poured upon Your lips; Therefore God has blessed You in the

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[244] 1 Corinthians 3:10

[245] Note 2 Corinthians 1:12.

[246] 1 Corinthians 15:10 modified KJV

[247] Ephesians 3:7-8 KJV

aiona." Note that I started the quote using Hebrew and ended it using the Greek Septuagint. In the ancient understanding, grace was understood to have come by means of divine impartation by sanctified individuals who were defined as such by having entered into the holy realm. So then we understand in the context of Luke that the listeners were not conveying the idea that Jesus was an accomplished orator. Rather instead, Luke conveyed the idea that it was obvious that Jesus' teaching was from God.

In John 1:1-14, Jesus was literally identified as the Word and as a manifestation of God's grace living among them.

In the obtaining of such grace, Jesus taught extensively in John's Gospel that He could only perform miraculous works and could only teach because of what He had heard by spending time in the presence of God. This was the essence of the *aionios* life.

In Acts 14, at Iconium, Barnabas and Paul worked wonders and taught "by the Word of His grace." When Paul addressed the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, Paul commended the brethren "…to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance..."

Hebrews' author, in chapter 12, admonished readers, "…see to it that nobody falls short of the grace of God…" in verse 15 and concluded the remark in verse 25, writing "see to it that you do not refuse Him Who speaks." All of this had been written in the context of individuals standing before the throne of God's grace in the *aiona*, by those sanctified ones experiencing the *aionios* life.

The theoretical intellectualization of grace and faith by early and ongoing Orthodoxy and the rise of substitute theoretical cognitive counterfeit expressions of grace, faith, and spirituality were the result of the bishops' unwitting and continuing embrace of Aristotle's Classical Greek definitions of *charis* and *pisteuo*. Because Aristotle defined truth, spelled with a lower case "t," as correct information, the Aristotelian-thinking Greek bishops interpreted the New Testament by superimposing the foreign idea of intellectual belief over the Scriptures instead of contextually understanding the *Koine* Greek terms *pisteuo*, *pistis, and pistos*. These should have

been understood with the respective meanings as “I faith,” “faith,” and “faithful.” Since the verb form, “I faith” does not seem to make much sence in English, *pisteuo* can be more easily understood as “I uphold faith.” In rarer instances in the biblical texts, the case can be made that usage of *pisteuo* legitimately has to do with cognitive belief.

The same dynamic took place with regard to *charis*. Since Classical Greek had understood the term as conveying the innocuous idea of “favor,” Orthodoxy unquestioningly and sweepingly superimposed this simplistic idea over the *Koine* Greek Scriptures. While in some contexts, the concept of “favor” is a fitting interpretation of the term, in many other cases it is clearly demonstrated by inductive contextual analysis that “grace” is the voice of God, which comes through divine-human reception of the Word of God.

The study of context always makes it clear how translation should be rendered. For example, with respect to *pisteuo*, we investigate the passage asking, is this term usage describing the character of a person or is it describing intellectual knowledge? With respect to *charis*, one of the questions we ask concerns whether or not the larger context is discussing a divine impartation. And accordingly, this requires some attention to differentiate the impartation from the disposition of the Giver. When supernatural occurrences take place in a passage using the term *charis*, we understand from the corpus of Scripture beginning in Genesis that miraculous events happen in the world with the manifestation of God’s Word.

In Acts 7:10, Luke recalled for his audience that it was by grace and wisdom that Joseph had been divinely empowered to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh. God did not give Joseph favor, as many translations read, but instead when we study the Old Testament context which provided the basis for Luke’s discussion, more specifically we see that God imparted His Word which provided the interpretation. Joseph could not have interpreted the dream apart from receiving the Word of God. This example was

discussed more extensively in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*.

Paul further described divinely gifted Words using the term "*charisma*" (χάρισμα). And this set the basis for understanding the *Koine* Greek term "*eucharisteo*" as the calling forth of God's grace."

Those who walked according to the fleshly ways of men would ultimately be held accountable; no matter even if they were a priest or pastor:

> For he that does what is wrong will receive repayment for the wrong that he has done: and there is no respect of persons.[248]

In Romans 2:1-11, posterity was left to understand:

> Therefore you are without excuse, O man, whosoever you are that judges. For in the concerns for which you judge others, you condemn yourself, if you practice the same things.[249]

In the context of chapter 1, Paul had just listed all of these concerns which included lust, lesbianism, homosexuality, fornication, and other means of dishonoring their bodies. He elaborated on unrighteousness—providing a list of activities and character traits of those who had separated themselves from God. Whatever doctrine they claimed to have asserted might have been correct was immaterial in affecting their choices and behavior. He specifically mentioned,

> wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, and unmerciful.

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[248] Colossians 3:25

[249] Romans 2:1-11 ASV

Although they knew the ordinances of God, they continued to practice the very wrong-doing that Paul stated had made them "worthy of death."

The Apostle continued in chapter 2 regarding incurring the judgment of God for one's deeds.

> And we know that the judgment of God is according to Truth against them that practice such things. And you need to reckon with this, O man, who judges others who practice such things, and yet do the same. Do you think for a moment that you will somehow escape the judgment of God?[250]

Although God's goodness was intended to lead such individuals to repentance, many in ancient Rome, and still today, stored up the wrath of God for themselves; which would come upon them in the revelatory day of the judgment before God.

To be very clear, God:

> will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, *aionios* life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory and honor and peace to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God.[251]

Although many houses of worship turn a blind eye to the worldly passions lived out by their congregants, and ignore addressing behavior and character that is not pleasing to God, they probably do so in order to protect their financial donations. For those who may not have noticed, religion is big business. And in order to protect the business, Christendom has invented man-made religious doctrines of grace that contradict the Scriptures. They

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[250] Romans 2:2–3

[251] Romans 2:6–11 ASV

teach congregants that because they are under the unmerited favor of God, due to their mental acquisition of religious doctrines—and recitation of canned prayers—they somehow miraculously will not be judged for their wickedness.

No matter what anyone thinks or teaches, and no matter how they misconstrue Paul's instructions, God will not be mocked. Those who take the name of the Lord upon themselves in vain—who disregard the clear instruction of Moses, Jesus, and the Apostles—will not abide in the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. These are the very concerns whereby the Deuteronomists and Second Temple Judaism found themselves abandoned by God. And Paul warned of such abandonment in Romans 1. Only those who learn to walk in the ways of God are going to also walk in the *aiona*. And walking in the *aiona* or the kingdom of God is the highest concern for those who are going to prove themselves in this life to be the children of God. Like the prophet Samuel, ones such as these will be raised to new life in the realm of the *elohim* after life on Earth.

> For as many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law: and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law; for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified; for when Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are the law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them); in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my Gospel, by Jesus Christ.[252]

And so we understand just exactly what the Gospel of the Apostle Paul was.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul admonished those who were sexually immoral, idolaters, thieves, drunkards, and slanderers, informing them "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?"

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[252] Romans 2:12–16 ASV

John made the case that those who were born of the Truth would inherit the *aionios* life. In many contexts, when the Bible speaks of Truth, in a dominant number of contexts, Truth referenced the Being of God. However the bishops of Orthodoxy read the texts of Scripture through the interpretive lens of Aristotle and truth became correct facts which were to have been believed. Aristotle's philosophical influence was the foundational turning point from orthopraxy to orthodoxy. Also having misinterpreted the concept of salvation and the *aionios zoe*, the western-minded bishops eagerly and triumphally set about the task of telling the world what information it had to believe in order to get into heaven after they died.

This was a complete misunderstanding of the longstanding Hebraic biblical concept of *pisteuo* which was instead intended to have been comprehended as a upholding faith in the sense of remaining faithful in a divine-human relationship.

We can more properly translate the verb *pisteuo* in a context of upholding faith in God. In the Hebraic context, God Himself existed as Truth." Information about God was not the same as God Himself. Having a cognitive embrace of information is something very different than having a communal communicative relationship and walking in accountability with another living being. Any kind of so-called faith that is solely based upon acquisition of doctrinal knowledge, without subjective two-way divine-human participatory fellowship, is Christian gnosticism.

Those who upheld faith in *Yehovah* in the Bible, became like Him in being as they responded obediently in righteousness to His voice or to inspired *Torah*. In these actions, those who uphold faith become products of Truth, the children of Truth, or are reborn as the sons and daughters of God.

At the end of 1 John 5:20, the disciple of Jesus explained,

> We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him Who is True; and we are in Him Who is True, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the True God and the *aionios* life.

In John [253]5:24, Jesus stated, “Truly, truly, I tell you, anyone who hears My Word, and believes Him Who sent Me, has the *aionios* life, and does not come into judgment. Such ones have passed out of death into life.” Note the use of the term “believes” in the passage. Throughout the Scriptures, individuals were given a choice after encountering the Word of God. They could either obey and prove themselves as being faithful or as upholding faith in God, or they could choose to ignore and to disobey God. The passage should more accurately have been translated as follows:

> Truly, truly, I tell you, anyone who hears My Word, and upholds faith in Him who sent Me, has the *aionios* life, and does not come into judgment. Such ones have passed out of death into life.”

Before moving forward, the term “True” which was used three times in 1 John 5:20, was translated from the Greek term “*alethia*” (ἀλήθεια); whereas the phrase “Truly Truly in John 5:20, was translated from the Greek term “amen” (ἀμὴν). In John 14:6, Jesus, speaking as the Word of God and the second power of heaven, identified Himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life, using the term *alethia* (ἀλήθεια). Those who read or study the Bible in Greek have a tremendous advantage over English readers. And as we can extrapolate from this example, those who derive their theology from translated texts are probably going to make some huge mistakes when they somehow attempt to make a connection between the phrase “Truly, Truly” and knowing “God Who is True.” Amen, Amen referenced embracing an axiomatic statement, whereas knowing “God who was True” comprised an active responsible relationship. Jesus’ incisive instructions always led to answerable spirituality.

Here again, the *aionios* life of John 5 relates all of the way back to Noah and God’s establishment of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. Noah encountered the *davar* of God and obeyed His voice. Noah was counted as having been faithful by the author of Hebrews; whereas the author of Genesis reported that his obedient

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[253] 1 John 5:20 modified NASB

deeds, completed in accordance with the voice of God Most High, were righteous. This has been rendered in many English translations with the statement "Noah was a just man."[254] The theological concepts of justification and righteousness come from the same Greek term.

Dikaiósis (δικαίωσις) is the term for "justification;" whereas *dikaiosuné* (δικαιοσύνη) is the term for righteousness. The English connection comes from the idea that the concept of righteousness is a result of justification by a judicial verdict. Both *Koine* Greek terms share the common root as can be noted from their etymology. One is justified by his or her deeds that are completed as an act of faithfulness to God. In other terms, people hear God's voice—or understand some other representation of His will such as the inspired *Torah*—and obey. In the context of the biblical languages, this is righteousness and justification. Righteousness or justification—as a single concept—is the result of a cause effect relationship that is a measurable response to God's will. In its biblical usage, to say that a person was justifiable is identical to calling her or him righteous.

When systematic theologies are constructed using English terminology, at times, important connections remain unseen and theorists go far off course—sometimes resulting in the development of two entirely different doctrines for a single *Koine* Greek concept.

Jesus clarified that those who choose not to hold to the Truth, and thereby proved that there was no Truth abiding in them by their actions, were not the children of God.

> This is how the judgment works: the Light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the Light, because their deeds are evil. Those who do evil things hate the Light and will not come to the Light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up. But those who do

[254] Note Hebrews 11:7 and Genesis 6:9.

what is true come to the Light in order that the Light may show that what they did was in obedience to God.[255]

Note that in the print version of the book, the term "Light" was spelled using an upper-case "L" because in context the term Light referenced the second power of heaven. The upper-case "L" does not appear in the Good News Version.

Again, what we note in the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels is that actions prove every person's identity.

Throughout the ages, individuals in Orthodox Christianity have offered a theorized intellectual systematic set of doctrines to act as an objective gnostic replacement for a tangible personal relationship with God. This has been done in order to allow people to gain supposed eternal life while still living lives of disobedience and actively walking in opposition to God.

Preachers with refined rhetorical skills are able to move the crowds with the talented vocal inflections and the metered tempo of their speech. One talented man used his persuasive abilities to sell the supposed doctrine of a "sin nature;" a grammatical structure that does not actually occur anywhere in the *Koine* Greek New Testament. Many today use this doctrine to exonerate themselves from judgment pertaining to their personal disregard for the teachings of Jesus. Because of doctrines like this one that have been derived from reading English translations of the Bible, adultery has become casually dismissible in Evangelical paradigms of thought. And so if men like this preacher do happen to sleep with the wife of a parishioner in his denomination or with a single woman, he and those he has taught can readily rely upon the doctrine in order to justify themselves. Long ago, they prayed a brief formal prayer and were forgiven of every act of wickedness they ever had or would commit; or so they were told and led to believe. In this example, a false religion has replaced a living accountable divine-human relationship. Herein, deceived individuals have freed themselves from actual Lordship of *Yehovah* with a single prayer and by intellectually embracing just a few

[255] John 3:19-21 GNT

cognitive facts. Let us be clear, this man was not teaching anything that Jesus ever taught. Ones such as these are not *Ish-raah-el-ites*. They are not led by the Holy Spirit who beholds the presence of God.

Individuals like him prove by their deeds that they love the darkness rather than the Light, because their deeds are evil. If we trust Jesus more than we trust doctrine, then we will agree that "Those who do evil things hate the Light." They do not come to the Light or confess their sins and become accountable to actual *Ish-raah-el-ites*, ultimately because they are ashamed and do not want to face death and destroy their idolatrous false reputations. By contrast, those who do what is true come to the Light in order that the Light may show that what they did was in obedience to God. No matter how convincing their doctrine may sound or how pleasing their rhetoric, those who reject the way of the Lord do not walk in the life of the *aionios* covenant. Instead, they remain under God's judgment.

And if they were really so confident about their saving doctrine, why don't individuals such as these ask how their spouses and congregants feel about the matter? Shouldn't they stand up and proudly proclaim their nefarious hidden activities from the pulpit and at their denominational conferences?

Ultimately, the pain which comes as a result of confession and bringing our evil deeds into the light is an expression of God's mercy. He allows for pain so that we will learn from our mistakes. We know from 2 Timothy 2 that God desires for all men to come to the Truth.

Anyone who flagrantly announces that people can disregard the plain teachings of Jesus is an anti-Christ teacher. Do not incur the judgment they are bringing upon themselves by listening to them or by cognitively believing their doctrine. This destructive knowledge is not from God.

At the start of the book, the case was made that I was not attempting to make any argument for Jews to convert to Christianity. This false understanding of faith and truth has much to do with that warning. Naïve Christians scurry about the planet convincing others to learn a few religious facts about Jesus, God,

grace and sin, which they have labeled as “truth;” leading the unsuspecting to pray a simple prayer. In many cases, this does not lead to or constitute establishing a faithful relationship with God Most High. And in the worst cases, individuals who are morally corrupt, continue as such in life pretending to be God’s children.

My advice is to walk faithfully with the Lord. Listen to His voice and He will be your helper throughout life. Keep in mind that each one of us will give an account for our deeds. And my Jewish friends should read the Gospels for themselves and compare or contrast what Jesus actually taught with what they have seen or heard in the lives of their Christian neighbors. If anyone willingly walks in moral corruption and labels themselves as being any kind of a follower of God, there is a serious problem. God is merciful and we can come before Him and we can turn away from wickedness. His voice will always guide those with humble contrite hearts.

Darby’s Rapture

According to Darby, the imminent rapture might occur at any moment marking the end of the dispensation of the church. Those who had put off believing in Darby’s supposed Gospel; thereby having rejected God’s grace, would certainly suffer tortuous persecution and death.

Wildly imaginative and frightening illustrations of the Beast, the False Prophet, and the Antichrist annihilating the world have been depicted on posters; inciting the hearts and minds of the fearful. They rush forward in altar calls to ensure they will become participants in the impending rapture. Never has there been a more urgent message in the history of preaching.

Posterity has been robbed; only because we cannot look back in time to witness Darby marching back and forth on stages, scaring people half to death, deluding crowds with spellbinding presentations, and leading anyone and everyone down a path that could logically lead only to a single decision. All anyone had to do was to accept Darby’s simple formula for salvation. As Darby declared that the end was very near, by golly, everyone that could read the signs of the times got their act in gear. Never underestimate the vast enduring power of conspiratorial

sensationalism. And to this very day, the end never seems to be nearer than at the close of an Evangelical sermon. What rational choice is there when faced with impending Armageddon?

Do you believe that the rapture of the church could occur at any moment? If so, it is because Darby first introduced that particular idea along with its impending immediacy on a wide scale to the church. It can be enlightening to discover the historical sources of theories and philosophies which have shaped our lives.

Darby has proven himself as a hallmark of influence; the fear he instilled many generations ago determined how hundreds of millions of individuals would invest their lives and resources today and for the foreseeable future.

My goal is not to anathematize or to belittle those who believe in the rapture. For half of my life this was also my belief, and it was not something that I was fast in letting go of. Apart from first learning of, and by acknowledging the suspect origin of an idea, we can never move forward to dismantle its power. Untold millions of individuals around the world read the Bible and unwittingly superimpose Darby's conclusions over Scripture. Problematically, Evangelicalism has found security and has become habitually dependent upon the status quo. Nobody wants to risk a mistake when martyrdom under the reign of Antichrist is on the line. Fear can paralyze.

Is it honest, fair, and ethical to use threat of terror to lead naïve, or otherwise uninformed, neighbors to make a life-changing commitment to an imaginative doctrinal theory? Is it disingenuous to supposedly turn people into Christians through acquisition of an intellectual narrative? Furthermore, is it wise for anyone to make decisions based upon unproven information that is motivated by fear? A wise person once reflected: A people who forget the errors of history are bound to repeat them.

J. W. Brooks' Dictionary of Writers of the Prophecies demonstrated how Europe was saturated with misinformation for centuries. How could so many interpreters of the Scriptures, over hundreds of years, influencing millions of readers, with absolute certainty, prove themselves repeatedly and so consistently to be 100% wrong?

Prior to Darby, end times dispensational thinkers made repeated and compounded errors interpreting Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation, and other biblical texts; shuffling these into contrived yet conclusive apocalyptic formulas predicting exact dates and specific identities of the anti-Christ. And every supposed prediction of the soon-coming end of the world never happened. Every individual in history ever determined to have been one of the really bad guys in Revelation died before getting around to fulfilling their respective roles in Armageddon. As we will see, Darby came up with a clever way around these problems; ensuring that his last days model could never in the same ways be proven wrong.

One author listed in Brooks' bibliographic dictionary was Manuel Lacunza, who lived between 1731 and 1801. He was influenced by the dispensationalist, apocalyptic writer Joachim of Flora who lived between 1135 and 1202. Lacunza's work was translated from Spanish into English by Edward Irving, who lived between 1792 and 1834. Irving was a Scottish clergyman and founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church. Like many others throughout history, he became convinced that a new dispensational age had dawned and that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit was taking place. He and others understood this to be the precursor to the spread of the Gospel over the Earth that would precede the soon-coming return of Christ. Irving's services were scandalously popular as he encouraged manifestations of the spiritual gifts.

One of Irving's parishioners, Margaret McDonald, has been acknowledged by many as the first person to use the term "rapture" with respect to the biblical concept of the return of Jesus. The term came in a charismatic, prophetic utterance during one of Irving's church meetings.

Like many in his time, Edward Irving had a fascination with the last days. Participants in these meetings reported that many of his followers received revelations, saw visions and spoke in tongues. In Ms. McDonald's ecstatic utterance, she asserted that the believers of the church would be rescued from the battle of Armageddon at the apocalyptic end of the world described in Revelation; as the Lord would rapture them away from the world.

Irving's meetings had become a sensational attraction and had aroused such a fascinating degree of interest that in 1833, Robert Baxter composed the publication, Narrative of Facts Characterizing the Supernatural Manifestations in Members of Mr. Irving's Congregation and Other Individuals, in England and Scotland and Formerly in the Writer Himself, published by James Nisbet, at Berners Street, in London.[256]

Irving preserved his own lectures for posterity in the publication of an Exposition of the book of Revelation.[257] Volumes 1 through 4, published by Baldwin and Cardock, in 1831. For those so interested, also see the publication, The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty, Volumes 1 & 2, the authorship of which was attributed to M. Lacunza and Edward Irving, published by Seeley and Son, at Fleet Street, in London, in 1827.[258]

For a valuable overview of the flow of influence of Irving's ideas being passed along through history, consult Dr. Peter E. Prosser's book, Dispensationalist Eschatology and its Influence on American and British Religious Movements, published by Edwin Mellen Press in Lewiston, New York, in 1999.

Irving continued to speak about the rapture at a series of meetings known as the Powerscourt Conference. John Nelson Darby heard about the idea of the rapture and tied the concept together with a statement in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, in 4:17. Darby translated, "Then *we* the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall always be with the Lord." Quoted from

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[256] Robert Baxter, *Narrative of Facts Characterizing the Supernatural Manifestations in Members of Mr. Irving's Congregation and Other Individuals, in England and Scotland and Formerly in the Writer Himself* (London: James Nisbet, 1833).

[257] Edward Irving, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation, in a Series of Lectures*, 4 vols. (London: Baldwin & Cradock, 1831).

[258] Manuel Lacunza [Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra], *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty*, trans. and with a preliminary discourse by Edward Irving, 2 vols. (London: L. B. Seeley and Son, 1827).

the English Darby Bible translated by John Nelson Darby, published in 1884 and again in 1890.

Although the term rapture never occurs anywhere in the pages of Scripture, Darby made an intuitive connection between Paul's statement and Irving's propagation of Margaret McDonald's utterance. He used the term in his commentary on Genesis to speak of the means by which Enoch was removed from the Earth.

Discussion of the rapture of the saints continued to grow, and further prophecies in Irving's church confirmed that those who had turned to the Lord would be delivered from the end times peril. They would be drawn away invisibly to be with Christ prior to the start of the great tribulation.

If Darby had only preached his messages of dispensationalism and grace, perhaps his ideas might not have taken hold as they did, especially because of his firm conviction that all other denominations except his own had become ruined. What sealed the sale of his theology, however, was his assertion that he could authoritatively explain the end times.

Darby gambled well, with a watchful eye, in realization of the faulty strategies resulting in losses by thousands of his predecessors. He dealt himself an ace from the bottom of the deck that would ensure that his perspective could probably never have been proven wrong.

The major mistake of earlier predictors was that they either gave a specific date for Christ's return, or they named specific participants; always assigning contemporary religious or political leaders to the identities of the bad guys in Revelation. In every instance, the passage of time unveiled innumerable centuries of repeated error. They did not realize that these figures of speech referenced the wicked identity of Second Temple Judaism.

Darby realized the design flaw and improved upon the schematic.

Instead of predicting the identity of the anti-Christ, Darby left this up to his converts instructing them to examine the signs of the times. By leaving identification of the Antichrist to the unbridled imagination running wild among willing speculators in the body of Christ, Darby found that they were all only too eager to make fools

of themselves pointing the finger and by declaring what would later be proven as falsehood. In a world that more speedily flowed with fresh daily news, reading the papers probably became of greater importance than the Bible. Moreover, Darby never gave a date, he taught that the rapture was about to occur at any moment, thereby indemnifying himself from indictment and avoiding censure based on provable error.

Darby's end-time model never dies because it has certain components that can fit into any age. All that is necessary for the development of new predictions is the presence of a maligned religious order, a stigmatized political or religious leader, and conflict in the Middle East. Wars, rumors of wars, conspiracy theories, extreme weather conditions, volcanoes, earthquakes, particular alignments of the planets, and solar or lunar eclipses also feed the hungry appetites of eager end times evangelists. The finishing components include mathematical calculations based on the book of Daniel that happen to coincide with a date or timeframe in the immediate future.

Since no healthy thinking individual wants to suffer martyrdom under the reign of Antichrist, well-intended pastors partner with Satan; inciting fear in the hearts and minds of naïve Christians. And fear is a cruel dictator.

Uneducated, non-critical thinkers are pre-conditioned to become sincere evangelists hysterically warning neighbors about the end. The poisoned victims of such fear take on frantic, reactionary identities. Their lips are driven by emotion as they passionately proclaim assertions that are doomed to fail.

And then, the world listens to rhetoric sounding like, "It is pretty darn plain for everyone to see that all of these predictions come straight from the Bible!" Or, "A person would have to be absolutely blind or a complete idiot not to see that we are in the end times!"

Do you know someone like this, or, am I speaking directly to you?

The absolutist philosophy, driven by alarm, is designed to entice, ensnare, and to enslave ignorant victims. Many whose lives are driven by this spirituality are completely ignorant that they are

merely pawns who serve a virulent religious philosophy that did not come from the Bible. Although preachers ignorantly assert with confidence that the original language term for “rapture” occurs several times in the Scriptures, there is no such term.

Darby provided a role of supposed importance to each believer who desired to stake their claim on any particular Antichrist. The end times casino and its constantly revolving roulette wheel was opened for business. It has proven to be a crowded, boisterous gathering of swaggering experts from Darby’s lifetime until today. Not surprisingly, the house has continued to win every single dollar and dime in the economy of false predictions. Consider several hundred million frothing Evangelicals still agendized today by Darby’s rapture theory watching the nightly news and casting their bets. I used to be one of these!

Just merely considering the statistics of the losers, how is it that every single day, new confident predictors press forward to lay down their money along with their reputations? Hundreds of millions of individuals have already embarrassed themselves with incorrect speculations. Yet, most will shamelessly continue with revised calculations and conclusions throughout their lives. Although none of them has ever been correct, none of them stop to consider that the gambling table is rigged.

The wasted time devoted to discussion of the rapture and the end times along with the church’s preparations for the grand event, has replaced times of waiting before the Lord to seek and to hear God’s voice. Many today just watch the news, and then confidently announce to their neighbors what God is doing. They have become addicted to the virulent enigma of identifying the signs of the times.

Astoundingly, with unmatched giftedness, modern prophets can even track economic markers which affirm their predictions. Some seal their bets with supposed divine endorsement, shouting loudly, “Thus saith the Lord!”

A question of importance and perhaps of civil legality is whether or not people like this have an obligation to return the contributions or to provide financial restitution to individuals who sold their possessions and donated; or frivolously spent the money

because they were fraudulently deceived. And what about prosecution for causing emotional damage? Failed end times predictions do not come without costs.

Never in all of time, has anyone ever given Evangelicalism a more powerful, manipulative, fear-based tool with which to fill up the altar with decisions for Christ. Pastors in the mid to late 1800s and now well into the twenty-first century have leveraged this power in order to increase their flocks. It would be impossible to number all the tracts, books, and sermons that have been produced propagating Darby's rapture.

It is noteworthy to acknowledge that an idea does not actually have to be factually true, or historically provable in order for millions or billions to swallow a lie.

As Dom Cobb has informed us, the most resilient parasite is an idea, which once it becomes fully formed and fully understood, is almost impossible to eradicate. Darby's imminent rapture serves as the perfect example.

End Times Motivated Hoarding

> The land of a certain rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?" And he said, "This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years *to come*; take your ease, eat, drink *and* be merry." But God said to him, "You fool! This *very* night your soul is required of you; and who will own what you have prepared?" So is the man <u>who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God</u>…For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for *your* life, *as to* what you shall eat; nor for your body, *as to* what you shall put on. For life is more than food, and the body than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and *yet*

God feeds them. You are so much more valuable than the birds![259]

Since there are now several widely conflicting perspectives about the timing of the rapture before, during, or after the great tribulation, tens of thousands of people in the United States alone have stored up several years' worth of food and supplies. Dread and fear of the imagined worst case scenarios compel individuals to become slaves to financial debt as they assume that they are responsibly preparing for the end.

Some people move to places like the outskirts of Montana. They imagine a remote location will keep them outside the reach of the supposed anti-Christ.

Consider all of the money that fuels the industry of survivalist conspirators whose riches are compounded due to fearful manipulation. What value of supplies will provide for a family through the tribulation? Would $10,000 or $50,000 be enough? Is it ethical for a disciple of Jesus to create false urgency and to use worry as a tool to create sales?

Jesus explicitly taught His disciples not to be motivated by fear.

Because Darby rejected Jesus, he created Evangelical pandemonium, leading those who name themselves as Christians to act in direct opposition to the peace-giving instruction of Jesus. Will we allow ourselves to be ruled by worry, fear, and doubt or by the Holy One of Israel? Will we put our faith in credit cards or will we trust in the faithfulness of God Most High?

The Scofield Study Bible

C. I. Scofield lived between 1843 and 1921 and proudly published Darby's end times ideas in the Scofield Reference Bible. Darby's dispensationalist ideology and interpretation of Revelation were embedded in the text. Scofield was both showman and charlatan. He understood the sales value of Darby's methodological

[259] Luke 12:16-24 NASB

triumphalism as well as the influential power of an advanced theological credential. Without having any accredited education, overnight, he miraculously awarded himself a formal degree as the Doctor of Divinity.

With the make-believe honorable endorsement, Scofield fraudulently introduced his Bible proclaiming:

> The Dispensations are distinguished, exhibiting the majestic, progressive order of the divine dealings of God with humanity, the increasing purpose which runs through and links together the ages, from the beginning of the life of man to the end of eternity, Augustine said "Distinguish the ages, and the Scriptures harmonize."

Scofield never attempted to sell dispensationalism; instead, he merely assumed that this was the only reliable historical lens through which to interpret the Bible.

The study notes from pages 1345 through 1352 in the 1909 version of the Scofield Reference Bible detailed events of the end times, including scandalous accusations pertaining to the role of the Papacy and the rapture.

Scofield's end times scenario was not new. He simply plagiarized Darby. Of course, over time, his notes were proven as embarrassments to the publishers, and these were edited or were altogether removed. Some older versions may still be accessed at Google Books.

In 1910 the literacy rate in America was only about 10 percent. Many of those who heard about the rapture were unable to study the Scriptures and evaluate Darby's and Scofield's claims for themselves.

The Scofield Bible was considered as an essential and perhaps a required text by nearly every Bible school in America. Early in the twentieth century, the Scofield Bible quickly became the well-established pew Bible in many Protestant churches. With this, Darby's ideas became a snake in the grass.

Resultantly, this virulent idea rapidly became an assumed truth of the Bible. Scofield's Bible became a popularized standard use text throughout English speaking denominations; therefore, the

contagious influence of Darby's rapture theory became pervasive in America and around the world.

The phenomenon of having a Bible that included interpretive study notes gave rise to innumerable study Bibles throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that have included ideas ensconced in Darby's paradigm of dispensationalism. The spirituality of the Bible has been ill-fated by these supposedly helpful tools.

Because their minds have been preconditioned, students of the Scriptures often read biblical passages that pertained to the preconditioned condemnation of Second Temple Judaism and its future destruction and superimpose Darby's end times or last days theories over the texts as they interpret. They cannot see anything except references to the supposed rapture and Armageddon. Scofield succeeded in reinforcing a natural inclination for this habit of interpretation. Few Evangelicals today are willing to consider that biblical references like these could possibly point to any other concept.

In fact, except perhaps in scholarly discussions that have little or no practical influence upon churchianity, the entirety of God's judgment of the Second Temple Regime has been lost. Students are led to read the Scriptures and think that it was the latter kings who were evil and never realize that these leaders controlled the Jerusalem temple. The Hebraic Latter Prophets were condemning the Deuteronomist Judaic elite who had taken over the institution; having forsaken their marriage to *Yehovah*.

Many adherents to the theory of the rapture do not recognize that in order for Darby's concept to be correct, Jesus must not only have a second coming but also a third coming. The Bible never teaches this.

Nevertheless, naïve converts to Christianity often know nothing about the Bible. When they are told that the rapture is one of the most important teachings of the Scriptures, they prove themselves to be just like Darby's audiences. They swallow the pill without even knowing the correct questions to ask.

Ahead, we are going to see that those phrases mentioning the last day, the last days or the latter days, pointed to vastly

different concepts from the time of Abraham into the time of the first century. Had we not gone through the laborious exercise of tracing the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace throughout the Bible, contextually studying *chen*, *charis* or *grace* to recognize that this was a life guided by hearing the voice of God and by finding entry into His presence, that included a study of Darby, his questionable character, his dispensationalism, and the actual source of his end times theory, we might not have been able to critically evaluate the accuracy and validity of Darby's teachings.

Rather than attempting to solely rely upon rationalism to argue for the supposed correctness of one perspective over that of others, we have surveyed the Bible and have examined Old and New Testament history, as well as philosophical and religious influences that have had bearing upon interpretation of the Scriptures.

All of these facets of study contribute to the reason necessary to consider and realize the validity of the Hebraic perspective.

After being provided with the relevant paradigmatic elements that have contributed to a conclusion, we are educated so that we may ask the right questions and walk in the genius of Einstein. Hopefully, the intellectual bubble pops, which formerly caused our minds to become ensnared. Or, in the case of my Jewish readers, our eyes become opened so that we do not repeat the mistakes of others; walking in spiritualities asserted to have come from the Bible, that in fact have come from somewhere else.

The settled convictions of a person's life are not easily changed. If we hope to consider biblical passages and concepts differently than where we may have already placed our bets, we can only reasonably do this with educated perspectives. As we will see, in the Hebraic paradigm of faith, there was a far different world-view through which to interpret the Bible that has been lost and forgotten.

Hebraic Grace vs. Second Temple *Takkanot*

The concept of dispensationalism and the suggestion that the Bible is divided into a series of covenants is deadly poison. If any of us hopes to make sense of Hebraic eschatology and spirituality, this theoretical lens should be dismissed for what it is; a fraudulent, deceptive, lie of Satan. Moreover, it is essential for students of the Scriptures to comprehend how Christianity largely became a gnostic religion based upon the acquisition of doctrines or beliefs; in order to gain entry into heaven after death.

Many of us came to the Lord through what has come to be referenced as the "sinners prayer."

The basic format goes something like this: Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner and that you died on the cross so that I could be forgiven. Please forgive me, and save my soul. Amen.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Lord will respond to our humble sincerity and that He will lead us into His family, what we have here is an introduction to Darby's Gospel. When the finishing touch regarding Darby's or Calvin's doctrines of grace are added, all too often, this leads converts into a spiritual holding pattern. Since so-called believers thereafter have supposedly done their part to participate in what is often labeled as the "finished work of Christ," frequently what follows is a life of maintaining the *status quo* of social churchianity.

With regards to Hebraic faith, this can, of course, begin with the sinner's prayer. Everyone we read about in the Bible came to a desperate turning point toward God. However, quite often this was through divine-human encounter with the Word. God is faithful to gather His children to Himself.

A problem that can hinder spiritual growth is a myopic focus on religious information; especially bad ideas taken out of their biblical contexts which are then taught as if they were the exact intentions of the authors of Scripture.

The foundations of Hebraic faith include that the entirety of the Bible has application in understanding and participating in Hebraic spirituality. Moreover, we understand that Orthodoxy selected the canon with tremendous prejudice based upon the

noncontradiction of each book or letter with their theological conclusions. First century believers used texts that were later excluded by fourth century Orthodox bishops because they contained information which threatened Orthodoxy's ideological conclusions; and therefore, its very existence.

Canonization was *the human decision* of sorting out which texts should be included as part of *the inspired* Christian Bible. The highly respected Old Testament scholar James Barr commented…

> The formation of canons, both in the Old Testament and in the New, was done not only a considerable time after most of the books were written, but under very different theological and intellectual conditions. Athanasius was a great theologian, but he was not by any means a man of the biblical world. In Judaism, between the time when most of the books were written and the time when questions of canonicity came to be discussed, deep and far-reaching changes in the religion and its intellectual structure had taken place. Canonization was done under a faith structure very different from that of the biblical community.[260]

Just as the first and second century church included far more literary material in their Bibles, we should not fear investigating other ancient texts; these include the Septuagint and especially the Aramaic Targums that contain absolutely invaluable segments of the ancient oral tradition; predating composition of the Hebrew Bible. Ancient historic and worship documents can also help us to make sense of the Scriptures.

Although Orthodoxy canonized select books from the Bible, God has maintained His freedom to speak to us in any way He wishes. Jesus taught that God's children hear His voice.

The children of faith in the Scriptures understood that God's voice was different than the Bible. Making sense of this basic concept allows for freedom to read and study other ancient texts. The Orthodox canon is not God. Sadly, however, in much of

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[260] Barr, James. *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983. p. 67.

Christendom today, the Bible has been divinized. Since the bishops sanctioned this collection of writings as having been inspired by God, and because they labeled these as the word of God, there has been a tendency to revere the collection in an unhealthy manner.

These are books. We may choose to accept that individuals wrote each of these as they were motivated by the Holy Spirit. However, selection of the collection of Gospels, books, and epistles, that we find between the pages of our Bibles was only a human decision. It was made by individuals competing to ensure the dominance of their own doctrinal perspectives.

In the first century there were at least half a dozen or more forms of Christianity. When we read Bishop Epiphanius' treatise in the *Panarion*, we learn much about these movements. It is quite obvious that early Orthodoxy made their selection with a hateful religio-political agenda. Could it be that the bishops were blinded by their hatred? Or, should we presume that arrogance exist without bias?

Is it possible that among hundreds of other extant writings from the first century that some of these might have also been composed by devout individuals who also were being guided by the Spirit of God? Without suggesting that there be any need to change the Bible, what should be affirmed is that there is much to be learned from other ancient texts of the Old and New Testament era. Furthermore, ancient historical documents like the Dead Sea Scrolls can valuably inform biblical interpretation.

We should remember that if the Lord is our living, active Teacher, we can trust Him to guide our lives. If we are not held back by the harness of fear, and the imprisoning control of religious leaders, potential exists to learn and to make wonderful literary discoveries.

Personal Aside—Dismissing the Rapture

Although I had been raised in a nominally Christian tradition, in my senior year of High School, I began to walk with the Lord. I had questions about whether or not God was real. Around the age of 17 or 18, I had gotten to the point where I wanted to figure this out. I had read through the Good News Version of the New

Testament, trying to make sense of it all, but I had many questions. I absolutely loved Paul's discussion of love in 1 Corinthians 13, and so, I cut that portion right out of the pages of the Bible and held on to that for a while. It was a treasure. I sometimes wonder who ended up with that Bible and what they thought about the page with the hole in it.

I was in school one day in a typing class. As the bell rang to signal that it was time to go, a friend hollered to Gary, the guy sitting next to me, something about an upcoming prayer meeting. At that moment, I sincerely prayed, "God, if you are real, I want you to get me invited to that prayer meeting without me ever having to say anything about it." I did not want this to be any result of my own efforts. Instead, I hoped for God to prove His existence and His care for me through an invitation.

I attended a school with about 2,000 students, and despite the conscientious work of the custodial staff, by about noontime, there were papers students had dropped littering the floors of the halls. Every so often, someone at school made a mimeograph copy of some comics and jokes and distributed these. If you happened to find a copy, you were popular in the cafeteria. Everyone wanted to sit around you to have a look. If you are not familiar with the ancient technology of the mimeograph, the print of mimeograph copies sometimes bled through to the back side of the page. Even if a paper was lying face down, you could sometimes make out what was on the other side. It turned out to be my lucky day. There it was, obviously one of those comic pages lying face down on the floor. I grabbed it up and flipped it over only to discover that I was completely mistaken. Instead of jokes and cartoons, there was a map. Quite astoundingly, I read, "You Are Invited to a Prayer Meeting at Gary Pauwels' House!"

I was completely blown away! I cannot write about it now without crying. God cared about me! He saw the deep sincerity in my heart in my request. There can be no doubt that He was looking for me long before I was interested in knowing Him. Gary and His brother Steve changed my life. They were two humble Roman Catholic guys who taught me how to read the Bible and to pray and how to expect the Lord to work in my life. School ended with

graduation, and in that summer before college, we saw amazing miracles of healing for ones we prayed for in those meetings in the Pauwels' basement. Those guys and what they did changed my life.

Almost immediately, I went to the library to borrow Hal Lindsey's books on the end times. None were available, and there was a long, discouraging wait. I had rationalized that if I wanted to do things right, I needed to prioritize getting up to date on the rapture—as I had always heard of this in the tradition I was raised. In fact, one lady I knew had a brochure container glued to the dashboard of her car. It contained instructions regarding what passengers should do if she were suddenly raptured away; so that any of them might survive in the tribulation under the Antichrist.

At this point I had never even heard of Darby. I did not learn his name or of his influences until perhaps 1997 or 1998 when I was attending seminary in Prosser's church history class. Near the end of the 1980s, I was involved in business dealings with a very kind, admirable, and respectable Christian. He and his church had listened intently to the latest scenario of the end times. Accordingly, they prepared responsibly. He was so certain that he understood the signs of the times that he invested thousands of dollars into his preparations. These decades later he has passed away. He misspent significant time, energy, and resources during his life as an evangelist of the rapture and mistakenly, led others down the same path. Was he or was he not the victim of deception?

For two thousand years, innumerable Christians have made fools of themselves, brought ridicule upon Christianity, and in some cases, have wasted their lives. A few of these have earned millions of dollars peddling fiction in the marketplace as if it were truth. Like ones suffering in contagious delusion, they continue identifying imagined signs of the times as if tomorrow's predictions will be more accurate than yesterday's. Some of the Christian teachers, pastors, and broadcasters I've listened to over the years—even after wrongly identifying the alleged Antichrist several times and after predicting incorrect dates for Jesus' return—never give up. They are blinded to the realization -that their entire foundational

understanding of the end times was misinformed and doomed from the start.

Proverbs 26:11, provides the observation that just as a dog returns to its vomit and eats it again, so is the fool who returns to his folly or madness. And I became one of those fools.

There was always talk going on and predictions about which world leader might be the Antichrist. The three leading candidates in that era of my life were Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of Russia, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of Iran, and U.S. President Ronald Wilson Reagan. I recall someone explaining that President Ronald Wilson Reagan was the Antichrist on the well affirmed biblical basis that each of his names had six letters. Of course, those whose minds are contaminated by conspiracy always find a Bible verse to support their confident assertions: “Here is wisdom. He that has understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is six hundred and sixty and six.” Another asserted instead that it was Ayatollah Khomeini because he lived near ancient Babylon, then later Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev because of the mark on his forehead and because Russia was supposedly fulfilling a prophecy about the bear mentioned in Daniel, 7:5. Then even later, Saddam Hussein was supposed to be the Antichrist. Every predictor of the archenemy of humankind depicted in John’s revelation offered supposed Scripture references along with convincing rational arguments to prove their claims. Many used maps of the Middle East to show how the Bible prophecy supposedly proved it was the end.

Probably about ten years later, I was very surprised when my pastor told me that he did not believe in the rapture or the typical end times stories that were popular in the Christian marketplace. The Gospel I preached had become so entrenched in my perspective of the last days that I questioned, “Could a person really be a Christian if she or he did not believe in the rapture?”

Did Jesus’ disciple, John, actually intend for anyone to conclude that Revelation was identifying Ronald Wilson Reagan as the Antichrist because of the number of letters in his English name? Apparently not!

Just as history has always proven end times theorists to be wrong, once again we discovered that none of the middle east conflicts in that era proved to have been accurately identified as the signs of the times. Is it safe to ignore history? Absolutely not. Will we live on to repeat the mistakes of thinkers from the former centuries of Christendom; or worse yet, to mislead others into deception regarding the latest Antichrist?

Most end times evangelists who enthusiastically invest their lives in propagating the rapture, do not know the theory's suspect actual origins. To some it is a foregone conclusion that the Bible discusses the rapture, and yet the term never occurs in the pages of Scripture. Those who are sure of themselves simply pass along information which has been naively trusted and embraced by their religious traditions. Good intentions and blind error have caused the progeny of Christendom to stray far away from the spirituality of ancient Israel.

People I have known have invested their very lives into a spirituality that revolves around the interest of saving people from the rule of Antichrist. Is this what Jesus taught us to do? Really, just let that question soak in and ask yourself, am I investing my life into Jesus' spirituality, or have I become a busy-body and the pawn of somebody else's agendas? Many well-intentioned people think they are following Jesus and serving God but might not be as much on track as they thought they were. Many of us have unwittingly traded the means of anointing wherein each of us can be empowered by God for something that is worthless. We have inherited a fraud and a hoax. In the case of the theory of the rapture, we have to face the reality that every prediction ever made has been proven wrong; well perhaps except those accusations today pinning a present political ruler as the Antichrist, or maligning the current pope as the false prophet of Revelation.

Consider the vast amount of squandered resources, just in printing material alone, and all of the wasted time preaching and teaching, and enormous broadcasting expenses. Christians with a log in their eye accuse the government for wastefully sending money into outer space; but what about each of us?

Just after college I knew a couple who were preparing for the mission field as medical doctors. I was astounded to discover that it was going to take them 8 years of study to get their medical degrees. At this point in my life, I had fully embraced the idea of the rapture. It was just a matter of time and its occurring was increasingly evident by the signs of the time. As I listened to my friends explain their calling and plan, I could not help but think that they might be wasting their time. The world, as we know it, was about to end. What did they think they were doing?

It seemed that every television evangelist was talking about Israel, the European nations, the economy, specific world conflicts, and proving with the Bible that the end was near—these were well-informed Christian leaders. They were very well-educated men and women. They were warning us to get ready in every episode of their broadcasts. Nearly every sermon was followed by an altar call with mention of the soon appearing of Jesus and the rapture. Were not my friends aware of all of this?

I knew a couple who worked with a world-renowned evangelist. They frequently traveled back and forth to Israel and their boss claimed to have insider knowledge on details that the end was near. One popular radio personality who led a denomination in the 1980s claimed that he was friends with an American General who had given him the inside story. He confidently asserted that the end was just right around the corner.

Then, a booklet came out entitled, 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will be in 1988, by Edgar C. Whisenant. Whisenant's prediction was situated in the context of Jesus' teaching that no man knew the day or hour of His coming. Nevertheless, he had narrowed the timeframe down to a three-day period during the Jewish Celebration of *Rosh Hashanah* (September 11th, 12th, or 13th of 1988. Although I was no expert in these matters, I examined the text as a critical thinker. I was disappointed because I found several logical flaws with each of Whisenant's first few explanations. Although his announcement and book made worldwide headlines, the rapture never occurred.

Predictors, like this well-intended man were everywhere. I have wondered why end times teachers, especially in the world of

Christian broadcasting, do not feel any remorseful need to apologize when they screw up and their predictions prove to be incorrect. Instead of leading others to pray for world leaders, they re-cast the identities of those involved in politics as conspirators. Don't they see that they are perpetrating fear, worry, doubt, and insecurity? And moreover, that they malign the name of Jesus, insinuating to the world that all of this was His idea. But, who do I think I am, and what do I really know?

Years later, I went to seminary and we were all eager to study theology in order to figure out the proper end times scenario. Ironically, it was Dr. Jon Ruthven's course, Church, Kingdom, and Last Things, wherein I might have written the foreboding research paper on the last days; but instead, I bargained my way into the study of *charis*. Dr. Ruthven had probably become sick of reading regurgitated pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, post-tribulation and amillennial research papers by that time in his life. Ha! I probably did not have to bargain as hard as I did just to get out of writing a 12-page research paper! But then, where would I be now?

That *chari* study changed my life and set the stage for development of a methodology through which to make sense of *davar*, *soteria*, *yeshuah*, *pisteuo*, *aionios zoe*, and other biblical concepts. Surprisingly, it was my study of Christian history that helped most beneficially in sorting out my present perspective on the last days. And furthermore, it was my course work learning to follow literary logic and literary relationships between terms and phrases in the Scriptures along with inductive analyses which helped me to see that the last days could be interpreted in an entirely different way—having absolutely nothing to do with the rapture.

In closing the discussion of historical persona influencing our theological leanings and biases, Jesus taught the principle that good trees bear good fruit and bad trees bear bad fruit. He offered this simple parable to describe men and what we offer and produce in the lives of others. As I look at Marcion, Luther, Calvin, and Darby, they all shared the malevolent character trait of hatred. Darby hated Roman Catholics, Marcion hated Jews, Calvin hated those he perceived to be theologically inferior and went to the extreme of

justifying their murder because of it. And in addition to being steeped in antisemitic hatred that Hitler probably used to condone genocide, poor Luther hated anyone and absolutely everyone who disagreed with him; and that's quite a number of people! At least for my own part, I do not think Jesus wants me to follow or for my life to be shaped by individuals who are motivated by hatred.

In many ways these hateful men are like an example I gave at the start of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*. The world is filled with the stories of many sons who hate the lascivious, wanton, neglectful behavior of their fathers; who thereafter, falter in reaction and become exactly the same. Their sad retrospect sometimes lives on to see the wake of desolation they have created and just exactly what they have become. Jesus called His disciples to love and to forgive their neighbors, and this is not always an easy calling. Hatred is a snare that defiles ones caught in its trap. Be filled with peace always, and move forward in love!

Perhaps this is the most valuable lesson I could ever hope to leave to posterity. If someone or something has caused you to hate someone or to fall into the trap of conspiracy theories, there is a problem. We have to break free from all that rot. Look inside yourself and realize that wherever there is hatred, there is a problem. Examine the root from where it was planted and grew up inside of you and get rid of it! Ruthlessly examine yourself with the sobering understanding that the whispering voice of Satan plants seeds of hatred in our lives using the voices of some of our most trusted friends and leaders. When you realize the source, it may be time to make some changes. When your life is conditioned only by love, that is a good sign that you have embraced Jesus and the ancient life that is truly Life. God is Love, and He should always be living and moving in His children's lives through their love for others in the world.

Insofar as my perspective on the rapture goes, in my own self-examination, I realized as I read Dr. Prosser's book on Millenarianism, that there were two conflicting dispositions that motivated my life and that unwittingly were driving me in opposite directions. On the one hand the rapture might occur at any moment, so the exercise of haste was of great necessity. I

witnessed this being played out in the lives of my friends in seminary. They had to get out of there as quickly as possible so that they could get on with saving the world. And we were conditioned by an overriding, general attitude in the professors and administration. We had a duty to fulfill and it was not going to happen if we got stuck in education. The underlying motivation was pessimism and fear. And as best as I could trace back its philosophical source, this pessimistic outlook and fearmongering was the result of the theory of the rapture. More than anything, fear is what compels an incoming parishioner to raise his hand or to come down to the altar after an Evangelical teaching on the rapture or with the threat that any of us might die and burn eternally in hell.

Would it not be more appropriate for altar calls to be focused on the fact that a loving God wants to have a relationship with us and that He has the power to free us from life-controlling sin; so that we can participate in His miraculous reign in the world? Would it not be more appropriate if such invitations were not seasoned with terror and dread?

It may be that people, whose voices instill fear, worry, and doubt, in order to manipulate others, may just be well-intended, bad trees. Are they worthy of being followed? Is it acceptable to walk in their example?

The other side I understood to be warring for attention inside of me was my understanding of the kingdom of God. The reign of God was optimistic. A bright and challenging future lay ahead for those who pursued the Lord and all that He had in store for each one to participate in His reign. God was alive, and His kingdom was expanding in the Earth. This was great news!

Should I allow the pessimism of the soon-coming rapture to shape my life with urgent stress and worry. Should I cast aside any and all personal desires and goals in life and become a radicalized evangelist of the rapture? Or should the optimism of the abiding voice of God with me, and the trustworthy increase of His kingdom, allow for me to pray about a suitable plan by which my life would be led?

At my own point of decision, I came to the conclusion that it was the virulent voice and conspiratorial agenda that had driven Darby's life; which itself was the anti-Christ. Please be careful to understand, I am not saying that Darby was the Antichrist in the sense of him having anything to do with the text of Revelation. However, instead, he was anti-Christ in that he led Evangelicalism away from Jesus and His teachings. He supplanted these with a spirituality that focused Evangelicals on the vain and hopeless attempt of identifying the Antichrist.

Darby invented and set in motion the present-day focus on an Antichrist religio-spiritual philosophy which deceptively controls the minds and lives of Evangelical thinkers. This errant deceptive focus on the supposed end times takes captive and alters the minds and lives of its victims. It blinds them from ever understanding the Gospels, keeps them from finding the entry point into God's Kingdom, and prevents them from participating in the tangible reign of God—which had been the central focus of Jesus' teachings. The malevolent spirit behind Darby's teaching casts aside Jesus' instruction in the Gospels and sets Christians on a wild goose chase in their never-ending pursuit of identifying the signs of the times. This lying antichrist spirit should be cast back into hell from whence it came.

Is a false prophet identified as such because his or her prophetic pronouncements turn out to be false? If that is the case, think of every single individual you may have ever heard on the radio, television, or whose books you may have read and accurately attribute to each one the title "False Prophet"—and I don't care if it is the pastor of the church that you and your family have been attending for the last 20 years. Now then, have you come to the point where you need his or her acceptance so desperately that you cannot vote with your feet and walk away? Are you actually going to remain under the teaching of said false prophet?

Much of Evangelicalism has trained its gullible constituencies to become gutless compliant servants of its false religio-spiritual philosophies and agendas. It has turned the concept of foot washing—which was preparation for entry and standing in the holy realm with the blessing and breaking of the bread—into

feel-good messages about the importance of something they call, "Servant Leadership." And by means of tools like this that are created in pulpits by supposed confident authorities like Darby, unwitting parishioners are sometimes manipulated—becoming enveloped in social activities and religious campaigns. Their lives are so refocused and consumed, they never take hours to wait upon the Lord seeking and listening—and in fact—they are not even taught to do so.

Darby's errant, virulent ideas, his hatred, his self-appointed agenda as a supposed authority to bring and end to guilt in the world, his conspiracy theories, his redefinition of immorality, his need to be recognized as being important in the perspectives of others, and the pride in his own intellect became like seeds that now have grown up and have flourished in the fundamentalist Evangelical world.

The unsuspecting become pawns in a game of deception that controls their lives.

And if I am to be honest, many of these same empowered realities have been alive in me. How shameful that people, who were all created to be the bearers of the image of God, and who were intended to become temples wherein He would dwell, have allowed ourselves to become polluted. Jesus is returning for a pure and perfect bride who has pledged her allegiance faithfully to Him above all else.

Moving forward, are we going to attempt to protect our theological bubbles or are we going to passionately ask the Lord for eyes to see and for ears to hear? This prayer was the instruction of Jesus.

Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that people who became eyewitnesses and servants of the Word were persecuted, mercilessly tortured, and murdered because of their testimonies of divine-human encounter; and One in particular. We only have the testimony of the Hebraic tradition because they loved not their earthly lives, even unto death.

Section Four

Whore of Babylon—Abomination of Desolation

In keeping with the foretelling of the prophets of Judah and Israel who were well aware of the nation's dark history, Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem's Second Temple—otherwise understood in His era to have been the Whore of Babylon—or rather, the whore who had returned from captivity in Babylon. Those who had taken control and instituted a fraudulent religious system that usurped the place of a tangible, personal, mutually faithful, matrimonial relationship with God Most High, were about to be destroyed. History records that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the punishment of the temple leaders was beyond horrific.

As we read Old Testament passages foretelling doom, gloom, and destruction, we have gained the background knowledge here which explains their passionate prophetic pronouncements.

Second Temple Judaism was not only known as the Whore of Babylon, but looking at Ezekiel, we also identify the infamous Abomination of Desolation.

> As I live, declares the Lord God, surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw, and My eye shall have no pity and I will not spare. One third of you will die by plague or be consumed by famine among you, one third will fall by the sword around you, and one third I will scatter to every wind, and I will unsheathe a sword behind them. Thus, My anger will be spent, and I will satisfy My wrath on them, and I shall be appeased; then they will know that I, *Yehovah*, have spoken in My zeal when I have spent My wrath upon them. Moreover, I will make you a desolation and a reproach among the nations which surround you, in the sight of all who pass by.[261]

Jesus warned those who followed Him to spread out across the world with the Gospel because the long-awaited punishment foretold by the prophets was about to come.

> This Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. So, when you see standing in the holy place the abomination that causes desolation, spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.[262]

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[261] Ezekiel 5:11-14 NASB

[262] Matthew 24:15-25 NIV

These matters were mentioned specifically regarding Jerusalem. And Rome descended upon Jerusalem with such fury, the likes of their destruction was incomparable to any other assault against the city and its people in history. Thousands of Jews were crucified as the Romans destroyed, pillaged, and turned the temple into a pile of rubble.

However, those who had heeded Jesus' warnings and had moved away were spared.

Nevertheless, the Lord revealed to Ezekiel that in a future day, there would be a time of blessing and feasting when His presence would return to Israel. His coming would be preceded by a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel.

Just as God had provided a ram for Abraham to sacrifice instead of Isaac, on the third or the last day of his three day journey—in the future eschatological day—God Himself would provide the incomparable sacrifice of His Son on the third day.

> At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'"[263]

The prophet Ezekiel had told of this sacrifice hundreds of years earlier.

> "And as for you, son of man," thus says the Lord God, "Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field, <u>Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood.</u> You shall eat the flesh of mighty men, and drink the blood of the princes of the Earth, as *though they were* rams, lambs, goats, and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. So you will eat fat until you are glutted, and drink blood until you are drunk, <u>from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you</u>. And you will be glutted at My table with horses and

[263] Luke 13:31-32 NIV

> charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war," declares the Lord God.[264]

Ezekiel foresaw a coming day of vengeance falling upon those whom we might presume were the oppressors of Israel, as was emphasized by the implausible, grotesque repetition of drinking blood. Just as Moses had foreseen, Assyria and Babylon had cruelly treated the captives. In the first and second editions of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, I made the mistake of thinking these nations were the ones over whom Ezekiel was prophesying doom. However, in the span of more than a decade of study, I realized that the guilty being punished were those among the nation of Israel who had abandoned their marriage relationship with *Yehovah*. Retribution would be exacted upon the wicked kings and religious leaders of the Jerusalem Temple who had forsaken God, banned the worship of His name, and had murdered those who had celebrated the faith of Abraham. Many of these crimes were committed under the reigns of kings who disregarded *Yehovah*.

> And I shall set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. And the house of Israel will know that I am *Yehovah* their God from that day onward. And the nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My presence from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword.[265]

In the captivity, Israel had served their deserved sentence for their adultery. They were given time to recognize their wickedness and to turn back to *Yehovah*. And yet the wicked religious leaders who had established the Second Temple would face punishment for destruction of the Abrahamic faith tradition,

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[264] Ezekiel 39:17-20 NASB

[265] Ezekiel 39:21-23 NASB

which took place in 70 A.D. Ezekiel continued describing the return of God's presence:

> According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I dealt with them, and I hid My face [*panim* or presence] from them." Therefore, thus says the Lord God, "Now I shall restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I shall be jealous for My holy name.[266]

The treasure of Jacob was his encounter with the presence of God, wherein he became *Ish-raah-el*, meaning "the man who sees God."

In Abrahamic worship, the name of *Yehovah* was praised, thereby inviting His presence. In this ancient worldview, God and His name were identical; even to the point of using the term "name" in reference to God. Speaking His name invoked His presence. Judaism eventually banned speaking the name of *Yehovah*, excusing this practice because of the sacredness of the name. Perhaps, instead, we might understand that an ulterior motive was at work among religious leaders to eliminate divine-human subjectivity from the spirituality of the people.

Whereas God had ignored the Israelites while they were in captivity because they had forsaken His name, in the coming day, the concept of *jealousy for His holy name* in Ezekiel 39:25 implied that *Yehovah* would instead rush to the worshipers calling out to His name.[267]

This is what was seen in David's worship as evidenced in the Psalms. He invoked God's name and experienced His divine manifest presence.

Ezekiel continued speaking of the day of restoration.

> And they shall forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely

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[266] Ezekiel 39:24-25 NASB

[267] Therefore thus says the Lord God [*Adonai Yehovah*]: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for my holy name. HCSB

> on their *own* land with no one to make them afraid. When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations.[268]

Recall that terms such as "saint" or the concept of "sanctification" were derived from the original language term *qodesh*, that was translated as "holy" and that spoke of standing in His heavenly presence. What Ezekiel was saying was that the nations would be invited back into the holy realm.

It was God's sacrifice by which the way was opened for seekers to enter into His presence. The veil was torn in two allowing for entry before His throne.

> "Then they will know that I am *Yehovah* their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them *again* to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. And I will not hide My presence from them any longer, for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," declares the Lord God.[269]

The prophetic eschatological expectation being set forth within the Hebraic Tradition according to Ezekiel's pronouncement included that God was preparing a table for the children of Israel. His sacrifice would be made on the mountains of Israel. His children would eat flesh and drink blood. It would be a time when God's presence would reappear. It would be a day of God's blessing, wherein His hand would be recognized upon them. It would be a day of divine forgiveness for Israel. Jacob's fortune would be restored, which according to the Aramaic Targum *Onkelos*, was the Word of God known as *Memra*. The Word, or *Memra*, would provide sustenance and the means by which humankind would be allowed back into the presence of God. Consider Etheridge's translation of Genesis 28:20 from the Aramaic:

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[268] Ezekiel 39:26-27 NASB

[269] Ezekiel 39:28-29 NASB

> And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, "If the *Memra* of the Lord will be my help, and will keep me in that way in which I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to wear, and bring me again in peace to my father's house, the *Memra* of the Lord shall be my God."[270]

The occurrence of this sacrifice would be so obvious to those who attended to the feast that undeniably thereafter they would recognize the Lord. It would be a time when God's Spirit would be poured out upon His children.

Repeatedly in the text of Ezekiel, the prophet lamented over God's name being profaned. Humankind were created to bear the image of God which was synonymous with being called by or being known by His Name.

In Ezekiel chapter 16, *Yehovah* explained how He had compassion on the descendants of Abraham and chose them as His bride. Nevertheless, by their contemptuous lustful actions, they forsook marriage with Him and departed from the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace.

> "…you took advantage of your beauty and fame to sleep with everyone who came along. You used some of your clothes to decorate your places of worship, and just like a prostitute, you gave yourself to everyone. You took the silver and gold jewelry that I had given you, used it to make male images, and committed adultery with them. You took the embroidered clothes I gave you and put them on the images, and you offered to the images the olive oil and incense I had given you. I gave you food—the best flour, olive oil, and honey—but you offered it as a sacrifice to win the favor of idols." This is what the Sovereign Lord says. "Then you took the sons and the daughters you had borne me and offered them as sacrifices to idols. Wasn't it bad

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[270] *Targum Jonathan on Leviticus 26:11-12*, in *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch; with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum from the Chaldee*, trans. J.W. Etheridge (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862).

enough to be unfaithful to me, without taking my children and sacrificing them to idols? During your disgusting life as a prostitute you never once remembered your childhood—when you were naked, squirming in your own blood." The Sovereign Lord said, "You are doomed! Doomed! You did all that evil, and then by the side of every road you built places to worship idols and practice prostitution. You dragged your beauty through the mud. You offered yourself to everyone who came by, and you were more of a prostitute every day. You let your lustful neighbors, the Egyptians, go to bed with you, and you used your prostitution to make me angry. "Now I have raised my hand to punish you and to take away your share of my blessing. I have handed you over to the Philistines, who hate you and are disgusted with your immoral actions. "Because you were not satisfied by the others, you went running after the Assyrians. You were their prostitute, but they didn't satisfy you either. You were also a prostitute for the Babylonians, that nation of merchants, but they didn't satisfy you either." This is what the Sovereign Lord is saying: "You have done all this like a shameless prostitute. On every street you built places to worship idols and practice prostitution. But you are not out for money like a common prostitute. You are like a woman who commits adultery with strangers instead of loving her husband. A prostitute is paid, but you gave presents to all your lovers and bribed them to come from everywhere to sleep with you. You are a special kind of prostitute. No one forced you to become one. You didn't get paid; you paid them! Yes, you are different." Now then, Jerusalem, you whore! Hear what the Lord is saying. This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "You stripped off your clothes, and like a prostitute, you gave yourself to your lovers and to all your disgusting idols, and you killed your children as sacrifices to idols. Because of this I will bring all your former lovers together—the ones you liked and the ones you hated. I will bring them around you in a circle, and then I will strip off your clothes and let them see you naked. I will condemn you for adultery and murder,

and in my anger and fury I will punish you with death. I will put you in their power, and they will tear down the places where you engage in prostitution and worship idols. They will take away your clothes and jewels and leave you completely naked. “They will stir up a crowd to stone you, and they will cut you to pieces with their swords. They will burn your houses down and let crowds of women see your punishment. I will make you stop being a prostitute and make you stop giving gifts to your lovers. Then my anger will be over, and I will be calm. I will not be angry or jealous any more. You have forgotten how I treated you when you were young, and you have made me angry by all the things you did. That is why I have made you pay for them all. Why did you add sexual immorality to all the other disgusting things you did?” The Sovereign Lord has spoken.[271]

The prophet Malachi reiterated the same point:

Judah has been unfaithful. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves by marrying women who worship a foreign god.[272]

Jeremiah made the same observations:

The Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah: “Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore?”[273]

“For the sons of Judah have done evil in my sight,” declares the Lord; “they have set their abominations in the house that is called by my name, to defile it.”[274]

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[271] Ezekiel 16:15-43 GNV

[272] Malachi 2:11 NIV

[273] Jeremiah 3:6 ESV

[274] Jeremiah 7:30 ESV

By design, members of humankind had been made to praise the name of their Creator and to abide in His presence.

Accordingly, David had admonished the nation:

> Let everything that has breath praise *Yehovah*! Praise *Yehovah*!...I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name in the *aiona*, and in the *aiona* of the *aiona*. Every day I will bless you and praise your name in the *aiona*, and in the *aiona* of the *aiona*.[275]

This is what was seen in David's worship as evidenced in the Psalms. He daily invoked God's name and experienced *Yehovah's* divine manifest presence.

A people who are called by the name of *Yehovah* and who become the bearers of His image will live lives characterized by obedience to the inspired *Torah* and the voice of God.

However, Second Temple Judaism continued in the ways of their forefathers and profaned the name of *Yehovah* because they stood against the calling of Abraham to spread God's compassionate lovingkindness to the nations. Instead, they used the *takkanot* to excuse themselves from contact with the Gentiles and to usurp other aspects of the inspired *Torah*. Moreover, the *takkanot* provided a means by which individuals might have created an outward impression without actually changing the heart. It was a manufactured religion, not unlike what some of the streams of Christianity have also become.

Ancient Israel and Judah became an embarrassment to the Creator Who had intended for their lips and actions to constantly demonstrate that they belonged to Him. Because of their evil, they made themselves unfit to worship the name of *Yehovah*, to enter His presence in the *aiona*, and to receive His *yeshuah*. In so doing, they proved that they were not the sons and daughters of God Most High. Their sacrifices of rams and bulls meant nothing. Their sacrifices no longer entitled them to celebrate the *kiddush* and to enter the holy realm on the Sabbath; and so the seventh day

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[275] Psalms 150:6 and 145:1–2; modified ESV

became a measuring tool with which hypocrites licensed themselves to critically evaluate the spirituality of others.

And so, it is observable that Second Temple Jewish whorish leaders were the abomination who stood against *Yehovah* and His way into the *aiona*. As they preempted the faith and spirituality of Abraham, the *aiona* was made desolate. Individuals were no longer admonished to listen for God's voice or to walk in genuine love and concern for their neighbors; especially the unclean Gentiles.

And this is the case with the segment of Protestant Evangelical false Christianity mentioned above. This may not be the case with every Protestant Evangelical, however, tremendous error and deception have made their way into this facet of Christendom. For the record, my own upbringing has been in the Orthodox Protestant Evangelical stream of faith. The matters contained herein are a call for Orthodoxy to move forward in maturity. Wrong must be confronted and dispelled in order to embrace God Who exists as Truth.

And I confess that I am preaching to myself more than anyone else in all of this. We all needfully walk in the mercy of God. We all depend upon the brothers and sisters who hear our confessions. As we bring darkness into the Light, we are restored and are healed.

Ezekiel pronounced, "For thus says the Lord God, "I will repay you according to your deeds; you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant." Nevertheless, he added with respect to the *Ish-raah-el-ites* that in a later time, "I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an *Aionios* Covenant with you."[276]

And so once again we take note that Hebrews' author's affirmation of the re-enactment of this same covenant was strongly rooted in the foresight and prediction of the Latter Prophets. The cloud that had settled upon the faithful opening to the realm of the *aiona* would be restored. The Holy One or the second power of heaven—witnessed throughout the Old Testament era as a radiant

[276] Ezekiel 16:59 NASB

light—would once again provide grace to those in need who gathered together before His throne.

> And six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on Earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three Tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he did not know what to say; and they became terrified. Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!" And all at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.[277]

During the transfiguration, the disciples were in the cloud in the realm of the *aiona*. Having been changed in that instant, as in the twinkling of an eye, they were alive in their angelic identities. As authentic *Ish-raah-el-ites*, they were given eyes to see and ears to hear.

In 18:10, Matthew recorded that Jesus had taught His audiences, "Be careful that you do not despise little children. I firmly warn you that their angels behold the face of my Father Who is in heaven." Even small children could enter into the *aiona* and behold or embrace the presence of God.

In keeping with the celebration of the Sabbath and entry into the holy realm, Jewish tradition held that a person received an additional soul during that time, referred to as the *neshama yeterah* (נְשָׁמָה יְתֵרָה). In Eden, God imparted the *neshama ruach chaim* or the "breath of the spirit of life." The case can be made that Jesus' statement about individual's angels who beheld the presence of God, had to do with the *neshama yeterah* that was enlivened within

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[277] Mark 9:2-8 NASB

them following the *kiddush* prayer of entry. Tracing the roots of this understanding might enlighten us more regarding entry into the holy realm on the Sabbath. Such individuals would have been given "eyes to see and ears to hear."

Proverbs 20:27 teaches that "The spirit [*neshama*] of man is the lamp of *Yehovah*, searching all the innermost parts of his being."

The significance of this event and Jesus' statement have been lost over the centuries; the point of which was that Jesus was restoring the ancient faith tradition of Abraham according to the priestly order of *Melchizedek*.

The Deuteronomists and Second Temple leaders who had maligned, destroyed, and forbidden the more ancient mysterious divine-human subjectivity had emphasized that the secret things were reserved for the Aaronic Priests who entered the holy of holies. These men understood that they were transformed into spiritual beings when they came before the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant.

Paul spoke of this transformation in 1 Corinthians 15 as individuals would be gathered up into the cloud; although in this context the transformation seems to have been a final event. However, in his own experience of the third heaven, described in 2 Corinthians 12, Paul appears to have been so overcome by the event that he did not know if he was still in the flesh or in the spirit.

Also of eschatological importance was the reference made in Hebrews 12 regarding those who were gathered together with a great cloud of witnesses. Just as Peter, James and John had been gathered together with Moses and Elijah, so also Hebrews' author listed those faithful ones who had passed from this life into the next. The point is that when we enter into the *aiona*, the holy ones who have passed before us are alive there together with us.

So then we are able to understand Jesus' opposition to the humanly contrived rules and regulations of those sects of the Jews. Rote obedience to man-made laws, especially those which contradict the inspired *Torah*, do not constitute a relationship of faithfulness with God. In this sense, nobody can work their way to

God. Jumping through religious hoops is nothing more than jumping through religious hoops.

To be clear, individuals responding to God's Word, choosing to live out desires pleasing to Him would become inheritors of the kingdom. At the most fundamental level in the Bible, God spoke to each and every person in their hearts. They either embraced or rejected Him. And they were warned, *Yehovah* would eventually hide Himself from those who chose evil. Some willfully gave license to Satan who blinded their eyes and further darkened their hearts. And the more anyone pursued and took hold of the Lord, the more He unveiled His Word to each of them. This is a repeating pattern we find in Scripture.

Nobody was born into the earthly realm as a murderer or a rapist. Each one made choices and became who they were. Cain listened to—and obeyed—the lying voices of jealousy, disappointment and self-pity. Others listened to the enslaving destructive voice of lust. By contrast, Cornelius listened and responded to the voice of God in his heart; even though he wasn't even a Jew. He was a Gentile; just like Abraham.

In Mark 13, Jesus foretold the destruction of the Second Temple. He described the day of judgment: "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light." Considering the phenomena described, we take note that the clouds of heaven would descend upon the Earth.

Jesus continued, "and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken." Accordingly, Paul referenced the demise of geopolitical spiritual powers of wickedness through Jesus' work in his letters to the Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, and in 1 Corinthians. In continuity, this same point was reiterated in Revelation. A spiritual war would precede restoration of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. After this, the heavenly temple, or the *aiona*, would be reopened, and the *aionios* life would be restored.

Although many religious traditions have prescribed that we read the book of Revelation from a perspective thinking that it describes events yet to come regarding the end of the world, in the

Hebraic Context, the elements depicted therein revolved around the accomplishments of Jesus. We might better understand much of this narrative as the unfolding of a three-day war that took place in the realm of the *aiona* between the time of Jesus' crucifixion and His resurrection.

Continuing in Mark's narrative we read:

> And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the Earth, to the farthest end of heaven.

Although Christendom has taught us that this was an apocalyptic event signifying the end of earthly time, the elect have been being gathered together with the faithful cloud of witnesses referenced by Hebrews author for more than two thousand years.

If Christendom had emphasized subjective faith and had taken the Bible more literally, perhaps our understanding of verses like this would be different. And when you have experienced the cloud and have felt the overwhelming power of His glory, nobody is going to tell you anything different.

As an aside, I want to mention an experience which I shared with other individuals. A group of us had gathered together to pray. Some of us were laying on the floor quietly praying for a period of time; perhaps for a half hour or so. Maybe others were sitting in chairs. I am not sure because of my focus. It was not a highly emotional meeting with lots of hullabaloo, and none of us were wound up into any kind of frenzy. We were just softly praying when suddenly the presence of God's glory came down so heavily upon us I felt it happen. At that very second, my friend Charlie uttered, "The Lord is here!" And the dominion of His presence was unmistakable. And it fell upon the whole room at the very same instant. It was not as if a single person felt the Lord's presence. We were gathered together and the occurrence of God's visitation was equally realized and shared simultaneously.

For those who have not shared such an experience, you will recognize this when it happens, and you can be reminded of Charlie's exclamation. It will change you, and you will walk even more closely in the fear and reverence of the Lord. And keep in mind that your faith does not depend upon feeling an experience. Nevertheless, do not let others try to convince you that the divine-human experiences of those in the Scriptures cannot happen today. I think that the Lord waits to take each of us by surprise.

Jesus was the holy cloud-rider Who also sent forth angels. The gathering place before the throne of grace would be reopened and from all across the world, seekers would again stand before *Yehovah* to obtain the grace of His tangible help.

Although John Nelson Darby planted toxic seeds in the Evangelical movement causing this statement to be misinterpreted as the supposed event of the rapture, Jesus was actually instead teaching His disciples about the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Latter Prophets.

Moreover, Jesus wanted His disciples to realize that they were intended to walk in the same legacy of Jacob who became *Ish-raah-el*. Like David, they would be raised up to ride upon the heights. As Isaiah described, they would mount up with wings like eagles. In other terms, and to be more specific, the devout worshipers of *Yehovah's* name would renew habitation of the *aiona*. The angelic high place would once again be re-populated by God's children as He gathered them together to Himself.

Shortly after Jesus' crucifixion, the Second Temple was about to be destroyed, and to accomplish this, great peril was going to come upon the land at the hand of Rome.

Although Mark did not explain as much, when the oppressive Jewish religious ruling regime was gone, the only means of entry into the *aiona* left was through the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. Hebrews' author addressed this topic. However, Mark spoke more precisely of encounter with the angels that would once again take place; as had been the case with many individuals in the

Hebraic tradition when their ancient ancestors of faith had encountered the Word.

Tragically, the minds of Bible readers from the mid-1800s onward have been trained to read these similar passages in the Gospels immediately assigning them to Darby's contrivance of the supposed rapture. Soon we are going to delve deeply into Darby and the history of his maligned influences upon the Evangelical movement—especially having to do with his nefarious end times or last days misunderstandings that are so popular in the Christian marketplace today.

We get bits and pieces of what took place in the restoration of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace explained by various authors of the New Testament. It is the eschatological writings of the Hebrew and Aramaic Scriptures that help us reassemble the Hebraic paradigm. When we take note of the historical workings of *Yehovah* through the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace, and we understand the history of the horrific crimes of the evil kings of ancient Israel against its celebrants, and how they changed the Law creating and mandating a legalistic dead religion, we become informed regarding the concerns for God's justice by the Latter Prophets. It is in their eschatological hope that we find the means to reassemble components of the New Testament so that we are able to understand the events on Earth and events in the heavens that resulted in the restoration of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace. However, in order to see and to take hold of this perspective, we have to cleanse our minds from ignorant and deceptive ideas that have been passed down through the history of churchianity.

For those who have read *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, you will recall that encounter with the *davar* often came through angelic interactions with humankind.

Herein we have the promise of the *Aionios* Covenant, and they will see the son of man coming. Recall that Jerusalem is comprised of the phrase "*yeru*" meaning "They will see" and "*salem*" which is peace. The title "Jerusalem" was representative of

a covenant city. Those who stood on the foundation of peace would see peace.

God's authentic children, who were identified as such by the angels who saw the deeds of their faithfulness, were going to be found and would also find the Lord in the same kinds of experiences as their ancient forefathers of faith. His Glory would come to them in the clouds.

Recall that the Word of God came in many forms and in many ways including by dreams, visions, miracles and by angels throughout the Bible. Why did the realm of the spirit or the cloud of the *aiona* descend upon the Earth? It was to gather together those who are faithful to the Lord into their spiritual dwelling. This was the same dwelling place experienced by King David, and that was named *Peniel* by Jacob. He was re-named during his birth into the spiritual realm, *Ish-raah-el*, which is translated, the man who sees God. They were gathered together with the great cloud of witnesses named in Hebrews. The purpose was explained by Jesus. Where two or more are gathered in My Name, I am in their midst and their requests are obtained.

> I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with His glory. The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the *Kebar* River, and I fell facedown. The glory of *Yehovah* entered the temple through the gate facing east. Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of *Yehovah* filled the temple. While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple. He said: "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever [or in the *aiona*]."[278]

Note that the term "forever" is translated from the phrase "*eis ton aiona*." However, the context of the passage does not

[278] Ezekiel 43:2-7 modified NIV

convey any concept having to do with a timeframe. Rather instead, the Lord had gathered the prophet into the throne room which was clearly stated as a place of dwelling. Furthermore, this was described as a location inside of the temple. The Glory of *Yehovah* would abide in the throne room which would exist as a meeting place for those *Ish-raah-el-ites* who walked in the namesake of Jacob and who would fight their way into the hidden realm in order to see God. With the concentrated repetition of a diversity of terms and phrases pertaining to a celestial habitation, the context more perfectly demands rendering the term *aiona* as a noun identifying a place in the presence of God.

Imposition of the term "forever" changes the significance and meaning of the text. While we may agree that God's throne-room will exist without end, the point of the passage was that just as Ezekiel had been drawn into this celestial dwelling, so also this house would be open to others—whose feet would stand in God's Glory.

Jacob found this place where a ladder extended from the Earth into the heavens. As he fought to take hold of the presence of God, the grandson of the Patriarch was appropriately renamed *Ish-raah-el*. So then, even the title Israel, provided an enduring testimony of *Yehovah's* intent for each one to find his or her abiding place in the presence of the Holy One.

Those who had turned to God in faithfulness received a dwelling place in the heavens even as they abode on Earth. This was the vantage point from which they observed and called forth the reign of *Yehovah* into the physical world. They were eyewitnesses and became servants of the Word.

Luke similarly described what we speak of today as the transfiguration that was quoted earlier from 9:28-36.

As soon as fig-trees put forth leaves you can tell that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, which was a reference to the destruction of Second Temple Jerusalem, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.

This last phrase helps readers today to understand that Jesus spoke of an occurrence which would happen during the earthly lifespan of His disciples. He continued regarding the time thereafter:

> Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My Words will not pass away. Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the Earth. But keep on the alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.[279]

Those to whom the Word of God would come were to have found their places before the Son of Man in the realm of the spirit.

While addressing His closest followers, Jesus warned them not to allow their minds to become preoccupied with thoughts of apocalyptic end of the world scenarios. Rather instead, Jesus taught the disciples to concentrate on the here and now apparitions of the kingdom of God. Just as Ezekiel had stood in the presence of *Yehovah's* Glory and had heard His voice, so also this was to become the renewed focus of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

Jesus taught His disciples, "Very, truly, I tell you that you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." This was the promise of *Ish-raah-el* that had once been Jacob's in long ages past.

> He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of

[279] Luke 21:33–36 NASB

> the Earth." And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on. And a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; and they also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, Who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven." Excerpts offered here are quoted from Acts 1.

The Apostle Paul understood *Ish-raah-el's* entry into the spiritual realm and explained this to the Corinthians**.**

> For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food.[280]

This spiritual food was the Word of God. Just as Jesus was baptized by John and passed through the water, this was also the way back into the *aiona*. Even the Levitical Priests had washed in the laver prior to entry into the presence of *Yehovah*.

We infer that in some way, daily residence in the world made ones unfit to experience *Yehovah's* presence. Recall that Jacob encountered *Memra* only after passing through the Jabbok River.

Speaking of his own day, Paul continued regarding this food in identification of Jesus as the Word:

> Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is One Bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the One Bread. Look at the nation of Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?.[281]

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[280] 1 Corinthians 10:1–3 NASB

[281] 1 Corinthians 10:16–18 NASB

Think back to our comment on the Hebraic concept of remembrance which came from the Hebrew term *zachar* as this pertains to what we speak of today as the celebration of communion. Jesus taught that we were to call forth grace by breaking the bread and then by remembering. However, Jesus was not instituting a ceremonial ritual of mere intellectual recall, but instead was teaching those who followed how they should also enter into God's kingdom.

When we look closely at the Pauline passage above, this is what we see.

Paul was arguing that those who followed Jesus' instructions were also finding their heavenly dwelling places before the throne of God—which was affirmable by the signs and wonders that accompanied their participation in His kingdom. Even though they did not respect or adhere to the 600+ regulations of the *takkanot*, the work of God's Spirit was evident in their lives. And because this was the case, the traditions of the elders were pointless.

Not only did those who broke the bread calling forth *charis*, referenced in 1 Corinthians, enter before the throne of God, but Paul also stated that "all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food."

In other terms, celebrants of the Hebraic tradition thousands of years earlier had been "remembering" and had been gaining entry into the presence of God by the same means.

Jews have celebrated the *kiddush* for at least 2,500 years; although Christian theologians throughout history demonstrate by their lack of discussion that they have known virtually nothing about this entry into *Yehovah's* dwelling. There can be no doubt that over the multiplied centuries, the significance of the *kiddush* was lost and forgotten and this was reduced to a mere ceremonial ritual at the start of the Sabbath. However, we can also be assured that its roots had to do with remembering or with re-enlivening one's way into the *qodesh* realm of *Yehovah*. The Sabbath was not intended merely as a day to cease from earthly work, but moreover as a means of discovering and entering into heavenly rest.

Whereas John Nelson Darby had commandeered 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 ascribing these to the fictitious rapture envisioned by Margaret Macdonald, in actuality, these verses can be understood in the much wider context of the Bible as the faithful's inheritance of participation in the *Aionios* Covenant:

> For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.[282]

Because of his willful rejection of Jesus' teachings and the Gospels, and due to his complete ignorance of the Hebraic tradition, John Nelson Darby took Margaret McDonald's prophetic proclamation at Edward Irving's prayer meeting and applied it to his own dispensationalist ideas, thereby distorting the understanding of these verses down to the present-day. Darby misapplied the verse, aligning Paul's statement to his make-believe end of the world last days or end times theories.

Regarding entry into the cloud, Paul affirmed that personal choice and proven character were the means by which the Lord imparted the inheritance of the *Aionios* Covenant.

> But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining *yeshuah* through

[282] 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17 NASB

> our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.

Paul continued forward with the admonition for a life of Godliness:

> Live in peace with one another. And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything call forth grace; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.[283]

With the Hebraic realization that sanctification meant to become holy or to enter into the holy realm, to be "sanctified entirely" was of the greatest importance. Although Christendom has taught Bible readers to associate the coming of Jesus, with a grand eschatological second coming as a single apocalyptic event at the end of time, we need to understand that in the course of the lives of the faithful, there remained the potential for many encounters with the second power of heaven. He was expected to make His appearance innumerable times in the lives of the faithful.

Therefore when we read Paul's hope that ones would be found blameless at "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," as a Hebraic thinker, the Apostle's comment fell in line with the day-to-day expectation for those who upheld faith in *Yehovah*. The Word came repeatedly during the earthly lifespan of the faithful.

Moreover, this is what was meant by Luke in His repeated references in Acts to the advancement of the Word. By His own volition, God was moving throughout Israel and beyond—

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[283] 1 Thessalonians 5:13-23 modified NASB

manifesting Himself in the forms of dreams, visions, by angelic visitations, and through miracles.

There was no end to the expectation of His multiplied returns. John shared in the understanding of the reappearance of the son of God, continuing with all of the same phenomena which was explained in keeping with Noah and many others who had encountered the second power in the clouds.

> John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him Who is and Who was and Who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the Earth. To Him Who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the Earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty.[284]

So then we reiterate the point that by the time of our contemporary era, due to the influences of Darby, nearly all Protestant Evangelical Christians have been well-trained to read the book of Revelation considering that the contents pertain solely to the end of the world.

However, long before Darby, prior to the Reformation and the establishment of early Orthodoxy, the Hebraic paradigm existed wherein the text of Revelation pertained more specifically to a war being waged in heaven between the time of the birth and the resurrection of Jesus; extending to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 A.D.—and continuing with the ongoing establishment of the Temple of the New Jerusalem.

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[284] Revelation, 1:4-8 NASB

In that time period from the life of Jesus up to about the end of the second century A.D., there were still Jewish followers of the Way who lived with an ongoing expectation to encounter the second power of heaven in the clouds.

Recalling the historical study of the rise of Christian Orthodoxy in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*, we note that there were quite a number of competing Christian movements. The lines were blurred regarding exactly what it meant to have been a follower of Jesus. What we are left to wonder is whether or not it was an early sect of the Jewish followers of Jesus who migrated into the *Merkabah* spirituality as Hebraic faith passed out of Judaism and as the Greek bishops commandeered the religion.

Now there is an exciting Ph.D. dissertation awaiting research.

Following the obliteration of Jerusalem with its corrupt imposturous religious order, the New Jerusalem or the new foundation of peace and its temple were breaking forth from the heavens into the Earth. All throughout the known world, the Word of God continued manifesting Himself to those whose good deeds in life warranted His appearance. Such ones walked in faithfulness to God Most High without ever even having heard of the Hebraic tradition. Of course, Cornelius in the book of Acts serves posterity as a fine example. God saw Cornelius' good works, appeared to Him in a Word, and swiftly drew the man to Himself.

> At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.

> The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.[285]

As we will discuss later, the faithful were trained to partake in the three-day journey. By fighting their ways prayerfully into heaven and finding themselves being gathered together in Jesus' name, these few had discovered the narrow pathway into the temple in the *aiona* of God. And while they were gathered together in the Holy place, they received authority and power to accomplish on Earth that which had been wrought in heaven. Upon their return to the realm of Earth, they rendered signs and wonders—changing the world around them.

Debate Identifying "*Eis Ton Aiona*"

If any of us takes the time to delve into the topic, there has been an immense amount of study and debate regarding the Greek term *aiona*.

Universalist Christians, who have been unable to reconcile never-ending punishment in the afterlife with the identity of a loving God have argued that references to the "*aiona*" in its various forms have been translated incorrectly. Although this topic of eternal punishment is unrelated to our concern, celebrants from that faith community may find some components of the Hebraic perspective contained herein to be useful.

We are not going to look at every angle of the disputation. In fact, we are only going to present a limited number of examples to make our case that the term *aiona* was known in ancient times to have referenced a location in the heavenly angelic realm before God's throne. And with this, assuredly, we are calling into question definitions of various forms of the term pertaining to perpetuity that are typically translated as "forever," "eternal," or as "eternity."

For most of my life, I never called into question Orthodoxy's adoption of these definitions. I had always assumed that the term *aiona* was a chronological connective in the Scriptures pertaining to

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[285] Acts 10:1-4 NIV

time. Nevertheless, I did take an important step in *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* identifying that various forms of *aiona* or the adjective *aionios* could equally point forward or backward in time—depending upon the context of the discussions in which these terms were used.

And this was not my own discovery. Translators had been rendering *aiona* looking forward or backward in time for centuries. Nevertheless, this realization became an important stepping stone that widened the pathway to even greater Hebraic discoveries.

First and foremost, the understanding that *aiona* could point backward in time helped to reconcile a *non sequitur* in Jesus teaching.

In the Gospels, whenever anyone came to Jesus inquiring how they could inherit the *aionios* life, He always pointed them back in time to Moses' instruction and particularly to the Ten Commandments. What I came to understand at the time of the writing of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* was that because Jesus was pointing backward in time, *aionios* should have been rendered in English using an adjective that also looked backward chronologically. Therefore, we understand that Jesus' inquirers were not asking about eternal life but instead were seeking the "ancient life."

Consider these supporting examples from popular English translations:

Job 22:15 RSV reads, "Will you keep to the <u>old</u> way which wicked men have trod?"[286]

The ways wicked men behaved was described in the past tense, therefore, *aionios* was translated as "old." When action is being described in the present tense, but the nature of the information revolved around something that obviously took place in the past, the same consideration is justified. For example,

Proverbs 22:28 KJV reads, "Remove not the <u>ancient</u> landmark, which thy fathers have set."[287]

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[286] Job 22:15 RSV μη. τρίβον <u>αἰώνιον</u> fυλάxεις η]ν ἐράτησαν α;νδρες α;δικοι

[287] Proverbs 22:28 μη. μέταιρε ο[ρια <u>αἰώνια</u> α] ε;qεντο οι' ρατέρες σου

Since the admonishment was made to children about boundaries that were set by their fathers, there is no other way to reasonably translate except by using a term that looks backward in time.

One point should be evident from the translation of these verses which were completed by non-universalist scholars; the terms *aiona*, *aionios*, and *aionion* should not always have been translated as "eternal."

Resultantly, I began to re-examine the concept of the *Aionios* life.

Of course, there is always a domino effect when one biblical concept changes.

Whenever I use the phrase "house of cards" describing Orthodox doctrine, I am not trying to be pejorative. However, it is observable that if a single concept is altered, there is a ripple effect or worse as tremors shake their way through a series of doctrines which are all hinged on the one that has changed.

This is why Orthodoxy cannot afford to have anyone poking around in uncanonized ancient biblical or historical religious texts. Its doctrines can only stand firm if these are situated in a very limited number of books. Otherwise, the creedal system becomes threatened and is doomed to fall. The very specific canon we use today was chosen precisely for the reason these documents alone would support the emerging and evolving religion of early Orthodoxy.

For reasons of security, Jew and Christian alike desire to embrace the idea that what we hold dear today in our religious practices and beliefs has not changed since the foundation of the world. However, whether we like it or not, this is simply not accurate.

A perfect example was the fervent worship of the name of *Yehovah*. In the Scriptures, David and others passionately called upon and worshipped His actual name. Moreover, they compelled others to follow in their example in order to engage in divine-human encounter. Moses taught that this was God Most High's memorial name for all generations.

If anyone examines the Hebrew biblical texts, the intent for the enduring continual worship of the actual name of *Yehovah* was absolutely undeniable. However, today this has become an extremely inconvenient fact. At a certain point in time, Jewish religious leaders legislated rules over the Bible acting as if they wielded divine authority to change the Scriptures. Similarly, in our current era of time, the Roman Catholic Papacy has forbidden use of the name *Yahweh* in worship.

Another example concerns the Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. The Deuteronomists and Second Temple Judaism tried to make this ancient priesthood go away. First, they attempted marginalization. Then Hezekiah tore down their altars. Finally, Josiah murdered its priests and its adherents.

In order to erase mysterious subjectivity from Judaism, ancient religious leaders only permitted divine-human participatory spirituality within the Aaronic priesthood, and they only allowed that Jerusalem could be the authorized location of worship. However, on both of these accounts, Second Temple Judaism failed.

Nevertheless, the tradition of subjective spirituality was fearlessly kept very much alive in the writings of the Essenes. It is likely that their literary records were preserved by the generation which fled from Josiah into Arabia. This thesis was presented by Dr. Margaret Barker.

It was widely understood that David worshiped according to the more ancient priestly order, but his testimonies and practices were a little too prestigious to delete from the Bible.

Perhaps one of the most influential intellectual pogroms was Judaism's condemnation of acknowledgment of the second power of heaven detailed by Alan F. Segal in his book entitled *Two Powers in Heaven*.

History records and will continue recording that Christians and Jews alike are guilty of repeatedly attempting to commandeer the faith tradition and spirituality of the Bible. Today, some Reformed leaders decry that which they do not approve of by using pejorative labels. When someone speaks openly about hearing the voice of God, and they are not discussing reading of the Bible, these well-intended religious leaders attempt to safe-guard their

congregations, often contemptuously labeling such experiences as “mysticism.” Therein, they hope to marginalize and to contain this practice.

What we realize in all of this is that Orthodox thinkers’ minds are controlled by the rationalism of Aristotle. The early bishops and those continuing in the tradition today live with an absolutist obsession to find and believe immutable and indisputable religious facts; as if gnostic intellectualism could ever somehow substantiate a divine-human relationship.

Clever realizations often make investigators feel good. However, it is healthy to keep in mind that good ideas and the knowledge of religious facts will never get anyone into heaven.

It is by seeking the Lord and by hearing His voice and by obedience that we prove to heaven and Earth that we walk in the same *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God. And this was the pattern of the Hebraic tradition set for posterity from the time of Noah to the time of the Apostles.

Jesus identified His sheep by the fact that they heard his voice and obeyed. Faithfulness was to have been proven by actions and deeds. According to John 5:28-29 NASB, ones such as these would be raised up in the resurrection.

> for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Although we have been trained to think of the resurrection as an event following death, in the Hebraic usage and in John’s case in particular, the term probably also had to do with individuals being raised up into the heavens as a matter of practical spirituality. We will discuss this at length later.

Perhaps some have lost sight of the fact that in order for there to be a tangible relationship between two living beings, this must also include the experience of living communication. If anyone makes the assertion that God cannot possibly speak today using any other means than the text of the Bible, then he or she is attempting to usurp the authority of God. This was one of the means by which

Second Temple Judaism attacked the more ancient Hebraic faith community. By demonizing the practice of listening for the intimate voice of *Yehovah*, they hoped to make this spirituality go away.

And so Judaism famously upheld study of *t*/*Torah*, rather than Praising *Yehovah's* Name and participating in entry into the *olam* or *aiona* as *Ish-raah-el-ites*. Hearing the voice of the Holy One was a spirituality that was relegated and allowable only for the Aaronic Priests. However, Jesus restored the more ancient spirituality which was the foundation of the lives of the spiritually minded from the time of Noah onward.

> I am telling you the truth: those who hear my words and believe in him who sent me have the *aionois* life. They will not be judged, but have already passed from death to life. I am telling you the truth: the time is coming—the time has already come—when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear it will come to life. Just as the Father is himself the source of life, in the same way he has made his Son to be the source of life.[288]
>
> The Father who sent Me has Himself testified about Me. You have not heard His voice at any time, and you haven't seen His form. You don't have His word living in you, because you don't believe the One He sent. You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, yet they testify about Me. And you are not willing to come to Me so that you may have life.[289]

Observe that the Jewish so-called authorities had never before seen or heard the Word of God. In other terms, they had no idea what it meant by experience to have become *Ish-raah-el-ites.* Due to the wickedness in their hearts and the evil hypocritical practices of their lives, they had departed from the Holy One of Israel and could not enter behind the veil into the *olam* or the *aiona*.

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[288] John 5:24-25 GNV

[289] John 5:37-40 HCSB

As I studied John's Gospel—which incidentally is the only so-called Gospel not to use the Greek term *euaggelion* that is translated "Gospel,"—I kept running into a logical problem. Jesus was seeming to offer eternal life, however, in the time period of His life, the Jews did not have any dominant concept of life after death. The resurrection was of tremendous debate and seems to have remained so even in the time of Paul's preaching. We know that Jesus affirmed the afterlife with His statement to the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with me in paradise." Of course, Paul affirmed life after death, however he also strategically used this concept to divide his accusers.

> But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.[290]

The rendering, "ancient life," seemed to fix the problem that I ran into in my attempt to eliminate the *non sequitur* of supposedly receiving eternal life through observance of the Ten Commandments.

In fact, the ancient life could be connected all the way back to Eden, when God gave humankind life, and it could also be tied back to Moses, as he admonished Israel to "choose life;" which was a life of seeking and obeying the *davar.* And of course, the *davar*, the Word, or *Memra*, as He has been described, was at work in the Garden with humankind. Moreover, the Ten Commandments had come in Israel's encounter with *Yehovah* through manifestation of the *davar* from Mount Sinai. Posterity was meant to understand that obtaining the ancient life was the foundational idea behind living by the bread of heaven and finding life through every Word that proceeded from the mouth of God.

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[290] Acts 6:6-8 KJV

It is only in a living, active relationship of two-way communication that humankind experience God. And so, Jesus confronted the Jewish religious authorities:

> You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have the *aionios* life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.[291]

Reading literature—even if it had been divinely inspired—is an activity which is very different from divine-human communicative encounter with the Holy One. Study of the Scriptures had nothing to do with the actual life that Jesus had to offer which was characterized by the *chen*, *charis*, or grace that had been experienced by authentic *Ish-raah-el-ites* all throughout the ages. The *aionios* life of the *Aionios* Covenant of Peace allowed for entry into the protective habitation of the angelic realm, wherein those whose identities was proven by their good deeds could hear God's voice, perceive His glory, and become empowered to change the world.

Although Christendom has downplayed the necessity of good deeds due to Martin Luther's emphasis on *sola fide,* according to Jesus, resurrection into the holy realm was predicated upon one's choices and actions.

> …an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life…[292]

An individual could only ever possibly embrace the life that was truly life by direct encounter with the Holy One of *Ish-raah-el.*

Does this mean we should quit studying the Bible?

No, of course not.

The problem was that the objective religious practice of Bible Study had replaced the subjective living spirituality of hearing and obeying the voice of God.

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[291] John 5:39–40 NIV

[292] Excerpted from John 5:28-29 ESV

Religious legalism had replaced the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God. These Jews did not walk in an intimate relationship with God. Instead they studied to become smart about the Bible and obeyed religious rules.

Fundamentalism had become the god of the Jewish religious leaders in the same way that it is the god of many so-called "Christians" today. Some Christians have divinized the Bible and narrow-mindedly have assumed that the only way God can speak to anyone is through reading a passage of Scripture. The identical mistake was made by early Orthodoxy. In the *Panarion*, Bishop Epiphanius only cited Scriptures as what were to have been considered as authentic prophetic words of God.

At some point, the rubber needs to meet the road with what we call faith being turned into action. If God's mission is to bless the nations as the children of Abraham, then in some fashion, hearing and responding to His voice will lead us to caring for ones such as starving Lazarus who was sick and dying in the street.

If on some level we are not like Cornelius in the book of Acts, to whom the Word of God came, then whatever we label as faith in our lives is not the faith of the Bible. And to be certain, I am speaking to both Christians and Jews. Faithfulness to *Yehovah* is expressed in serving the world around us. Proverbs 19:17 instructs that He or she who gives to the poor lends to God.

Abraham became a partner with God in helping the needy. The poor among Job's neighbors were clothed with the wool from his sheep. Sacrificial generosity is evidence of birth in the spiritual realm and also an expression of the True and Living God abiding in our lives.

Luke wrote his Gospel and the narrative of Acts explaining that he was going to list individuals who encountered the Word and who became servants of the Word. Servants of the Word proved by the living water flowing out of them that they had discovered the ancient life of divine-human encounter.

One day, I was pulling together some concepts related to the *aionios zoe* or the ancient life and connecting these to the Hebraic motif of the three-day journey. And suddenly, the phrase, "I will raise you up on the last day," took on new significance.

We understand that the problem of understanding the Bible is the fact that we lack a great deal of background information. The authors of Scripture wrote with the assumption that their audiences would have been familiar with the Hebraic tradition.

Luke might not have imagined that anyone would be reading his writings 2,000 years later, and there were certain concepts that he did not have to define because of the familiarity of the shared background and context he had with his readership.

For those like Barker, Heiser, or myself whose efforts revolve around recovery of lost and forgotten information, sometimes we are scratching our way along until we get a firmer grip on ancient concepts.

I had never really looked very closely or called into question the phrase *eis ton aiona*, which was rendered as "forever." I had always thought of this as a chronological connective. However, with further investigation of many contexts in which the phrase was used, I came to a different conclusion. The phrase *eis ton* was used ubiquitously throughout the Greek Bible, and in innumerable instances, it is followed by a specific place—indicating its use as a loacative connective. Many contexts imply movement into a habitable space—as this is often translated with the phrases, "into the" or "in the."

For example: "*eis ton oikos*" means in the house. "*Eis ton uranos*" means "in heaven." "*Eis ton topos*" means "in the place." "*Eis ton patamos*" means "in the river." "*Eis ton kolpos*" means "in the breast." "*Eis ton lakkos*" means "in the pit" or "in the dungeon." "*Eis ton cheimarrhos*" means "in the brook." …and so on and so on and so on.

Based upon this finding, the inescapable rationale existed that *eis ton aiona* could point to a habitable place in the spiritual realm.

Nevertheless, even though the majority of other Greek constructs employing "*eis ton*" in the Scriptures were followed repeatedly by particular kinds of locations, the bishops instead chose the terms "forever" or "eternal" in their interpretations due

to Classical Greek's common usage of *aeon* that pertained to an era of time.

With this, I questioned, "could the *aiona* be a place?" At the same time, I was intrigued by the recollection of many years ago having once heard of a monastery in the British Isles called "Iona." As I began an inductive study through Genesis and continued through the Scriptures, the evidence of the *aiona* being a heavenly location was overwhelming.

The premise of my research included an inductive survey of many instances of *eis ton aiona* in order to either affirm or to eliminate the possibility for the *aiona* to be recognized as a dwelling place in the presence of God. By examining the text surrounding the phrase, I asked the question, is there more evidence here that *aiona* should be referenced as a place rather than as a time-frame.

In the upcoming verses to be examined, terms such as "forever," or "eternal," etc., will be translated literally as "in the *aiona*."

In the first pages of Genesis there are three uses of the phrase, "in the *aiona*." "And God said, Behold, Adam is become as one of us, to know good and evil, and now lest at any time he stretches forth his hand, and take of the tree of life and eat, and so he shall live in the *aiona.*"[293]

Immediately, there is a connection between humankind's dwelling in Eden with the location in the *aiona*. Due to forsaking loyalty to the voice of God, members of humankind were cast from His presence out of the place of Eden. Recalling God's admonishment, "In the day you eat of it you will certainly die," Adam and Eve passed into death outside of the presence of God. The forbidden meal had resulted in divine-human incompatibility.

The second occurrence of the phrase is found in Genesis 6:3, with repeated emphasis on divine-human incompatibility or antagonism. The sons of God had taken wives from among the

[293] Genesis 3:22 Brenton LXX

daughters of men, and this had proven to be a problem. Now we reflect upon the question, "Where did the sons of God live?" Of course, they lived in heaven existing as angelic beings. From time to time however, they made appearances in the Earth. After these sons of God had taken human wives, "the Lord God said, My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men in the *aiona*, because they are flesh.[294]

When we consider that the action of remaining requires for there to have been a place in which to remain, this location appears to have been the *aiona*.

Aside from mentioning the endurance of natural life, the context has nothing to do with an eternal timeframe. Humankind were not living forever after having been cast out of Eden. Instead, the actual dilemma was that these wives had come to dwell in a place they were not supposed to be, due to their illicit union with the angelic sons of God.

The women had no place of standing in the house of God. The solution revolved around finding a means of their removal. If they died, their flesh no longer would exist. Accordingly, this remedied the conundrum of their presence in the *aiona*.

In order to fix the problem, the lifespan of humankind was shortened to one hundred-twenty years.

In another example we read: "And the Lord said to Moses, Lo! I come to thee in a pillar of a cloud, that the people may hear me speaking to You, and that they might have faith in You in the *aiona*."

The cloud was a dwelling place, and the Tent of Meeting provided a location for divine-human encounter. Moses and God were meeting in a specific habitation. The holy of holies provided a means of passage into the angelic realm before God's throne.

Negating the idea of eternal time, the witnesses of this event who watched Moses and who heard the voice of *Yehovah* were not going to live forever. Moreover, this event ceased from

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[294] Brenton LXX

occurring thousands of years ago with the loss of the Tent of Meeting. If this same apparition continued today in an identical manner, the notion of *aiona* being translated as forever might be appropriate. However, this was not the case.

Moreover, the Israelites witnessed the event standing at the doorway to their own tents for the purpose that they would walk in faith; at least with respect to accepting that Moses' leadership was divinely inspired. Other than this, the context mainly had to do with *Yehovah's* manifestation in a specific location which we accordingly understand was in the *aiona*.

In another example, recall that the Tabernacle was a place of meeting between priests and *Yehovah*. Priests could not just whimsically wander into this location, but instead they had to be consecrated which meant that they underwent preparations.

Exodus 29 told of them washing and putting on new clothes. Then, some kind of object of holiness was placed upon their heads, they were anointed with oil, and all of this prepared them with the result that "they shall have a priesthood to Me in the *aiona*.[295]

Here again we realize that these priests were not going to be alive forever. Furthermore, the physical Tent of Meeting that served as a passageway into the presence of *Yehovah* would only exist for a limited amount of time.

By contrast, the context told about preparations for entry into the location where God dwelt.

In comparison to an earlier example, whereas Adam and Eve as well as the daughters of men who married the angels had made themselves incompatible to dwell in the *aiona*, the priests who were consecrated had done the opposite in order to allow entry back into the specific location of God's presence.

Since nothing in the entirety of the context has to do with anything or anyone enduring forever, the idea that the phrase *aiona* should have referenced a timeframe is unsupported. However, the biblical text does in fact provide abundant evidence that, once again, the *aiona* should have been acknowledged as a reference to a location in the presence of God.

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[295] Exodus 29:9 Brenton LXX

Looking at the Patriarch and the generations of his children, we read:

> Remembering Abram and Isaac and Jacob thy servants, to whom thou hast sworn by thyself, and hast spoken to them, saying, I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of heaven for multitude, and all this land which thou spoke of to give to them, so that they shall possess it in the *aiona*.[296]

In this example and in others that more specifically mention the term "generations," there is a stronger sense of an enduring time-frame. It is only fair to agree that this provided support for translators to render *eis ton aiona* as "forever" or using the concept of "eternity."

Nevertheless, the context also emphasizes the need for an earthly location in which the Hebrews would dwell that was comparable to the heavenly location of the stars.

In biblical interpretation there is a literary tool known as *chiastic* structure which was named according to the shape of the Greek letter kai. This looks somewhat like the Roman letter X. *Chiastic* structure has rarely if ever been used as a feature in English literature. However, in ancient writings and in the Bible, it was much more commonly used to make a comparative emphasis and to shift the focus of a discussion from one level of thinking to another.

In order to fully make sense of the concluding phrase *eis ton aiona*, it is necessary to understand how it has been situated using this literary tool.

Authors used *chiasim* as a tool of comparison in order to make a particular point that was greater than the topic at hand. When a *chiasim* appeared, an idea was presented in a pattern like an X and then the pattern was reversed. At each end of the points of the letter X two interests were repetitiously placed in order to set the stage for an evaluation and establishment of an idea.

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[296] Genesis 32:13 Brenton LXX

Today, we do something similar in communication using the phrase, “just as” combined with the phrase, “so also.”

For example, consider the sentence, “*Just as* a tree requires sunlight and water to grow, *so also* people need love in order to thrive.” In this case, trees, people, sunlight, and love are used to introduce a much larger philosophical concern for healthy existence. As a literary tool, *chiastic* structure allows an author the means to pivot a discussion to a more important topic.

In ancient literature, *chiasims* were sometimes used to reveal cryptic points. One must first have recognized the employment of the *chiasim* in order to set the stage for his or her embrace of the larger point of knowledge or wisdom that was intended.

There seems to have been the sense that *chiasims* identified clever people who were able to comprehend what was being compared and differentiated them from outsiders. *Chiasms* contained and conveyed insider knowledge. At the same time, these could be used to identify or manipulate those who lacked insight.

We might observe this in Mark 2:27. Jesus employed this literary device stating, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” Astute listeners or insiders would make immediate sense of His point, while the naïve or those lacking insight might wander in thought; remaining aloof.

Jesus forbade His followers from calling others “fools,” but that does not seem to have prohibited communication skills that might be used to identify those lacking insight. Discerning individuals would have understood that Jesus’ statement was a criticism of the rulers of Second Temple Judaism; while these religious leaders would still be shaking their heads trying to make sense of Jesus’ regard for the Sabbath. Jesus did not call them ignorant fools, but their ignorance proved their immature identities due to their inept understanding of the Law.

Jesus made the straightforward point that the Sabbath was a benevolent gift. Then He candidly accused the legalistic religious leaders of His day as being so utterly ignorant that they did not even know how to receive and make beneficial use of God's gift.

And so we offer these comments and this simple example of a *chiasm* in order to examine the more complex literary usage of the tool. Even as there is thought provoking structure in the *chiasm*, *chiastic* interpretation requires investigation.

Problematically, because of the difficulties of translation quite often, moving a *chiasm* from one language to another is not an easy task. Sometimes the *chiastic* structure does not remain intact, and later on, interpreters are unable to recognize the comparison. Resultantly, they never think to seek out the insider knowledge. And so translators of *chiasms* face a tremendous challenge with some of these in attempting to convey the same complexity of information as would have been discerned by the original audiences.

Genesis 32:13 has all of the components of a *chiasm*, but in common translations, it has lost its form.

The first step in interpretation of a *chiasm* is to identify the components. Here we have two locations which are Earth and the heavens. We also have Abram's seed who will need an earthly habitation, who have been compared to stars that exist in a heavenly location.

At this point we realize that the *chiasm* is going to teach something important regarding a dwelling place for humankind wherein an earthly dwelling is compared to a heavenly dwelling.

The author seems to be implying that because Abram's seed are like the stars, they need both an earthly and a heavenly dwelling. And this habitation happens to be *eis ton aiona* or in the *aiona*.

This appears to be the insider knowledge which had to be conveyed.

In order to confirm our hypothesis, we examine Abram's life and we take note of the fact that he had encountered the Word or *Memra* by many diverse means. If we look at the Aramaic Targums, we see that as he was fleeing from the land of the Chaldeans, he encountered *Memra*. When this happened he constructed a tent and fellowshipped with the Word of God for three-days in a location which thereafter was known as the Plain of the Vision. And through his life he had many lengthy encounters with the Word. The vision that included the smoking pot seems to have gone on for more than a day. From the larger context of Scripture we ascertain that in several instances during his life, he had discovered an abiding place in the realm of the spirit while his feet yet remained on the Earth. It is from this context that we affirm the insider knowledge we have been looking for.

And so we understand that *chiasim* was used as a tool to shift a person's focus from the mundane to something more profound that they might have missed. In the case of Genesis 32:13, the formulation moved descendants from the concern of obtaining an earthly dwelling place to the more profound understanding that they too, just like the Patriarch, were to have inherited heavenly places of standing before God Most High.

The *chiasim* redirected the Hebrews' attention to something far greater than their original concern of the need for land on Earth, lest posterity forget about its place in God's presence. Not only would the Patriarch's children possess land, but moreover they would possess a habitation in the location of the *aiona*; just as this had also been the inheritance of the Patriarch from God.

Abram stood before God in visionary experiences in the *aiona* and was also given land on Earth in which to dwell. This same legacy would be passed on to his children.

Those who might not have been so familiar with the construction of ancient eastern literature would be predisposed to miss the existence and the intent of a *chiastic* comparison. If the *chiasm* had included two elements of time, rather than locations,

then interpretation would have gone in a different direction. But as it is, the *chiasm* eliminated consideration of *eis ton aiona* having anything to do with the rendering of "forever."

Instead, the *chiastic* structure reinforced the intuitive point that the subsequent generations were being offered the promise of two dwelling places. One existed in the physical realm of Earth and the second was the heavenly place of standing experienced by their father Abram.

This land or dwelling place, which the Word spoke of to give to the descendants of Abram to possess was in the *aiona*. This fits with previous instances of *eis ton aiona.* As we recall, Adam and Eve were prevented from eating from the tree of life so that they would not remain in the *aiona*. Although they were cast out of Eden, in the Hebraic tradition, we see that God wanted to draw them back into His presence, and He made a means for this in a limited sense through sacrifices at the altar.

Earlier we referenced the Apostle Paul discussing eating the sacred meal of the sacrifice in 1 Corinthians 10. He challenged his New Testament audience, "Look at the nation of Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?" The point here was that the faithful in His present time who practiced breaking of the bread, were given the right to approach the same altar before God's throne; as had been the privilege of their ancient ancestors of faith.

The faithful of the Christian era understood that Jesus having been the Word or the second power of heaven and that God's Son, having come in the form of human flesh, had offered Himself as a final sacrificial meal. Although members of humankind were restored to the presence of God through altars and sacrifices in the era of the Old Testament which was the reason they celebrated the *kiddush*, so also in the Christian era, celebrants would break the challah understanding that this was the sacrifice of the Holy One of Israel; the incomparable exceeding sacrifice that God would make on the mountains of Israel which was foretold by Ezekiel in 39:17-34. We have mentioned the passage already, in the context of God's provision of a supreme sacrifice in order to atone

for Israel and Judah's abominable adultery, but later we will revisit the topic in connection with the reopening of the *aiona*.

From the point of understanding that the book of Genesis was repetitiously indicating the existence of two cosmological dwelling places being Earth and heaven, we may also learn something important to the concept of the *Aionios* Covenant with respect to the promise of the land as well as pertaining to a heavenly dwelling.

From our discussion of the *Aionios* Covenant, we understand that Noah was under the *chen* or the *charis* of God in as much as he was under the clouds in which God's radiance dwelt.

Chennan is translated as the activity of God's protection extended to David in the *Aionios* Covenant. As a descriptor of God's disposition toward His faithful children among humankind, the term is typically translated as "gracious."

Although *chennan* and the location of Canaan are spelled almost completely differently, only sharing two letter *nuns* in Hebrew, it would seem by the way they are pronounced that the promise of the earthly land of Canaan was figurative of the impartation of *chennan*.

With these understandings, recall that the narratives of Scripture began as an oral tradition. The spoken stories of Abraham were passed down through countless generations. Although the terms *chennan* and Canaan were eventually written using different letters, perhaps the title of the earthly dwelling place of Canaan was intended to have been understood as representing each faithful person's standing before God in *chennan*.

One thing we can be sure of is that God Most High intended for His earthly children to find their places of standing as priests before His presence. The promise of both earthly and heavenly dwelling places substantiated that the gift of Canaan was figurative of God's *chennan*.

We read in Genesis,

> And now *I charge you* before the whole assembly of the Lord, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek all the commandments of the Lord our God, that ye may inherit the

good land, and leave it for your sons to inherit after you in the *aiona*.[297]

Once again, the text indicates a heavenly standing place related to being in the *aiona*.

Where exactly did those who were faithful to the Law stand as they were found standing, "in the audience of God?" They were not standing before the assembly of Israel, but instead were standing before the heavenly assembly of the Lord.

For those who have questions on the interest of the existence of the divine council, I recommend reading Michael Heiser's book, The Unseen Realm.

The point that I add to this herein, is that the *aiona* was the secret habitation of the divine council, that was hidden from the eyes of the unfaithful. Those who walked in faithful obedience to the voice of God, lived under his *chen*, *charis*, or grace and were recipients not only of Canaan, but also of being under his *chennan*. Such ones as these were allowed entry into God's throne room; which was equally described as His kingdom.

Jesus taught that individuals needed to first seek God's righteousness and his kingdom. The disobedient were not going to be granted entry.

The context of Genesis 28:8 also indicates perpetuity with mention of an inheritance. The inheritance was predicated upon faithfulness, in the same way that David's descendants were promised a seat on the throne on the condition that they obeyed. Jesus clarified to the corrupt religious leaders of His own time that bloodline was of no importance insofar as being identified as a child of Abraham. Only those who did the deeds of Abraham existed as his authentic children in the eyes of God.

In the Gospels we read that a man ran to Jesus and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit the *Aionios* life? What we discover is that this boiled down to one's choices and actions. God recognized His authentic children by their behavior.

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[297] Genesis 28:8 Brenton LXX

Moving forward, in Deuteronomy we find an important passage that unmistakably exemplified the *aiona* as a place of standing before the throne of God.

Before we render the verse translating *aiona* as a location, first we need to consider the following interpretive intricacy that is created when the concept of eternity is superimposed over the following verse: "No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of *Yehovah*, even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of *Yehovah* forever."[298]

Note that the phrase *eis ton aiona* here has been translated as forever.

At the start, we have to ask a question in order to clarify just exactly what the author intended to convey.

Had the Ammonites and the Moabites lost their places of standing before the divine council in the assembly of *Yehovah* for ten generations, or rather instead, for all of time?

We cannot have it both ways. There is a huge difference between ten generations and eternity. If *eis ton aiona* is translated with the concept of never-ending perpetuity, then why did the author bother to tell us they would be prohibited for ten generations?

What we observe is that the imposition of the term "forever" created an enormous *non sequitur* in translation of the biblical text.

Moreover, in examination of the passage, the emphasis was directed toward a place of standing in *Yehovah's* presence. While the context also spoke of a duration of time, that specific timeframe was the limited period of ten generations.

Furthermore, throughout Scripture, certain peoples, because of their choices and behavior, had made themselves incompatible for entry into the presence of God.

What we realize in a survey appears that the *aiona*, was the hidden place of God's dwelling which was closed off from the unrighteous. The Word of God or the presence of God was meant to be found and inhabited only by the righteous, who prepared

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[298] Deuteronomy 23:3

themselves for entry by turning from wickedness, by forsaking Satan's lies, and by walking according to God's voice. Additionally, we note the pattern that departure from wickedness was accompanied by cleansing with water.

Because translation of the phrase *eis ton aiona* in Deuteronomy 23:3 as "forever," created two conflicting chronological statements, and in light of the discussion revolving around a location before God, *aiona* should have been more accurately understood as the term describing the heavenly dwelling place.

Suffice to understand that interpretive difficulties or *non sequiturs*, often result from forcing concepts from later eras of history back over the biblical texts. These make readers aware of missing background knowledge. And herein, we see the need for the recovery process of inductive contextual analysis.

The flaw in the English translation is removed if we understand that the *aiona* was a reference to the hidden place where *Yehovah* resided, literally, "in the *aiona*." Furthermore, the purpose of the *Aionios* Covenant was to restore humankind to their place of dwelling before the presence of God as they had experienced in the original innocence of Eden at creation. Living life in the care of God Most High as it had been so in the Garden was the Ancient or the *Aionios* Life.

This fits the larger context of Scripture which presents two cosmological dwelling places that are the heavens and the Earth. The way into the realm of God's holiness where His glory dwelt was cut off from those who did not walk according to His voice. Consequently, evil doers whose lives were shaped by the suggestive voice of the adversary were not under His *chen*, *charis,* or grace. And so they would neither inherit the land of Canaan nor the *chennan* of God.

The way was blocked back into Eden by an angel with a flaming sword. Adam and Eve were banned from re-entry into that realm because they had proven that they were untrustworthy. Adam and Eve did not immediately die physically; however, they were separated from the life-giving manifest presence of God's Spirit. Eventually they would die a second physical death. However,

those made alive in the *aiona* would not die a second death, but would live on in the realm of heaven.

Those who have read *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom* may be reminded that encounter with the Word or that entry into the Word, was synonymous with reception of the Spirit. Jesus, Who spoke on behalf of the Father, asserted in John 6:63 that His very Words were spirit and life. Whereas in the earlier book, emphasis was placed upon the concept of entry into the Word or the *davar*, here, we are drawing attention to the synonymous awareness of entry into the *aiona*.

The interpretive intricacy of Deuteronomy 23:3, is removed from the passage when "*eis ton aiona*" is interpreted as a location: "No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of *Yehovah*, even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of *Yehovah* in the *aiona*." The Lord was declaring that none of these people, nor any of their descendants for 10 generations would stand in His presence. The text conveyed the clear message that the assembly of *Yehovah* in the *aiona* would be understood as a place of prayerful appeal before His throne—but only for the faithful. Moreover, although the way could be shut for certain individuals, it could also be opened at a later time.

Once again, the point is reiterated that in numerous biblical examples, the phrase "*eis ton*" appears just prior to a location. And this pattern continues on and on throughout all of Scripture.

- Genesis 12:15 …into the house of Pharaoh…
- Genesis 19:1 …in the street…
- Genesis 19:10 …into the house…
- Genesis 25:9 …in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite…

Therefore, the change we are proposing here is reasonably substantiated. We are not eliminating the concept of an afterlife in God's presence, but rather instead, we are offering a corrective which eliminates a tremendous number of *non sequiturs* that have been created in the biblical texts by translating every instance of the phrase *eis ton aiona* as eternity or forever. Ultimately this is

going to make our understanding of Jesus' teachings much more comprehensible.

Those who will continue to object are ones who thrive on the practice of objective gnostic religion that revolves around gathering correct doctrines or religious information. I realize that some of my friends do not believe they can enter into the spiritual realm. They would agree intellectually with Paul's statement that "we are seated in Christ in heavenly places," but they might not ever be willing to admit that they could have their eyes and ears opened in order to personally witness the holy place; while they yet remain alive on Earth. They cognitively accept that heaven exists, but that it is only tangibly accessible in the afterlife. They have been persuaded by enduring centuries of religious traditions that have been founded in ignorance regarding what has been explained in Scripture.

This is sad, but as lovingly as possible, we hope and pray that their eyes and ears become opened so that they have seeing eyes and hearing ears to experience the radiance and voice of the Living God.

Based on these findings, we should consider the phrase *eis ton aiona* not only as a chronological connective in some contexts, but also as an appropriate locative connective speaking of the hidden dwelling place in the presence of God that was experienced by the faithful children of *Yehovah*.

We can also hope that the eleventh, twelfth, and subsequent generations that the spiritually minded among the Ammonite and the Moabite faith communities began once again to seek and experience the Holy One of Israel—in the *aiona*.

Moving forward, we ask the question, are there other examples where the *aiona* might have been conveyed as the location of God's dwelling? The few examples we have reviewed by no means comprise an exhaustive list. There are probably even better examples. However, the economy of time and space require that a limit be set on the topic. Nevertheless, in many other instances, the phrase was used in the Greek Septuagint speaking of

the location of heaven. For those desiring to move forward in this study, note Genesis 15:5, 28:12; Exodus 9:8, 10, 22, 23 and 10:13, 21, and 22. The list could go on and on.

Notably, in Genesis 28:12, Jacob had a dream with a ladder reaching into heaven, used by the angels to travel between heaven and Earth.

Just as James Barr has criticized, we may have to accept the fact that staunch monolithic Orthodox interpreters of the Bible are not easily persuaded to let the Scriptures speak for themselves to convey ideas that might threaten the creeds or its doctrines. Furthermore, due to the influence of Classical Greek in keeping with the biases of Orthodoxy's doctrines, confessions, and their mission to provide "eternal life" to the world, the expectation that this is suddenly going to change how the Bible is read by the institution of Christendom is unlikely. Reform movements always squelch subjective spirituality. Church management can get very messy when individuals are permitted to hear God's voice and are free to follow His leading.

Moreover, it should be understood that I am not the first student of Scripture to suggest that the *aiona* should have been understood as a location in God's presence. Although other articles and books have been written on the topic, this concern is integral to the discussion of the *Aionios* Covenant. In order to make a comprehensive presentation of the Hebraic paradigm which includes definition of the ancient life, and that according to Jesus was entered into by observing the kind instruction of *Yehovah* in *Torah*, we have approached the topic somewhat differently than others. Hopefully this foundation will make sense to those who are digging deep in the Bible as we move forward to understand the manifest signs and wonders that took place in the ancient spirituality of Israel.

The genius of Einstein which calls into question the influence of these factors leads to a more legitimate and productive translation of *eis ton aiona*. When we come to grips with making use of inductive contextual examination, we see new understandings outside the bubble that formerly set boundaries on our literary understandings and minds. In turn, errant conclusions

have kept us from realizing the treasure of our ancient inheritance of a dwelling place in the presence of the Holy One of Israel.

The term *aiona* is translated from the Hebrew term "*olam*" which is often rendered as "old" or "ancient." This comes from a root term "*alam*" that means "hidden" or "concealed" and can refer to a place that lies just out of sight over the horizon. A sense of mystery can be inferred from the root, due to the fact that what lies over the horizon cannot be seen and yet it is known to exist. Accordingly, the kingdom of God is out of sight, over the horizon of the physical world. This is a location where individuals throughout the Scriptures were called to stand before the throne of God. They entered before the altar with the breaking of the sacrifice and entered at the start of the Sabbath with the breaking of the challah. Even so, Jesus instructed His disciples to do this in order to invite or to re-enliven His presence among them. It is the place where they were endued with power and authority.

By the means of *chen*, *charis*, or grace in this secret place of standing, they were empowered to change the world so that God's will in heaven could become manifest in the Earth. Ones such as these did not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeded from the mouth of God. In the New Testament, the spiritual gifts they received were called *charismata*. With restoration of the intellectual literary path, it is comprehensible to realize where and how individuals were empowered to perform the miraculous works of God.

I should mention that it does not matter if someone is a Jew or a Christian if they are seeking encounter with the Holy One of Israel or the Word of God. Whether a Jew seeks to tangibly encounter the Holy One of Israel or a Christian seeks to encounter Jesus, they are both doing the same thing. I can hear some of my friends on both sides of the Judeo-Christian aisle shouting objections. Nevertheless, Christians have to remember that Jesus and His disciples were Jews. This is what He taught His Jewish brothers and sisters to do. Now I am teaching Jews, as well as

Christians, to do the same thing. Even though Christians have been trained to think that there are a bunch of doctrinal hoops to jump through in order to become a so-called believer as preparation for encounter with the Lord, if we are honest, Jesus did not teach any of this. Some of my Jewish friends will undoubtedly have their own objections. And I am going to warn both sides not to expect any kind of entry if arrogance dwells within you. Arrogance will disqualify all of us from entry.

Both contingencies have to recognize that Jesus was leading the humble who would listen and obey the commandments to participate in the practice we call communion in order to encounter His tangible presence. The Jews reference this as the *kiddush* in preparation to enter into the *qodesh* realm or the place of God's holiness. As either side breaks the bread, both sides need to hear the admonition of Paul, who was a Pharisee and the student of Gamaliel. He was in a similar predicament as I may have created for myself here. Listen to this Jewish teacher's insight from 1 Corinthians 10. He challenged his New Testament audience, "Look at the nation of Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?" In the case of the Old Testament sacrifices and in the case of Jesus' sacrifice, the faithful broke the bread, understanding that the veil was torn and that they could enter. Both sides of the aisle have been trained by their traditions to think that they hold a monopoly on the Holy One of Israel; and frankly, this needs to change. And if Christians do not understand that Jesus was the Holy One of Israel or the incarnate Word of God, then they need to re-read and re-understand Who He claimed to be in the Gospels. According to King David, if anyone approaches with clean hands and a pure heart, God Most High by no means will turn anyone away. Furthermore, nobody has to completely comprehend every minute facet of all of this to enter God's presence. You just have to be very hungry. The Holy One hurries to those who are desperate for His help or *yeshuah*. Christians and Jews both appreciate David's instruction in the Psalms. Learn from David, worship God's name

and enter His gates. And if you remember that you have an offense between yourself and a brother or sister, first go and be reconciled before you enter.

When we study use of the term *chen*, we see that walking in the miraculous empowerment of God was acknowledged many times in the Hebrew Old Testament. The *charismata* were not a New Testament phenomena as was evidenced especially in the lives of Elijah and Elisha. As they performed signs and wonders, they were walking in the *aionios* life.

Some readers might wonder why we did not begin by presenting the Hebrew concept of the hidden place that can be related to the Hebrew term *Olam*. To explain, we have focused on the Greek Septuagint because the New Testament documents that have been most readily studied over the last two thousand years were also written in Greek. It was simply much easier to trace the idea of the *Aionios* Covenant through the Old and New Testaments using the same repeated phrase. Furthermore, it makes sense to associate the *aionios* life presented by Jesus in keeping with the long established covenant bearing the same name. To have made a similar presentation emphasizing that the use of *olam* in the Hebrew Old Testament was comparable to the *aionios* life of the New Testament would have been more complicated. Furthermore, our goal has not been to teach Hebrew or Greek. Instead our desire has been to make a presentation that a wide majority of individuals could understand. While it is necessary to reference biblical terms in the original languages in order to situate the discussion as coming from the Scriptures, hopefully the use of these terms does not get in the way of the larger achievement to restore ancient understandings.

Personal Thoughts on Spirituality

At this point there may be readers who are figuratively jumping the gun with the question, if I just simply revere and live by the Ten Commandments as Jesus taught will I then be empowered

to perform miracles? The man who ran and knelt before Jesus asking what he needed to do in order to receive the *aionios* life wanted the same kind of quick solution in order to become empowered like the prophets. My response would be that *Torah* served in the role of being a school teacher. If it wasn't obvious how one should have behaved in order to love their neighbors, the Ten Commandments provided a simple starting point of instruction.

Furthermore, relationships and mutual trust take time to build. If God Most High could speak to Balaam through a donkey, He could certainly perform a miracle through anyone He chose at any time He desired. Nevertheless, we are going to see that there is more to understand regarding Hebraic spirituality. One issue that I will bring up here, however, is that *Torah* allowed for the gift of a day of rest in which to build a relationship with our Father in heaven. Even so, many ignorant Christians have rejected the Ten Commandments for a variety of reasons soon to be discussed. The day of rest should have been understood as a starting point with the breaking of bread for worshipful entry behind the veil into the *qodesh* realm or the holy realm of the *aiona*.

Whereas our ancient ancestors of faith burnt the fat of animals that rose up into the sky to get the attention of *Yehovah*, like David, we simply need to worship and to call out His name. Reverent worship of *Yehovah's* name was identified in the Scriptures as the key David used for entry into the presence of God Most High. With this David stressed that only those with clean hands and a pure heart would enter. Therefore, we need to consider the cost, depart from wickedness, confess our sins to someone trustworthy, be cleansed with water, and then wait with expectation. This is the pathway that we discover as we look back in time studying the lives of our ancient ancestors of faith.

Just as entry could provide seekers with the *aionios* life, so also, the unfaithful attempting entry could bring great harm upon themselves. This was referenced as *aionios* judgment. The Scriptures tell us that Satan entered into Judas of Iscariot when he

ate the bread soaked with wine that Jesus handed to him. This is why consecration was necessary for the priests of ancient Israel and why it is necessary for each of us. We need to walk in the reverent fear of the Lord as we seek His presence. So far as it is possible, we need to be at peace with our neighbors so that we can enter. Individuals of maligned character will not enter the kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul had much to say about this.

And finally, we need to practice true religion in caring for the needy around us. If anyone among us in the faith community is not expressing some act of care for the needy, then perhaps they should question whether or not they have an authentic relationship with God.

We previously mentioned the calling of Abraham and the practice of Job.

We prove to God Most High that we are Abraham's children by doing the deeds of Abraham.

Jesus taught His disciples that whenever they helped the needy, in actuality, they were helping Him. Can you imagine that helping the needy around you is the exact same as caring for the Holy One of Israel?

We can be assured that the Lord Almighty will not tarry in revealing Himself in some tangible manner to those who call out to His name and who He also finds taking care of the needy.

Be advised there are no formulas or rituals that empower individuals to perform signs and wonders. Jesus did what He saw the Father doing. We are going to see that He set an example in the three-day journey. It will probably be no different for any of us.

Selah

Recall Moses and the people of Israel taking the three-day journey. On the third or the last day of the three-day journey they encountered the *davar* or the Word of God. In the transitional verses between Hebrews, chapter 3 and 4, the author explained the event as the coming of the Gospel to ancient Israel. He affirmed that in the New Testament era, they had encountered the same

Word. This was one means by which we understand that Orthodoxy's Gospel was different than the Hebraic Gospel.

Early Orthodox leaders asserted that the term Gospel was defined as a body of knowledge that included the primary information regarding Jesus' life and accomplishments. If this information was accepted as being the truth and was agreed with intellectually, or rather was "believed," the so-called "believers" of such information would receive salvation or be saved from hell and would go to heaven after death.

By contrast, the Hebraic Gospel was encounter with the Word or the *davar* of *Yehovah*. A pattern was understood that the Word, or the second power of heaven, would make His appearance on the third day of a three-day journey. God met with Moses atop Mount Sinai while the people remained in a restricted area at the base of the Mountain. *Yehovah* had been hoping to raise up a nation of priests, however, the people were too terrified and begged that Moses should instead act as a Mediator. In that event the inspired *Torah* of the Ten Commandments was given. These were God's kind protective instructions, which if heeded by the people would also serve to refine and prove exactly who *Yehovah's* children were among the Israelites. The means to encounter the Word was also embedded within *Torah*.

The Aaronic Priesthood could encounter the Word by entry into the holy of holies, which was the third chamber of the Tent of Meeting. It was separated by a thick veil from the second chamber. Nobody could enter unprepared without having gone through the steps of consecration lest they die.

In antiquity and still today, the holy of holies is labeled the *davar* or the Word of God because this is where the priests entered into the presence of *Yehovah* and stood before His throne. They literally entered into the Word of God.

Again, we need to reiterate that in the Bible, references to the Word of God are never references to the Scriptures. Despite accepting the divine inspiration of the texts, these were referenced

with a different set of terms having nothing to do with the term "Word."

Even so, there was also a means that was understood whereby common individuals in the nation could encounter *Yehovah's* Word. Keep in mind that only those who proved themselves faithful or who proved that their hearts and lives belonged solely to God could enter.

At some point, the prayer of *kiddush* became understood more or less as the celebratory entry point into the *qodesh* or the holy place by the breaking of the bread. However the understanding of the Sabbath providing a point of entry to the holy realm was from Exodus 20:8: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Problematically, the simple English translation does not transmit the vast significance of what was stated in that verse and for untold centuries the Sabbath became a special day in the week wherein devout Jews rested from their work, just as God had rested on the seventh day after creation. To have stopped at this point, however, was to have missed the mark which was God's intent for His people to enter into His *qodesh* holy kingdom and to have participated in His reign over the Earth.

And if we comprehend the intent of the gift of the Sabbath, we can begin to understand why Jesus taught seekers of the *aionios* life to reverence the Ten Commandments. By these, not only would their character be reshaped, but moreover, they would find instruction how to enter into the holy realm of the *aiona* in order to become re-enlivened or resurrected to new life by God.

Information often gets lost in translation because there are many difficulties rendering identical concepts between two different languages. Moreover, these are increased when attempting to move information from an ancient language.

Earlier we discussed the relevance of *zachar* which is translated as "remember." In our contemporary western culture, the action of remembering revolves around cognitive recollection and reflection. However, in ancient Hebrew *zachar* meant to re-

enliven. It was not God's goal for ancient Israel to sit around and to contemplate rest, instead it was His goal for each of them to enter into His rest in the *qodesh* or the holy realm. Most literally, keeping the Sabbath was entry into the holy realm.

Although today the term "holy" is used to reference something special or a quality of admirable behavior, in the context of the biblical languages this referred to a place in the presence of God. For example, the Greek counterpart "*hagios*" is also translated as "saint." By inventing the term saint, modern western languages which had already reduced the significance of the term by associating this with being "set apart," further obscured its meaning by introducing the term saint in the use of *hagios* referencing good people. Neither the Hebrew *qodesh* nor the Greek *hagios* were intended to reference special people of good character. Instead, what biblical authors were intending to convey was that there was a class of individuals who had entered into the holy realm. Because of the space they had inhabited, they were also known as being holy. Today, when we read the Bible and learn about the saints, we think of them as special people who were really good and who were strong in their resolve so that they avoided sin. We no longer understand that *qodesh* and *hagios* referenced a location in the divine spiritual realm.

And once again we have to reiterate that this has been the emphasis of Orthodoxy for the last 1,700 years. The church has invested itself in training people to act holy.

Beware that the biblical concept of actual entry into the holy realm might still today get parishioners thrown out of some congregations.

And many denominations are going to marginalize or shun individuals who bring up the topic.

The *Aionios* Covenant of Peace was referenced at times only as the Covenant of Peace. This can be explained in a practical sense because those who participated in the covenant and entered into the *qodesh* or *hagios* realm experienced peace. This was not the

kind of peace that the world had to offer, it was peace with God. Additionally, entry into the *aiona* was sometimes characterized by the experience of an overwhelming ecstatic peace. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul described this as the peace which surpassed understanding and explanation. This was the peace that Jesus offered in John 14:27.

As an aside, although this book is written as an exposition of Scripture, speaking from my own experience and that which I have heard from others, this peace is nothing like anything that is possible to derive from the creation. To experience this peace is like being consumed by a drop of heaven. No burden or care of the world can remain attached to ones experiencing this peace because in some incomprehensible sense they have been transformed and are with God. This is what Jesus offered and that which concerned Paul in Philippians 4. This peace was also referenced in Hebrews and was associated directly with the Sabbath.

As Paul stated, there is a peace that surpasses all understanding. Many Christians I know have never experienced what I am describing. However, many others have been immersed into this reality.

For me, the experience came after the Lord asked me to give my secular albums to a friend. I clearly knew that He had spoken to me directing me to get these out of my life. I told my best friend Steve from high-school about this and after some struggle with the matter over a period of days, I followed the Lord's leading.

After attending our weekly Saturday morning men's prayer breakfast at the Covenant Presbyterian Church, I dropped the record albums off at my friend George's house. As I drove home, I was just minding my own business, praying as I went down Old Meadow Plain Road in Simsbury Connecticut. Maybe I was thanking God for my ability to obey His voice in this matter.

Looking back, this was a big step of obedience for me in the expression of my faithfulness to God.

I was not expecting anything, but then suddenly it happened. All that I could perceive was that all of the atmospheric pressure was leaving the car. I felt lighter and lighter and actually thought my body would explode. I figured that before I reached the slight curve at the bottom of the hill that I would be gone. I figured the car would run off the road and that they would find my splattered remains inside the wrecked vehicle. And in all of this I felt such tremendous peace that it was utterly indescribable! There was absolutely no fear whatsoever. Every burden I had ever carried in my body and mind was completely gone.

You might be happy to realized that as things turned out, I did not explode but instead negotiated the curve and stopped at the end of the road. I kept asking myself what was going on. After a moment or two, I finished the short drive home. When I got there, I thought to myself, "I can never tell anyone about what just happened because they will think I am crazy."

That was more than 40 years ago, and since then I did tell a handful or more of my friends about the experience. When I was in college, I told a couple guys who I respected, and they told me that I was probably baptized in the Holy Spirit. I had heard of such a thing at the Covenant Presbyterian Church. Although there was a great deal of fervor in the church at the time of my membership, I really did not know much of certainty about these matters.

Later, while I was in seminary, I wrote about this in a Christian spirituality course. Perhaps years after that, I cannot remember now, but I heard that the famous mathematician, Blaise Pascal, who lived between 1623 and 1662, seemed to have had a similar experience. Although he had been a church man, in 1654 he had an encounter with God that defied explanation. It was such a life-altering event that he sewed a parchment inside of his coat to commemorate the occurrence.

The reminiscence read:

> The year of grace, 1654, Monday, 23 November, feast of St. Clement, pope and martyr, and others in the martyrology.

> Vigil of St. Chrysogonus, martyr, and others. From about half past ten at night until about half past midnight, FIRE. GOD of Abraham, GOD of Isaac, GOD of Jacob not of the philosophers and of the learned. Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace. GOD of Jesus Christ. My God and your God. Your GOD will be my God. Forgetfulness of the world and of everything, except GOD. He is only found by the ways taught in the Gospel. Grandeur of the human soul. Righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you. Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy. I have departed from him: They have forsaken me, the fount of living water. My God, will you leave me? Let me not be separated from him forever. This is eternal life, that they know you, the one true God, and the one that you sent, Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. I left him; I fled him, renounced, crucified. Let me never be separated from him. He is only kept securely by the ways taught in the Gospel: Renunciation, total and sweet. Complete submission to Jesus Christ and to my director. Eternally in joy for a day's exercise on the Earth. May I not forget your Words. Amen.[299]

And this is the *aionios* life; to meet with the Holy One of Israel first hand.

Although the Holy Spirit may fall upon us as we read the Scriptures, and hopefully we look to hear His voice as we read, this is not the kind of experience one typically has when evaluating Scripture. I can only describe that I was washed away into the presence of heaven. I begged for it to stop. Somehow, I did not think I could remain here on Earth if the Lord did not stop. I experienced bliss beyond all imagination and that still defies description. I literally felt as if I had been raised up off of the

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[299] Frank Weathers, "Because of the Note Sewn in Blaise Pascal's Coat," Why I Am Catholic (blog), Patheos, July 2014, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/yimcatholic/2014/07/because-of-the-note-sewn-in-blaise-pascals-coat.html.

ground; which may be difficult even for me to understand since I was in the car. When I arrived home and got out of the vehicle, I still felt as if I was walking 4 feet off of the ground.

With some humor now, I can just imagine what my parents would have said and done if I had told them what just happened.

Mom and Dad were occasional church goers, but they were already expressing serious concerns about what I referred to as "my walk with the Lord." Can you imagine my mother's expression and actions if she heard all of that? Maybe they would have taken me to the hospital for evaluation.

I know for certain that I would have been grounded. And it would probably have been years before they'd ever let me drive the car again.

I figured the best bet was just to keep my mouth shut about the whole thing.

The enduring testimony of Blaise Pascal makes me think that he and I were in the same place at different times.

Although it has been my goal to exegete the Bible on the topics discussed, some matters might only be conveyed by the testimonies of those experiencing these. I wonder if there was some personal test leading up to Pascal's experience with the fire and the God of Abraham.

I have heard others recount similar experiences. The common term everyone seems to mention is "joy." As best as I can explain, these have been immersions into the realm of God's holiness.

I do not think that this kind of experience makes any of us more spiritual than anyone else, instead it was very humbling. I begged for God to stop the outpouring because I did not think I could bear another drop; lest I go to be with Him right then and there forever.

From that point onward, nobody ever had to try to convince me that heaven was real. I had experienced something completely and incomparably divine. To the best of my understanding, I know that this is what comes next after this earthly life. The Lord had given me a reassuring deposit. And this changed me. I was no

longer going through the motions of churchianity. I was on the path of knowing God. And to be honest, I was on that path prior to the experience. I think that just as I had proven myself faithful in something costly that God had called me to do, He also showed Himself to me in faithfulness in a way that I would never ever doubt Him or His existence again.

I have never thought of it until this very day, but my experience which I would describe as immersion actually took place during the hours of the Sabbath. Keep in mind, that at this point I only had a beginner's understanding of the Scriptures and I was not attempting to celebrate the Sabbath, nor did I even know it was possible to enter into the holy realm. I am pretty sure that someone at that time had said that only Jewish people kept the Sabbath.

This experience serves as evidence to me that God does what He wants whether we are going to be able to explain it in religious terms or not. I am fairly certain that Jacob was not expecting to be fighting through the night with the angelic being he encountered. Even so, he was able to describe it in Hebraic religious terms as an encounter with the *paneh* or the presence of God. This is why he named the location *Peniel*. Later the biblical record would preserve this as an encounter with the *davar* or the Word of God.

Maybe Jacob considered remaining silent about the matter of his encounter as well. However, one way or another, he was going to have to explain how his hip got broken.

In similar fashion, we understand by the testimonies of many individuals in Scripture that the Word of God came to them in many mysterious forms and means throughout Old Testament history. The Deuteronomists and Second Temple Judaism did their best to put an end to these kinds of controversial mysterious encounters with the second power of heaven. Nevertheless, these began to occur again with the dreams, visions, angelic visitations, and more notably, through Mary's miraculous conception as a virgin at the start of the Christian Era.

The Significance of Pentecost

In His appearance to Ancient Israel at Sinai, *Yehovah* had hoped to raise up priests, but instead he conceded to the people by shortly thereafter raising up the Aaronic Priesthood. Nevertheless, God did not give up hope in His plan to raise up a nation of priests. The Aaronic Priesthood would prove to be very long, but the appointment of the Levites was only a temporary concession.

The Jews celebrated the giving of the Law with a festival called *Shavout*; also known as the Feast of Weeks. This feast commemorates the giving of *Torah* at Sinai and is celebrated 50 days after Passover which was the celebration of the exodus to freedom from Egypt.

The Reformed Protestant and Evangelical religious traditions in which I have participated have usually minimalized or have outright rejected the relevance of the Ten Commandments. Despite Jesus' stringent affirmation of these in Matthew 5, and His teaching that these would remain in effect as long as the Earth exists, many of my friends used Paul's dichotomy of the law with grace to entirely dismiss the *Torah* which came to heaven from Mount Sinai.

Ironically, many ignorant Christians who celebrate Pentecost remain unaware that this Jewish Festival commemorated the gift of God's kind instruction of the Ten Commandments. Moreover, they selectively ignore the Apostle's continuing affirmation of *Torah* in Romans 13. It is clear that the Apostle was not rejecting the Law which was imparted from Sinai.

Sadly, these supposed enlightened and liberated individuals have actually been deceived by layer upon layer of compounded error.

First, they assume that *charis* or grace is God's unmerited favor. The equation of grace with favor came from the influence of Classical Greek in which the early bishops were raised. And this became understood as "unmerited favor" by Reformation and Evangelical thinkers. They have never understood that the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God was the miraculous life of hearing God's voice and was lived out by walking in faithful obedience. Second, they are unaware that there have been two laws in Judaism which

were the inspired divinely imparted Ten Commandments and the man-made traditions of the elders. These were differentiated in the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, however, early Orthodox bishops were illiterate in that language and could have cared less about anything that might have been associated with the Jews. In the composition of the Greek Scriptures, both laws were lumped together into a single concept. As ancient and continuing Orthodoxy have read Paul's statement about not being under the law but instead being under grace, following the idea that was first the thesis of Marcion, they rejected both the Ten Commandments along with the *takkanot*. Had they continued reading Romans 13, they might have realized there was a problem with rejecting the Ten Commandments. Paul was clearly rejecting the *takkanot;* but not Moses' Law. Furthermore, Marcion set the Gospel in opposition to the law, even though he had no idea that the Gospel was the restoration of encounter with the Word of God. Tertullian wrote extensively attempting to bring a corrective to the emerging church, but they rejected his expertise.

And here we are.

Today, by and large, churchianity has no idea who Marcion was or how he powerfully influenced the development of early Orthodoxy. The minds of many leaders today are so deeply buried in layers of error that we probably have to look toward the next generation to study, to learn, and to bring about a significant corrective.

Suffice to understand that Paul, who once served the Second Temple leaders and who imposed the traditions of the elders upon others, had encountered the living Word of God. He experienced the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God which had characterized worshipers who sought *Yehovah* according to the ancient Priestly Order of *Melchizedek*. And he ran away to Arabia to learn from the descendants who had preserved this priestly tradition after Josiah's destruction of the high places. When Paul returned, his eyes were opened and he wrote to the Romans rejecting the traditions of the elders which is translated as "law" from the Greek term *nomos*. Instead, they were to pursue the

miraculous voice of God manifesting Himself in the Word which was grace.

The outpouring of grace at Pentecost never negated *Torah* which had been given to Israel. However, Jesus and Paul both clarified that the Law was fulfilled by the love of God and neighbor. Although it was not possible to earn the infilling of the Holy Spirit by works of the Law or the *takkanot*, just as Jesus had remarked,

> Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.[300]

Of course, if a man loved his neighbor, he would not lie, cheat, or steal from him and he would respect the man's marriage and family.

Many Orthodox Protestants and Evangelicals—blindly ignoring the fact that the passing away of *Torah* cannot possibly happen as long as heaven and earth exist—dispense with Moses' law on the dispensational misinterpretation that "all has been fulfilled" by Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Although today many Christians perceive that the Sabbath is some kind of punishment, this was the gift of God so that individuals would have a time to enter into His presence in the hidden realm of the *aiona*, where they might experience Pentecostal encounters and walk in the Priesthood of *Melchizedek*.

Present-day agendized religious traditions will be slow in embracing all of this. Nevertheless, the pieces of the Hebraic puzzle are now on the table for all to consider.

Although *Shavuot* most notably has revolved around the giving of *Torah*, we have to remember what else occurred with that event. This had been the manifestation of the Word to Israel whereby *Yehovah* had desired to raise up a nation of priests. Now these many centuries after manifestation of the *davar* atop Mount Sinai, the time had been completed for the Word of God once again to reappear not only to Israel, but also to many other nations

[300] Matthew 5:17–18 NKJV

gathered together in Jerusalem on *Shavuot* following the crucifixion of Jesus.

In the retrospect of comprehending what Jesus had taught regarding Himself, He was understood by His followers to have been the final sacrificial lamb of the feast of weeks. It would not be long before the Second Temple would be completely destroyed, thereby ending the Aaronic Priesthood.

The outpouring of the Spirit was what *Yehovah* had hoped for at Mount Sinai during the life of Moses. However, the people of Israel were not ready. Now, at the start of the first century A.D., the appropriate time had come. God had made His supreme sacrifice on the mountains of Israel as Ezekiel had foreseen and the Spirit was poured out as Ezekiel and Joel had foretold.

Whereas the Jews continue to celebrate *Shavuot* as the giving of *Torah*, Christians celebrate the day as Pentecost with the outpouring of the Spirit; whereby *Yehovah* finally began raising up a nation of priests. With a mighty rushing wind, perhaps sounding like the formation of a tornado, the Word of God fell upon them and they were filled with His Spirit.

Recall back to the time of Moses, his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of *Midian* had instructed Moses to raise up elders. When they were gathered, the spirit fell upon them. The *Midianites* were descendants of the fourth son of Abraham named *Medan*, and by association with the Patriarch and in light of his own experiences, we infer that Jethro's priesthood was that of *Melchizedek*. Hebrews' author made the case that this Priestly Order of *Melchizedek* was raised up again by Jesus.

Therefore we find a connection between what occurred with the 70 elders of ancient Israel and the outpouring at Pentecost. In both events, an ecstatic miraculous occurrence took place having to do with what was described as prophesying in the Old Testament and what was described as speaking in tongues in the New Testament.

We may wonder, was Jethro surprised when the Spirit was poured out on the 70 elders, or had he been expecting this occurrence. If this was the case, and the two events were manifestations of the same phenomena, then the outpouring at Pentecost further affirmed the restoration of the Priesthood of *Melchizedek*.

God waited many centuries until the nation and even other nations were ready for manifestation of the Word and outpouring of the Spirit.

After His resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for an event wherein they would be filled with power from on high or from the realm of heaven.

And although the biblical accounts differ, this is what was explained to have happened to the prophets who encountered the Word. Most notably, Ezekiel was subsumed into the holy realm and was filled with the Spirit.

Although Christian denominations have taken a variety of religio-political positions explaining when baptism in the Spirit may have first occurred and what it meant, in the Hebraic paradigm, those who encountered the Word of God were transformed. King Saul of the Old Testament was a good example.

In 1 Samuel 10:6-7, the prophet Samuel tells Saul what is about to occur with his anointing. “The Spirit of *Yehovah* will come upon you and you will be changed into a new person.” Later, Saul had forsaken the voice of the Lord. He disobeyed the Word of the *davar* of *Yehovah* which had come to him through Samuel. Accordingly, as he made excuses, remained unrepentant and hardened his heart, so also God allowed his heart to become hardened. Eventually, the Spirit of *Yehovah* departed from the king and he was tormented by an evil spirit (note 1 Samuel 16-18).

The Bible records that King David had been filled with the Spirit in 1 Samuel 16:13.

> Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of *Yehovah* came

> mightily upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.[301]

After he had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered, he was similarly called into account by the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 12; after which David softened his heart and repented. He cried out to *Yehovah* pleading that the Spirit of God would not be taken from him (note Psalm 51).

> For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness: According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, and only You, have I sinned and done that which is evil in Your sight; that You may be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; And in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part You will make wisdom known to me. Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean. Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Cause me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and do not take Your holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your *yeshuah*, and lift me up with a willing spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, You are the God of my salvation. My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness. O Lord, open

[301] 1 Samuel 16:13 modified ASV

> my lips, and my mouth will speak forth Your praise. For You do not delight in sacrifice, or else I would make that offering. But You take no pleasure in burnt-offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit and a broken and a contrite heart. These things, O God, You will not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure to Zion: Build the walls of Jerusalem.[302]

During the lifespan of the Aaronic Priesthood alongside this institution, many individuals who became renowned as individuals of faith in the Bible followed the pattern of the three-day journey in order to find encounter with the Word of God according to the Order of *Melchizedek*.

Scholars such as Dr. Margaret Barker speculate that the record of *Melchizedek* was edited from the Hebrew Bible by the Deuteronomists during and following the life of King Josiah. This seems to make sense when we read the writings of the Essenes. The child king, Josiah, was controlled by religious rulers and it was under his reign that the high places were destroyed and their priests and those favoring the Order of *Melchizedek* or the King of Righteousness were slaughtered.

According to the research of Dr. Margaret Barker, many survivors and refugees fled to Arabia. The Essenes kept track of these inhumane events in the historical records of the Dead Sea scrolls. They also expected that the Order of *Melchizedek* would be restored to Israel.

Those among Second Temple Judaism who edited and passed the Scriptures down to posterity simply remembered Josiah as a good king. It is evident from the few passages regarding Josiah's rulership and especially in the event of his death that he did not consult the prophetic Word of *Yehovah*.

The first time that the three-day journey was mentioned was in reference to Abraham. He had been instructed to sacrifice Isaac after embarking on a three-day journey. This was a test of his

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[302] Psalm 51:1-18 modified ASV.

loyalty. The question was who he loved more; *Yehovah*, or the son *Yehovah* had given to him.

Abraham passed the test by preparing the altar on the high place of Mount Moriah. On the third day or the last day of his three-day journey, the Word of *Yehovah* came to him in a manifestation of fire and stopped the Patriarch from sacrificing his son. Instead, the second power of heaven provided an animal for the altar. Abraham's encounter with the Word of God at Moriah, was only one of many that took place during his life.

Moving back to our topic, the priests were made to be compatible for entry into the *aionios* life, not only by cleansing with water, but also by their anointing with oil. In Greek, anointing with oil is called "*christos*."

Just as the Apostle Paul explained, while the faithful yet walked in this world, they were recognized as having been seated in heavenly places in Christ.

Consider an example where it appears that a vital interpretational and translational mistake has occurred in Psalm 133:

> A Song of degrees of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity! *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments…[303]

Aaron lived long before David, who was explaining the priest's preparatory anointing prior to his service in the Tent of Meeting or the Tabernacle.

In the continued reading of the Psalm, there is an inconsistency with respect to the way *aionios* has typically been translated. We continue reading, "…As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there *Yehovah* commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore" (Psalm

[303] Psalm 133:1-2 KJV

133:3 KJV. NASB similarly translates the last phrase as "life forever." The NET Bible renders the finale as "eternal life." Despite all of these aberrant translations that are completely out of context with Jewish theology, the phrase in the Septuagint of Psalm 132:3, can be literally translated "life until now of the ancient." It was experienced like immersion in dew coming down from the high-place of Hermon. If we smooth this out, we understand that Aaron was being prepared for the "ancient life," or the "*aionios* life" to be experienced in the holy of holies; that continued to be availed to ongoing generations. David understood himself to have been an example. He had been similarly anointed by the prophet Samuel.

Considering this idea, there is actually only one location in the Septuagint of the Pentateuch where the Greek terms "blessing" and "life" occur in the same verse. Moreover, it is the only place where both terms occur within twenty verses of each other. The topics come together in a very serious prophetic admonishment given by Moses. "Blessing" and "life" were endowments from God:

> I call heaven and Earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore, choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants.[304]

Innumerable hours could be invested linking together references to the *aiona* with a heavenly dwelling. There are hundreds of Old Testament verses using the phrase *eis ton aiona*. This count does not include many other citations of the various forms of *aionios*, *aionion*, or *aiona*.

Recall that *olam* was translated from Hebrew into Greek as *aiona*. Therefore, if *olam* was used to denote ancient spiritual realities that were hidden but intended to be found by those who were matrimonially faithful to *Yehovah*, and specifically was understood as a mutual dwelling place, then accordingly, *aiona* was

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[304] Deuteronomy 30:19 NASB

also understood to have been the hidden realm in God's presence that was preserved for the trustworthy.

John wanted us to understand that Jesus went to prepare such a place, and Jesus explained Himself as being both the voice of God and the gateway into His presence. The second power of heaven was also the destination. Jesus, who was the Word of God, declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me.[305]

We understand that the way into God's presence was by passage through the throne-room of the holy of holies.

The Apostle Paul passionately pulled all of these concepts together quite clearly conveying that the *aiona* was a location in heaven:

> We realize that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands; the *aiona* in the heavens. For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.[306]

This dwelling place of the *aiona* was known of by Isaiah and was referenced roughly a thousand years later by Luke.

Translating Isaiah 55:3 literally, we read,

> All of you attend to the ears of you. Follow in my ways. Listen! And I will grant her to live in good your soul and I will grant to you covenant of *aionion*, the righteous David the faithful.

As we see, the grammar and syntax of Greek is very different than English and therefore literal translations have to be

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[305] John 14:6

[306] 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 modified NASB

interpretively rendered. The task of making something comprehensible in a new language is not easy. Translators have to make many judgment calls as they smooth out the reading. There is a balancing act in the attempt to remain faithful to the author while yet rendering the ancient text meaningfully in a contemporary language.

Because early Orthodoxy was set far off course, having been ignorant of the Hebraic background understandings of the Bible, and because the well-intended Reformers compounded their errors, and then furthermore because Evangelicalism introduced dispensationalism and a great number of eschatological deviations, the background knowledge of translators through the ages has not provided an informed means by which the texts of Scripture should have been translated. Moreover, as we have discussed in this book, significant religio-political agendas of both Judaism and Christendom throughout history have further obscured the texts.

As we identify *non sequiturs* and study the text inductively while rebuilding the various contextual factors at work when different segments of the Bible were composed, the pathway back to the Hebraic knowledge base can be restored.

The process of growing in one's ability to translate more accurately includes identification of the mistakes made along the historical path of well-intended translators. When we discover historical errors, we learn how not to translate some concepts thereby preventing ourselves from perpetuating misdirected ideas.

And this is of vital importance regarding the concept of grace. Are we going to follow in using the Classical Greek definition of favor as was the case with early and continuing Orthodoxy and uniformly apply this over a majority of instances of *chen* or *charis* in the Scriptures, or are we going to study the Scriptures contextually and admit that grace was understood in the Hebraic paradigm as living by the voice of God and walking in faithful obedience. Each of these choices leads to completely different spiritualities.

Even with the best intentions, all of us still make mistakes.

These and other factors play into the production of a faithful rendering of Isaiah 55:3. Keeping all of this in mind, we recover the following information:

> Give heed with your ears. Follow My ways. Listen! And I will grant you to live in the good of the soul, and I will grant the *aionios* covenant of righteous faithful David.[307]

Keep in mind that the command to "listen" comes from the Hebrew term *shama*. This same term means to "obey." In the Hebraic sense, those who had actually listened proved as much by their obedience to the Word.

Isaiah had earlier stated,

> And a throne shall be established with mercy; and one shall sit upon it with truth in the Tabernacle of David, judging, and earnestly seeking judgements, and hastening righteousness.[308]

If we take a moment to think, David was from the tribe of Judah. He was not a Levite, therefore he could not have entered into the holy of holies in Moses' Tent of Meeting. Nevertheless, here we have a seemingly odd reference to David's Tabernacle. What was Isaiah talking about?

The answer is that David's Tent of Meeting was created by his worshipful entry into the *aiona* according to the priestly Order of *Melchizedek*.

Aaron's priesthood was only temporary and was for a select group from the Tribe of Levi. However the more ancient Priesthood of the One described as the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace had provided an entry point into the *aiona* or the Word for all of humankind who would seek the *chen*, *charis*, or grace of God Most High.

Accordingly, history proved that the edifice of the Jerusalem Temple was only temporary. The day would come when all those pursuing righteousness throughout the world would be able to enter at any earthly location.

Jesus explained to the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria,

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[307] Isaiah 55:3 Brenton LXX

[308] Isaiah 16:5 Brenton LXX

> a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem…a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking such as these to worship Him. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth.[309]

As David worshiped *Yehovah's* name and waited for the *davar* or the Word, the presence of God fell upon him. David experienced divine-human intimacy that renewed and reshaped his being as one who bore the image of God. On his best days, David lived to manifest *Yehovah's* judgment and reign in the world. Moreover, David invested a great deal of time writing down instructions for posterity to continue in the Hebraic spirituality founded with Abraham. Thankfully, a significant portion of this has been preserved in the Psalms.

In Amos 8:11, the *davar,* which in many contexts had been understood as a divine-human dwelling place, was removed from Israel. However, in 9:11, in a context describing the eschatological future, the prophet explained that the fallen tent of David, figuratively speaking, had been left in ruins would again be raised up.

In other terms, *Yehovah* would reopen the gateway into the holy *qodesh* realm and by means of their worship, those who had been born of the Truth would re-build this lodging as it had been in the days of old.

Accordingly, in the future, the righteous would find places of standing before this divine throne. We can reference this as the restoration of the Word which was proclaimed as the Gospel; as was the thesis of *The Lost and Forgotten Gospel of the Kingdom*. Or, in this case we are speaking of the same reality as the restoration of the *aionios* life that took place with the renewal of the *Aionios* Covenant. The habitation of the *aiona* would be restored and avid devoted worshipers, ones with clean hands and pure hearts, would

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[309] John 4:21, 23-24 BSB

ascend the hill of *Yehovah* and would find their way into the presence of God.

Whether we speak of this as the rebuilding or the reopening of the *aiona* or as the restoration of the Word or the *davar* of God makes no difference. Authors of the Bible living at different times and places used diverse ways of describing the same eschatological hope.

No matter how it is described, the *chen*, *charis*, or grace that came with God's manifestation in Noah's life was restored. Once again, those turning from wickedness could return to their Father in heaven.

Luke affirmed the fulfillment of Amos' expectations and David's holy *aionios* inheritance in the Christian Era.

> After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old.[310]

Keep in mind that Abraham was a Gentile who was called by God Most High to bring God's Word and *yeshuah* to other Gentile nations around him. Furthermore, his spiritual progeny would walk in this calling, proving their identities by reduplicating the deeds of Abraham.

According to *Yehovah*, such children would be comparable to the stars that resided in the realm of heaven. The calling to walk in Abraham's blessing of the nations came with the promise of receiving a spiritual dwelling place in the *aiona*.

Although nobody seems to emphasize this point, the Patriarch sojourned in this realm at different points in his life. Note the narrative of Genesis 15 wherein Abraham's encounter with the Word lasted for more than a day. He experienced a vision and responded with obedience preparing a sacrifice. Then he had a dream and there were signs and wonders with the appearance of a

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[310] Acts 15:15-18 RSV

fire and a smoking cauldron that mysteriously moved around the sacrifices.

The account is one of many wherein it was demonstrated that the Patriarch walked in the *chen*, *charis* or grace of God.

With the condemnation of the Second Temple and because of its history of murderous corruption, God Most High was reestablishing the dwelling place of the *aiona* in God's presence before His throne of grace through the more ancient priestly order. Just as Noah had sought after and had heard the voice of God, and as this had been the same practice of Abraham and the *Ish-raah-el-ites*, so also this same grace was the gift renewed that was described by the Jewish authors of the New Testament.

What made the Jews led by Jesus different from the leaders of Second Temple Judaism in the first century was their determination that the second *torah* or the *takkanot*, described as the traditions of the elders, was merely a non-inspired, man-made set of legalistic rules. The disciples rejected those burdensome regulations and instead embraced the life of *chen*, *charis*, or grace; walking through their daily lives seeking and obeying the voice of God. They demonstrated courage, freeing themselves from the imposturous Second Temple Judaism. They defied its rulership and returned to the forbidden worship of the name of *Yehovah*. Resultantly, the Word of God flourished among them. The Holy One rushed to bring *yeshuah* to those crying out to His name. And the Word of *Yehovah* moved throughout the land seeking those who worshiped in Spirit and in Truth. The way had been reopened into the throne-room of the second power of heaven.

In different synonymous terms, we can say that ones such as these saw or encountered the Spirit of Day, the Word of God, or that they met the Holy One of Israel. And perhaps they simultaneously trembled and rejoiced.

Jesus said of the Patriarch, "Abraham saw my Day and rejoiced." Divine-human encounter for those who were faithful was a moment of unspeakable blessing and joy.

As an aside for the benefit of my Christian audience who avidly worship the name of Jesus instead of *Yehovah*, we should come to several realizations. First and foremost, the name "Jesus" is

an English proper noun. The English language did not exist before the fifth century A.D. Therefore, although we love to revere and to worship Jesus' name, nobody had ever actually worshiped God using this particular name in the first several hundred years of the Christian Era; even those among Christian Orthodoxy. Prior to that, more than likely, Jesus was worshiped by the names of *Yeshuah* by Jews and as *Iēsoûs* (Ἰησοῦς) by the Greeks.

Does this mean that worship of the name Jesus is wrong today?

To assert as much would be absurd. When we consider the multitude of languages on the Earth today, we understand that the Son of God is authentically worshiped using many different titles. The point is that we should not allow ourselves to become caught up in controversy or to be hindered in our worship.

I heard a story that I can only recount second-hand. I hope I state this with relative accuracy. C. S. Lewis wrote a children's novel containing an account wherein one of his characters had devoutly ascribed worship to the wrong God. When that character died and found himself in the presence of the Almighty, he was willing to accept punishment for his error. However, the Almighty explained that this man had offered pure worship. He further helped the character to understand that pure worship could only possibly have ascended to the True and Living God. Therefore, the Almighty received the character into His eternal presence.

Even if my account of this narrative is wrong, my own position from what I understand in the Scriptures is that nobody approaches the throne of God on the basis of accurately pronouncing His name. And for that matter, nobody receives approval to enter into the spiritual realm because they cognitively believe what they assume are correct doctrinal facts about God.

Furthermore, there are hundreds of languages on Earth. The names *Yehovah* and *Yeshuah* have been translated into more diverse spellings and pronunciations than we can possibly imagine.

The desire to be perfectly correct about a topic or concern is admirable, but this is also a snare. The exacting god of perfectionism deceives us into thinking it is possible to become absolutely perfectly correct.

Consider that due to the nature of how we learn and how our minds work, and the individualized nuances regarding how each of us understands terminology in our own languages, it is not possible for any two people on Earth to share the absolute same pronunciations or theological understandings.

When we take into consideration developmental disabilities that inhibit speech and learning as well as the limited availability of theological knowledge throughout the world, a significant portion of Earth's population will probably never have the ability to share perfectly identical theology. And some individuals will never have the ability to verbalize anything at all.

Furthermore, there are no ancient recordings offering authoritative instruction for the proper pronunciation of the letters, *Yod, Heh, Vav, Heh* from which we translate *Yehovah*, *Yahweh*, or other renditions. And so, the accurate ancient means of saying God's name can never be definitively proven.

Let each person be convinced in their own heart, but let us not become arrogant, factious, or divided over the matter.

The bottom line is that it would be implausible to assume that God would limit entry into His presence based upon correct pronunciation or knowledge of doctrinal religious facts.

Origin of the Messiah

Jesus taught that He and the Father were one. For the disciples to have been with Him was the same as if they had been with the Father. Accordingly, in the Old Testament, in some instances, both God Most High and the second power of heaven were equally referenced as *Yehovah*. The point is that it would not be possible to worship the Holy One of Israel without also worshiping His Father.

For that matter, Jacob and Hannah both thanked God for *yeshuah*. Although they were thanking God for His helpful intervention in their lives and not a formal name, later we understand that when the Word of God took on human flesh having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born into the earthly realm through the virgin Mary, the name given to the Son of God Most High was *Yeshuah*.

Again, we reiterate the point that it is not possible to revere God's Son—the second power—without also revering the Father.

As Christians—in matters of debate—we should habitually consult a Jewish rabbi. Therefore. it is safest to determine Jesus' position on that topic. When Jesus instructed His disciples how to pray, He told them to begin by worshiping the name of the Father which was *Yehovah*. This clarifies the issue that it is proper and acceptable to worship *Yehovah*. However, it does not prevent any of us from also worshiping the name of Jesus or *Yeshuah* because—as we are about to see—there is far more to the story that has been lost and forgotten. In John 14:13, Jesus further explained that the disciples should make requests to the Father by referencing His name, which was *Yeshuah*, so that the Father would be glorified in the Son. Doesn't this sound like a change in spiritual protocol? How could my Jewish audience ever think that this was appropriate? Let's keep reading.

Note that in the Qumran text 4Q381, the ancient Jewish worshiper wrote, "Your name is my *yeshuah*, my rock, my fortress and [my] refuge [is my God]." Note fragment 24, line 7.

This exclamation of praise may have been adapted from 2 Samuel 22:2–3:

> The Lord is my high ridge, my stronghold, my deliverer.
> My God is my rocky summit where I take shelter,
> my shield, the horn that saves me, my stronghold,
> my refuge, my savior. You save me from violence![311]

By comparison, the reference to "my savior" was not translated from the Hebrew term *yeshuah*. Instead it was rendered from "*mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ)." In several instances in the Old Testament this title is paired with mention of the Holy One of Israel or the Angel of *Yehovah*. Because of Hebrew syntactical and grammatical considerations, "*mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ)" is spelled slightly differently—therefore in the quotations ahead—the pronunciation is also going to sound different. This is comparable to English wherein the terms run, ran, and running all convey the identical concept.

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[311] NET

> Isaiah 43:3—"For I am YHWH your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior (*mōšîʿeḵā*)..."
>
> Isaiah 49:26—"...and all flesh shall know that I, YHWH, am your Savior (*mōšîʿēḵ*) and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob."
>
> Isaiah 63:8–9—"He said, 'Surely they are My people, children who will not deal falsely.' So He became their Savior (*lə-mōšîaʿ*). In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them."

Keep in mind that this book was produced in both written and audio forms. If you have the audio version, once again, listen very carefully to the verbal rendering in the Hebrew variations of "*mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ)." If you only have the print form of the text, consider the phonetic transliteration of these terms—which are, *mohsi-ek-ah*, *mohsi-eck,* and *lə-mo-shee-ah*.[312]

Do you hear or see something similar to the term "Messiah." What we take note of is that in the most ancient times, Israelites identified the second power of heaven as being their Messiah. The title *Yeshuah* was used in the Hebrew texts synonymously and equated with *Mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ.

Having gained this long-lost linguistic understanding, the prophetic nature of Isaiah can be better understood connecting the New Testament identity of the Messiah with *Yeshuah*. For my Jewish readers, perhaps you are able to understand the appropriateness of worshiping *Yeshuah*, comprehending that *Mohshia* was exactly identical to *Yeshuah* in the ancient context of Hebraic understanding. And for both sides of the Judeo-Christian tradition, we see clearly that Mohshia was the Holy One of the Israel— God, Who was understood to be their deliver.

With this comprehension of long-forgotten background knowledge—which is confirmable straight out of the pages of the Hebrew Bible—Jesus' connection with the Holy One Who made His abode in the clouds and Who invited the faithful into His presence makes statements and events taking place in the New Testament

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[312] *mōšîʿeḵā*, *mōšîʿēḵ*, and *lə-mōšîaʿ*

more easily connected to the most ancient understandings of the Hebrew Scriptures—especially in his gathering of Peter, James, and John in the cloud where they encountered Moses and Elijah.

Thank you Origen for your compelling argument to study the Hebrew Bible to make sense of the Gospels and Epistles of the first century A.D.

Are readers and listeners able to see and realize the vast incomparable importance of what the early Orthodox Bishops and continuing Orthodoxy have missed?

Therefore, early and continuing followers of *Yeshuah* understood that Holy One who their forefathers encountered in the cloud and in the high places had come to earth—just as Isaiah and other prophets had foretold.

The term "*mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ)" is found in the Psalms and was used by David's in worship:

> Psalm 17:7, "Wondrously show Your steadfast love, O Savior (*mōšîaʿ*) of those who seek refuge at Your right hand."
>
> Psalm 18:2, "*Yehovah* is my rock...my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold, my Savior (*mōšîʿî*)."

Moses—God's Deliverer

The literal translation of *mōšîaʿ* is "one who saves" or "one who causes deliverance." In this term we also see the name, "Moses—which in Hebrew is *Mōšeh* (מֹשֶׁה)"—which means "deliverer." The similar term which was the basis of Moses' namesake was "*Māšāh* (מָשָׁה)." meaning "one who draws out." And we recollect that Moses received this namesake because he was "taken out—or was raised up and delivered or saved—from the waters of the Nile.

By explaining the etymological significance of Moses' name in Hebrew, we begin to get the sense of how a single term used to simultaneously convey several different ideas—prior to the tampering of the Masoretes.

Just as Moses became the deliverer of Israel, leading them out of Egypt and raising them above the water of the Red Sea in contrast to Pharoah's armies who were destroyed under the water,

so also *mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ) was understood as the divine deliverer and the heavenly angelic King of those who committed themselves to remain faithful to *Yehovah*.

Mōšîaʿ was understood as the divine being Who came down from heaven to deliver the faithful from harm. He was incomparable to the other divine beings. Isaiah 43:11 records "God declares, '*I, even I, am YHWH, and besides Me there is no mōšîaʿ*.'"

The transliterations *Mashiach, Mashiah, Mashi'ach* come from the spelling "מָשִׁיחַ"—*Mem, Shin, Yod, Chet*. which means anointed one because *mashach* (מָשַׁח), means "to smear" or "to anoint with oil."

In the examination of all of these terms we take note of the fact that they are nearly identical in spelling. The major difference that we visualize are the vowel markings that were added by the Masoretes. When these marks were added in the 6th or 7th century A.D. the root term simultaneously conveyed several different ideas. With the addition of the vowel sounds, a single term became permanently divided into variety of different concepts. However, if we hope to discern how the Holy One or angel of *Yehovah* was understood as the ancient Messiah of the *Ish-raah-el-ites*, we have to erase the vowel pointing and examine these terms in their original form.

It is important to acknowledge that while there are some forms of the root that contain different consonants, the concept of a deliverer was at the heart of the understanding of *mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ). And here is the most important significance—Long before Christians ever labeled Jesus as "Messiah," the Holy One Who was known to have met with *Ish-raah-el-ites* in the cloud and in the high places was already understood as *mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ)—from whence the English term "Messiah" eventually arose. *Mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ) had already been apprehended as the divine righteous King of ancient Israel in the time of the prophets.

So then we understand that David was offering worship to the messiah in his own time, because he knew that His Messiah was the Holy One—Whom He met with repeatedly in the high places.

David—God's Deliver

It is intuitive to understand that just as God who was *mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ) saved David and empowered him to save or *ôšîaʿ* (אוֹשִׁיעַ) others, that with the promise that he would never lack a son to rule upon the throne, so long as these sons obeyed, that God's rulership and delivering help would extend through members of humankind.

David's actions as a vehicle of the divine deliverer were explained in 2 Samuel 3:18. *Yehovah* declared, "By the hand of my servant David, I will save *ôšîaʿ* (אוֹשִׁיעַ) my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines." Herein, the term rendered "save" in English lacks the first consonant—*Mem*—and instead begins with an *Aleph*.

From the Gospels we understand that in the eyes of God, progeny is a matter of actions, not a matter of bloodline. The "sons of Abraham" were any individuals who did the deeds of Abraham. If we reason similarly, the reign of *mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ)—Who was God—would become manifest in the world through those who did the deeds of David. Therefore, those who gave their lives to *Yehovah* and who offered their worship solely to Him would also be empowered by divine "*ôšîaʿ* (אוֹשִׁיעַ)."

David said that those with clean hands and a pure heart could ascend the hill of the Lord. And this is what we take note of with Jesus in John's Gospel. With respect to His miracles, Jesus asserted that He was only doing what He had witnessed His Father doing.

This point is key for understanding entry into the kingdom or the *aiona*. Those who gave their lives to *Yehovah* in choice, behavior, volition, and action, and who offered the sacrifice of praise, could enter his presence in the holy realm in order to discover His direction and empowerment. Thus, as individuals demonstrate that they are the spiritual progeny of Abraham and David, they become inheritors of the Word of God as their Helper and the Messianic reign of bringing deliverance to a desperate world characterizes their lives.

Herein, by tracing terms in the Hebrew Bible we understand Messianic participation in the Kingdom of God. However, if we start reading Jesus call to enter into the Kingdom of God without this

background understanding—which was known by first century Jewish followers of Jesus and authors of the New Testament, it is far more difficult to connect the parables of the Kingdom and New Testament instruction about the Kingdom of Heaven or God to the Messianic rulership of those who would demonstrate the faith of Abraham.

Just as it had been the situation of humankind in Eden, so also it was God's intent that those who had faced death in the Garden, to once again find life in the *aiona*. Therefore God established his *Aionios* Covenant of Peace with Noah—raising him up into the clouds above the water.

John the Baptist, similarly, raised individuals above the water. And Jesus called Peter to walk on the water. In Revelation, all of the saints are seen standing upon the water. In the lesson of Jonah we find an individual who ran from the will of God, ended up under the water, but who was raised up to new life above the water when He expressed his desire to re-enter God's holy temple and find *yeshuah*.

Just as David had become the vehicle of God's *ôšîaʿ* (אוֹשִׁיעַ) in the world, so also the followers of Jesus were intended to duplicate themselves as servants of *Yehovah* or *mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ) in order to see how they might carry out His will. Luke explained this in slightly different terms at the start of His Gospel—writing as a testimony to the Most Excellent Theophilis concerning those who were eye witnesses and who had thereafter become "servants of the Word." It was through encounter with the Word, *Yeshuah* or *mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ) that individuals became participants in *Yehovah's* rulership in the world.

The Qumran—*Zadokite* Connection

Zadok served as co-high priest with Abiathar during David's reign, and the one whose name was derived from the Hebrew term *tsedek* meaning "righteous" gave his loyalty to David. Later, the priestly descendants known of as the *Zadokites* ruled in the second temple until they were driven out in the second century B.C.

King Antiochus IV Epiphanes accepted bribes to install new priests who were not from the priestly line, replacing Onias III with his brother Jason. And then later, Menelaus, who was not even of priestly lineage assumed the role (175-172 B.C.). in 152 B.C., the Hasmonaean priestly line assumed control as high priests. For all intents and purposes, this was the end of the *Zadokites* playing any significant role in the Temple. The displaced *Zadokites* considered the Hasmonean High Priests to be Illicit claimants to power who defiled the sanctuary purity and operated under an unbiblical calendar.[313] Recall the that Daniel had a vision about those who would take control and who would change both the *Torah* and the times that were inspired by God? in what took place with the rise of Second Temple Judaism, we understand Daniel's prophetic visions in the light of the context of scripture.

Those who coalesced around what they understood as the defilement of the temple, and who were the spiritual descendants of the First Temple worship of their Forefathers and King David—known as the "Sons of *Zadok*"—departed away from Jerusalem and established their separatist community in Qumran and other locations.[314]

Although scholars have labeled these Jews as the Essenes, they were known among themselves as the *Yahad* (יַחַד)—meaning "unity," "togetherness," or "community." In relationship to Psalm 133, they understood if they dwelt together in unity, that the heavenly anointing compared oil that was poured down the beard of Aaron at Hermon, would come upon them and they would experience the *aionios* life. Personally, I have the case that "Hermon" was a physical metaphor of "hemeron," which was the

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[313] Alice Hunt, *Missing Priests: The Set of Zadok in Second Temple Judaism* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 45–48.

Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994), 97–98.

[314] "The Kingdom of God – A Brief History of Qumran," *Encounters in Archaeology*, January 19, 2022, https://encountersinarchaeology.org/the-kingdom-of-god-a-brief-history-of-qumran/.

angelic realm of Day-One in Genesis—thereby pulling together the concept God's repeated manifestation of Light in divine-human encounters with restorative entry behind the veil into Day-One of Eden.

Again, I bring up the fact that our difficulty in making sense of statements in the Bible is due to missing background knowledge which comprised understandings that were so common at the time the biblical texts were written, that these concepts were not plainly spelled out. However, inductive contextual study of non sequiturs combined with analysis of historical documents and archeological findings from past eras can help us to restore what has been lost and forgotten.

So then when we read phrases such as "Give us 'today' our 'daily' bread," "Abraham saw my 'day' and rejoiced," or perhaps "'today' if you hear His voice," and we realize that each of these uses of the concept of "day" or "daily" have been situated in a context regarding either the hope for or actual divine-human encounter, we are able to re-assemble the lost concept that the angelic realm and the heavenly host as well as the spiritual arena where the throne of *Yehovah* was established, is exactly what biblical writers were making reference to. Once individuals make this connection, other examples in the Scriptures jump out at them. When they see the mention of "day" or "light" pertaining to the experience of God's glory, voice, presence or perhaps the manifestation of an angel or in a dream or vision, a new understanding regarding the text may dawn on their minds.

> For on the first day He created the heavens which are above and the earth and the water and all the spirits which serve before Him—the angels of the presence, and the angels of sanctification, and the angels of the spirit of fire, and the angels of the spirit of the winds, and the angels of the spirit of the clouds, and of darkness, and of snow and of hail and of hoarfrost, and the angels of the voices and of the thunder and of the lightning, and the angels of the spirits of cold and of heat, and of winter and of spring and of autumn and of summer, and of all the spirits of His creatures which are in the heaven and on the earth.

This quote was taken from the text of text from Jubilees 2:2–3. Although this had been accepted as a text of Scripture in the early church, it was discarded by early Orthodoxy. Whereas Hebrew Genesis merely tells us that light was called forth on Day-One, Jubilees explains more explicitly just exactly what was comprised by light.

Note that what scholars understand to be the original construction of Hebrew syntax, the text reads *yōm 'eḥād* (יוֹם אֶחָד)—which is literally "Day One" rather than "the first day" (yōm hā-ri'šōn)—which is how the majority of English biblical texts are rendered. In bringing this up, not the transliteration of "yom *hamerison*" and the etymological connection to "*hemeron*" can be seen. This may help us to make the connection that David was comparing Aaron's anointing at Hermon as his head and perhaps his garments were saturated with the horn of oil, with immersion into *hemeron*, where those thereafter who were known of as "holy ones" or "saints" were understood to have walked in the *aiona* and had experienced the *aionios* life of God. We glean much from David's brief presentation, comparison, and summary statement of the three-verse Psalm. Unfortunately, nobody today understands that the Psalm was built upon an implied *chiastic* structure that made the case that when brethren dwelt in unity, the *aiona* would either come upon them or they would enter into the *aiona* and experience the *aionios* life.

The fact that the Essenes took upon themselves the title "*Yahad*" was fundamental to their understanding that as they dwelt together in unity and as they worshiped *Yehovah*, Whose name was listed as "*Yeshuah*" among other descriptive titles in 1QHa, they could raise up the spiritual Temple of *Yehovah* with the praise of their lips, enter into the cloud, go into the *davar* or the holy of holies, abide in presence of the divine council, receive daily direction, embrace prophetic empowerment—fully living out life as *Ish-raah-el-ites*.

The more that we learn about the Sons of *Zadok*, the more fascinating it becomes to compare their understandings with Jesus' instruction. For example, Jesus said that whenever two or three of you gather together in My name—Whom the *Yahad* also

understood was *Yeshuah*—I will be there with you in your midst. In practical terms, to have stood in the presence of *Yeshuah* was identical to abiding in the Temple. Later we will discuss Jesus' use of the figure of a Vine in John's gospel which pertains to finding life in the *aiona*. Before we move on, it may seem incredible to think that the *Zadokite* Jews were essentially doing what Jesus taught for more than a hundred years before the incarnation of the Holy One foretold by Isaiah. Nevertheless, we need to break through to the comprehension that Jesus came to restore a spirituality that had been alive in First Temple worship and that had dated all the way back to Noah. This was the lost and forgotten understanding of *cken*, *charis*, or grace.

And for any who think that the *Yahad* were not actually divinely empowered, the Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus—who himself had lived among the *Yahad* for three years—recorded that the Essene Menahem had forcefully slapped Herod on the back as a young adult and prophesied over him that he would one day become the King of Israel.[315] Later in life, when Herod actually became King, out of respect for what had taken place in his youth and in recognition of their spiritual power, he exempted the Essenes from paying taxes.

David was renowned for having written thousands of songs, however only a small portion of these appear in the Bible. However, the Essenes preserved some of these that were passed down through their *Zadokite* tradition. In these we read: "Thy name is my salvation (יְשׁוּעָתִי), my rock, my fortress and [my] refuge [is my God]."[316] We note that the term for salvation, which the psalmist says is the name of God is *Yeshuah*.

And so, even among the ancient Jews, and especially among those who counted themselves as undefiled and as the authentic

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[315] The account noted by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (Book 15, Chapter 10) is explained elsewhere in The Lost and Forgotten Spirituality of Ancient Israel.

[316] *1QHAYOT* (1QH^a) IX, 29, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, ed. and trans. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997–1998), 1:156–157.

seekers of *Yehovah*, the name of *Yeshuah* was worshiped before One who would be born into the world was named "Jesus."

In the thanksgiving hymns of the Essenes, resurrection to life or ascension into the angelic realm of the was remembered and re-enlivened as a daily practice at each meal. There were several steps of consecration which included bathing and changing clothing before gathering together to break bread.

> "But those who please Thee shall stand before Thee in the *olam*: those who walk in the way of Thy heart shall be established evermore."[317]
>
> Thou has revealed Thyself to me in Thy power as perfect Light, and Thou hast not covered my face with shame. All those who are gathered in Thy Covenant inquire of me, and they harken to me who walk in the way of Thy heart, who array themselves for Thee in the Council of the holy.[318]
>
> For what is dust among al[l]… Ashes are in their hand: nothing at al[l] and thou hast shed [Thy Holy] Spirit over dust [to bring him into the company] of the 'gods' and unite them with the sons of heaven. And Thou has shed Thy [Ho]ly [Spirit] to atone for guilt for they are established in Thy truth [and Thou, my God], Thou hast acted wondrously for Thy glory.[319]
>
> He "lifts up the poor from the dust to the eternal height, and to the clouds he magnifies him in stature, and he is with the heavenly beings in the assembly of the community."[320]

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[317] *Hodayot* 1QH Column IV, lines 21–22, Geza Vermes, trans., *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 7th ed. (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), 254.

[318] *Hodayot* 1QH^a Column IV, lines 23–25, Ibid.

[319] Quoted from *Hodayot* 4Q427.

[320] *Hodayot* 4Q427 Fragment 7, Columns i–ii, Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 216.

"I speak to you through the storm and the clouds. Be still. Know I am God."[321]

From the *Yahad Hodayot* Thanksgiving Hymns, the practice of their ascension into the spiritual realm was underscored as is demonstrated by these verses.

Perhaps if second century Judaism had not forbidden passing along the knowledge of the second power of heaven, and if Christendom had taken Origen's advice and had studied Aramaic and Hebrew, these Old and New Testament connections would not have been lost. All of us would have better understood the identity of *Yeshuah* (יְשׁוּעָתִי) or *Mōšîaʿ* (מוֹשִׁיעַ)in the Hebrew Scriptures Who was understood to have been manifest in human form, being born of a virgin at the start of the First Century A D. Furthermore, by making all of these connections of what the ancient Jews and ancient Hebraic knew and practiced in worship, who and what those who uphold faith in God Most High would be far more apparent. My hope and prayer is that my conveyance of these concepts will be clear enough to rebuild the ancient understandings and ruins referenced all through the text of Isaiah. Who we are called to be and how we pray, wait upon the Lord and what we hope to experience in worship can make much more sense in the same context that the faithful embraced the Holy One of the *Ish-raah-el-ites* following Jesus' crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

And it is important for my Jewish audience to understand that Jews revered God's Son as the Holy One before Jesus walked the Earth. Therefore, it is not wrong for a Jew to ascribe worship to *Yeshuah*.

God Most High was the imparter of *yeshuah*. Therefore, how could it be wrong to thank *Yehovah* for His *yeshuah*, or furthermore to recognize that *Yeshuah* was in some sense the Son of God prior to the first century A.D.

God looks at the heart or the character and behavior of each person. And this was his point in speaking with the woman at Jacob's well. Those who are born of the Truth of God and who are

[321] *Quoted from 4QHodayot a.*

like Him in spirit or who are born of the Spirit have become actual bearers of the name of God. His name has been written on their foreheads. In Revelation 22, these were the ones who also saw the face or the presence of God. In other terms, these were the restored *Ish-raah-el-ites.*

Recall in the vow and the blessing of the Nazirite that the name *Yehovah* was placed upon the heads of those who had dedicated themselves to Him. We are not taught this by churchianity today and I doubt that it is much of a topic of discussion in present-day Judaism.

Nevertheless, it is those who have been sealed by the name of *Yehovah* who are granted entry into His presence. This is the way it was for the ancient *Ish-raah-el-ites* who made themselves nazir to God and it has not changed. The problem is that we do not understand this, and so, quite sadly, among some contingencies, there is bickering and argument over what supposedly might be the correct means of verbalizing God's name.

The skill of verbalizing pronunciation is not equally shared by all throughout the world. However, the ability to bear the image of God is possible for everyone. This should be our focus. Worship, listen, and obey.

Rinse and repeat. In all of this, be transformed by encounter with God's presence. Do what He says. And then, again, rinse, worship, listen, and obey.

And if somewhere in the process you sin, go to someone you trust and confess your sin. Or if you have a problem with a brother or a sister or your spouse, make things right before seeking entry into the presence of God. After things are made right, be cleansed with water and enter again into God's presence.

The most important factor of worship is whether or not each of us becomes a bearer of God's name. At creation, the members of humankind were made to bear the image of God. This was proven as they heard His voice and walked according to His instruction.

When the eyes of the Lord search throughout the Earth, He examines our deeds, which prove exactly whose hearts are completely His. This is the basis of the recognition and acceptance

of His earthly children. And once again, this takes us back to the Gentile Cornelius who was remembered in the narrative of Acts. God Most High called him into His presence because even though He may not have worshiped the name of *Yehovah*, "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly." And one sent by God said to him, "Your prayers and gifts have ascended as a memorial before God."

It is unlikely that the Gentile spoke Hebrew, and a second seeming strike against him was that of his bloodline. He was not a Jew. And yet, lo and behold, this guy who didn't have an ounce of doctrine and could not speak God's name was drawn into the Hebraic tradition without discrimination.

We can infer that Cornelius learned to worship God's name because of his eventual meeting with Peter and other disciples of Jesus. Just as Luke remembered this man's divine-human encounter, so also the author of Acts spoke of the restoration of David's fallen Tabernacle, which in his day was being restored. David had worshiped the name of *Yehovah* and the gates of heaven were opened. And according to Jesus' instruction, we understand that the same kind of worship had been restored. The Word was advancing to many kinds of diverse individuals whose lives bore the image of God, and the *aiona* was being inhabited once again.

And herein, we realize early Orthodoxy's divergence from Hebraic Spirituality. Christendom wrapped its identity around the mission of giving the world correct theological knowledge in order to get into heaven after they died. With this, Orthodoxy's Gospel revolved around the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. If anyone supposedly understood and agreed with Jesus' accomplishments, they were saved from their sins and were assured a heavenly afterlife.

Rather instead, in the Hebraic paradigm, the goal was entry into the presence of God while individuals who yet dwelt upon the Earth. Its adherents hoped to find the ancient or the *aionios* life and to walk in the grace of hearing God's voice and walking in divine-human intimacy with Him. Such ones would never have to worry

about whether or not they were going to heaven after death. While they yet lived, their deeds to bless their neighbors proved their identities as the children of God.

Although few individuals in Christendom want to admit as much, it is clear from Jesus' statement in John 5:29, and through many of His other teachings, that those who spend their lives doing good for others will be participants in the resurrection. These ones will have lived a life of authentic faithfulness. These ones will be proven as the children of Abraham because they have done the deeds of Abraham.

And it is important to clarify that these deeds are contrasted to the lifeless *takkanot* which were designed to make people appear to be outwardly pleasing to God. For example, the tradition of the elders (*takkanah*)—which describes which utensils should be used to eat certain foods—is very different from acts of compassion and sacrificial giving to one's neighbors. The former is an outward expression of man-made religious rules. The latter is an expression wherein individuals themselves become a manifestation of *yeshuah* that is motivated by the divine Being of *Yeshuah* being allowed to work through them.

If anyone wants to make the choice to use certain cutlery and tableware to honor a tradition, that is fine. But nobody should be deceived into thinking that observing a religious tradition justifies anyone or counts them to be righteous in the eyes of God Most High.

From what we read in the Bible, nobody comes into the presence of the Lord by compliance with enforced behavior. Neither do those who have rejected obedience to the inspired *Torah*. Just as it was fruitless for the unrighteous to present sacrifices at the altar, so also it is meaningless for the willfully disobedient to sing praises to God's name. Such ones profane the name of God because they do not bear His image in their being. Pretenders draw down God's judgment upon themselves.

Worship was designed to be a return to Eden for those having forsaken the suggestive voice of Satan. Calling upon the name of the LORD was intended to invite the cloud of His presence so that ones could be raised back up into life in the *aiona*. As a

result of authentic worship by those who have become His children, the Holy One comes to reside inside of them. They bear the image of God and their works are an expression of His love to the needy world surrounding them. The angels of *Yehovah* search throughout the Earth to find ones such as these to draw into His living *aionios* presence.

Hebraic celebrants are permitted into the *aiona* of *Yehovah's* presence because of who each of us are by our proven character. And proven character is the result of our choices and actions. God is not going to prohibit anyone from finding a place before the throne of grace based upon theological or pronunciation technicalities.

David embraced the *aionios* life by proven character. God saw his heart reflected by His deeds. Whatever else we think matters is probably the result of denominationalism. And denominationalism is rooted in Evangelicalism that is rooted in the Reformation that is rooted in early Orthodoxy, and these movements have each added a great deal of irrelevant baggage to faith and spirituality. Just as Second Temple Judaism had its non-negotiable requirements, so also does denominationalism. Although for Judaism these revolve around orthopraxy whereas in Christendom, the non-negotiables have to do with cognitive intellectual agreement with religious facts that are described in so-called "statements of faith." Keep in mind that I strongly affirm that God uses people in diverse denominations. He has faithful children in Catholicism and in Reformed Evangelical churches and perhaps even celebrants in that despised group across town from the wrong side of the tracks.

Just as members of humankind were intended to have borne the image of God from the foundation of the world, those witnessed to have been the bearers of God's name, as was known by their deeds, became inheritors of the Holy place before God. It was in this spiritual dwelling that seekers would obtain the good-Words of God. Luke reminded his audience; "I will give you the holy and certain blessings of righteous David the faithful."[322]

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[322] Acts 13:34

This fulfillment was from Isaiah's pronouncement in 55:3, which foretold the future inheritance of the *Aionios* Covenant. Pairing both verses, we understand Luke's perspective identifying reception of the Covenant of *Aionion* with gaining a dwelling place in the holy realm. As we have stated several times, in the Hebraic paradigm, the term "holy" spoke of a location in God's presence which was visited by the faithful. In English translations of the Greek Bible, visitors to the holy realm were commonly identified as "saints."

As the Word was newly advancing through the Mediterranean world, this term being understood as the second power of heaven, Gentiles like Cornelius who sought after righteousness were experiencing various sorts of divine-human encounters. Because of these apparitions, it was understood that the fallen tent of David had been restored. Jews and Gentiles who walked in the ways of the Lord became inheritors of the Word and inhabitants of David's tent. We take note of this in Acts 10:9-16.

> Peter went up upon the housetop to pray at about the sixth hour. And he became hungry, and desired to eat: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance. And he witnessed heaven opening, and a certain vessel descending. It was a large sheet, let down by four corners to the Earth. It contained all kinds of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the Earth and birds of the heaven. And there came a voice to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "I will not Lord. I have never eaten anything that is despised and unclean." And a voice *came* to him again a second time instructing, "What God has cleansed, do not despise." And this was done three times. And immediately the vessel was received back up into heaven.[323]

Luke further affirmed in Acts 15 that it was by means of Jesus' resurrection that David's inheritance had returned. The commission once given to Abraham to bless or to good-Word the nations, was now taking place through God's own initiative as the

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[323] Acts 10:9-16 ASV

Word advanced once again; through dreams, visions, angelic visitation, hearing God's voice, and by miracles etc. These were the same kinds of manifestations of the Word of God that had been prominent in the life of Abraham.

Herein we take note of the fulfillment of Daniel 7:14.

> And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and *men of every* language might serve Him. His dominion is an *aionios* dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.[324]

The NASB actually reads "eternal" where I have inserted *aionios* as this appears in the Greek text.

Walking in the genius of Einstein, we ask the question "Where is the only place in the universe that eternity can take place?" The answer is that heaven is the only location where anything can actually last forever. Therefore the location of heaven or the *aiona* and eternity are synonymous concepts.

One day the sun will burn out, and that will be the end of our solar system. However, the Light of heaven will always endure.

Furthermore, where the Scriptures state the phrase "forever and ever and ever," once again, three consecutive repetitions of the term *aiona*, seem to correspond to other references where the phrase "holy, holy, holy" were used.

Acknowledgement of *eis ton aiona* as the gateway into the throne room of heaven, as a place of a second spiritual birth, and specifically the place where the faithful receive the *aionios* life and found standing places in God's kingdom, radically alters the understanding of Jesus' mission. Furthermore, on several levels, this entirely changes interpretation of the New Testament. Explicit statements such as Paul's out of the body experience which he testified to in 2 Corinthians 12, when he visited the third level of heaven, become more normatively understood in the schema of the larger Hebraic paradigm.

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[324] Daniel 7:14 NASB

Examining the Scriptures from a restorationist perspective, this is exactly where we are headed.

As an aside, "*christos*" means to be "anointed with oil." The point of being anointed with oil is that this allowed ones to enter into God's Holy realm; wherein they might receive spiritual gifts. The term "*chrismatos*" is used to speak of anointing oil. These are the roots of the *charismata*, or the spiritual gifts that come from anointing.

Paul wrote to his disciple,

> Do not despise the gift or *charisma* that you have that was given to you by prophecy and by the laying on of the hand of the eldership.[325]

Paul addressed the Romans figuratively warning against a factious competitive spirit developing between Jewish branches who were broken off and the Gentile wild olive branches who were grafted into the body of God's family. He cautioned both contingencies to remember that each shared the same root that produced the nourishing oil of the olive tree. Neither side had any reason to brag. This reference was made according to the idea conveyed in the Common English Bible, copyright 2011, which specifically mentioned the olive oil.

The point was that the continuing practice of being anointed with oil from the ancient times of Aaron and David were continuing in the Christian Era. Those proving themselves to have become faithful were coming under the *charis* of God, entering the *aiona* through anointing, and were partaking in the *charismata* in the presence of the second power of heaven. Moreover, they were taking this back into the world through manifestation of His kingdom by means of signs and wonders. As individuals became eyewitnesses of the Word through the gifts of grace, so also they were becoming His servants.

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[325] 1 Timothy 4:14 JMP

Sections Five-Seven, the Epilogue, the Selected Bibliography, are contained in in the book: TLFSAI Book Two.

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Have you been blessed by this work? Would you like to be a blessing to me? As the Lord leads, please purchase several copies of this book and donate them to libraries and seminaries where these understandings will be preserved for future generations.

Also see: *Two Thieves in Paradise © 2001 by Steven R. Service* – an entertaining historical fictional account of the lives of the thieves before they go to the cross alongside Jesus—action, adventure, romance, comedy, tragedy and great hope for tomorrow. Perhaps 5 years after writing this script, I re-read it and laughed so hard it that it really surprised me. Before I was finished, I cried my eyes out. The story does not end at the cross. Note that the cover has nothing to do with the content. For my wife's birthday, I uploaded our picture to make this a gift for her, but then I have never yet gotten around to changing the cover.