

## **Bible Basics: Essential Doctrines of the Bible**

### **Part 3A**

#### **Anthropology: The Study of Man** (also available on-line at [ichthys.com](http://ichthys.com)) by Dr. Robert D. Luginbill

The creation of man as God's solution to Satan's rebellion.

*And God said, "Let Us make Man in Our image, after Our likeness.*  
Genesis 1:26 [KJV]

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## I. The Purpose of Man

One cannot understand God's purpose in creating Man or the timing of that creation apart from the devil's rebellion which forms its theological backdrop (see Bible Basics Part 2A: Angelology).<sup>1</sup> Before human history began, Satan's attempt to dethrone God had ended in a complete and dismal failure (cf. Is.14; Ezek.28), and his nefarious experimentations on earth, the original Eden, had been summarily terminated by a divine intervention that left not only the earth but the surrounding universe as well buried in deep darkness (Gen.1:2 compared with Gen.1:1). This judgment on the universe went hand in hand with God's condemnation of the devil and his fallen angels for their rejection of His authority as evidenced in their overt rebellion:

Behold, He does not place [unreserved] trust in His servants, but charges [even] His angels with error.      Job 4:18

Then He will say to those on His left, "Away from Me, you accursed ones, into the eternal fire [already] *prepared for the devil and his angels*.      Matthew 25:41

Concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.      John 16:11

But although Satan's case (and that of his followers) has already been adjudicated and his ultimate fate pronounced, it will not be until after the end of Christ's millennial rule that this sentence of condemnation will be finally and fully carried out (Rev.20:10; Is.24:21-22; cf. Rev.12:7-9; 12:12). The answer to the oft posed question "why this delay in judgment?" is intimately bound up with God's gracious creation of another species of morally responsible creatures, namely, mankind. Man is meant in no small part as a response to the devil and his rebellion. In our responsiveness to God, we constitute a living refutation of all the devil's slanderous lies which have been leveled against the character of God in the course of Satan's revolt. By creating (and saving) mankind, God is both demonstrating to all angelic kind His ability to reconcile His wayward creatures to Himself (though the devil claimed He could not or would not), and is actually replacing all that was lost through the devil's defection (by ushering willing human beings into the family of God in place of rebellious angels).

Thus, though already under sentence of death for his unrepentant attempt to overthrow God's rule over the universe (Job 4:18; Matt.25:41; Jn.16:11), Satan still retains his freedom of action. We find him spying on our first parents in the garden (Gen.3), appearing before the Lord to slander our brethren (Job 1&2; Zech.3; Rev.12:10), and prowling the earth in search of believers whose defenses are down (1Pet.5:8). Satan is ever re-acting to the plan of God. Therefore the reasons for the devil's intense interest in mankind are inextricably linked to the reasons for God's creation of us in the first place:

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<sup>1</sup> Although this study does contain material that is unique to it, much of what is covered below can be found in greater detail in the Satanic Rebellion series. Readers are invited to consult those studies after digesting the information presented herein.

1. Man created to refute Satan and his angels (by demonstrating God's righteousness in acting mercifully): Every aspect of God's perfect character is visible in His gracious dealings with the human race. Seen from the angelic point of view, however, the demonstration of God's righteousness in His dealings with mankind most directly answers Satan's slanders regarding God's ability to provide reconciliation (as He does for all sinful human beings who turn to Him in Jesus Christ). From the nature of his rebellion, we can surmise that part of the devil's appeal to his potential followers rested on his assurance that God would be unable to effect any such reconciliation between Himself and His rebellious creatures. Satan reasoned that God's righteousness would stand in the way of His mercy and thus make forgiveness impossible. Therefore once he was able to suborn a large number of his fellow angels into choosing against God, God would ever after be "in a box", unable to act in mercy without compromise, unable to execute punishment without permanently marring His creation in an irreversible way (especially since the number of fallen angels is quite large: Rev.12:4; cf. Rev.9:16). No matter how much He might dislike it, therefore, God would (in the devil's thinking) be forced to tolerate Satan's usurpation of power. But the devil's logic failed to take into account the ineffable love of God, and was oblivious to the idea that our God is a God of such grace that He would even sacrifice His most beloved possession, His Son, Jesus Christ, on our behalf in order to save us. Satan was correct about the righteousness of God preventing His mercy from arbitrarily forgiving sin in any form, but what the devil did not count on was God's willingness to pay for sin Himself through the sacrifice of His Son, so that we might justly be accounted righteous in His eyes (Rom.1:16-17; 2Cor.5:21).

We are saved by faith in the Person and work of the One who died in our place and paid the price of sin for us, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Because Jesus paid the price, God can forgive our sin, not arbitrarily, but justly, since it has been paid for in full in the most precious coin. God is therefore not only merciful to forgive us and welcome us back into His family when we believe in Jesus, He is also just in justifying us, righteous in proclaiming us righteous, "not from works of righteousness which we have done" (Tit.3:5), but from our acceptance of the work of the One who died for us. Angels being angels (and different in nature and experience from mankind), any decision to rebel against God would be final. Possessed as they are of perceptive abilities that far exceed our material limitations, it can be truly said of them that "they knew what they were getting into" (at least as far as creatures can know). Reconciliation of fallen angels to a merciful God was therefore never a likely possibility – because *they* would not have it, *not* because God could not or would not do it (cf. Heb.2:16). The truth of this last point He has proven irrefutably by the loving sacrifice of His only Son on mankind's behalf, paying a price so steep we can only dimly comprehend it. If the devil and his angels had been of a mind to receive such an incomparable gesture of sacrifice and mercy, God would have generously provided it. By giving up His Son to the cross, God has demonstrated beyond any shadow of a doubt both His willingness and His ability to rescue His creatures, for He has in fact done so for us, even though it meant paying the price His righteousness demanded with the blood of His own Son.

Thus human history is on the one hand a demonstration to angelic kind (elect as well as fallen) of God's mercy and His ability to act justly in providing that mercy (albeit at tremendous cost to

Himself). We human beings are actually experiencing God's love and mercy as He provides for us here in the world despite the devil's opposition. To the angels, however, we are a demonstration of that love and mercy, made efficacious through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and our faith in Him. Being spirits and so not subject to the material limits that so try our human hearts of flesh, they must learn by observation, and observe us they do in great earnestness (Job 1&2; Matt.18:10; Lk.15:10; 1Cor.4:9; 11:10; 1Pet.1:12). That this demonstration will have been one of over seven thousand years' duration (when human history shall have finally run its course) is merely further proof of the graciousness and long-suffering of God (Is.30:18; Rom.2:4; 2Pet.3:9; 3:15 etc.). Through the long course of this demonstration (which is our collective human experience), the elect angels will have come to know God and His perfect character better than ever before, while the fallen angels will see their leader's every blasphemous accusation refuted and destroyed in voluminous detail. And when all is said and done, God's righteousness will have been affirmed as beyond reproach, proved beyond a shadow of a doubt in the merciful salvation of believing mankind.

2. Man created to replace Satan and his angels: The creation of Man following the Genesis Gap judgment is a clear indication that the two events are intimately related. For God to create a new species of creature, possessing along with the angels both spirituality and free will, and then to deposit them on the very scene of Satan's rebellious activity was no subtle indication that at least one of God's purposes for mankind would be the replacement of the devil and his evil legions. This must have been abundantly and immediately clear to Satan. For here was a new moral creature who (left to his own devices) might just do what he and his would not: *obey God's will without rebelling against Him*. As soon as the requisite population was reached through procreation, Satan and company could be removed, wholeness and completeness having thus been restored. Judgment, after all, had already been pronounced (Job 4:18; Matt.25:41; Jn.16:11). What could remain except for a one-for-one replacement of fallen angels with human beings, once our numbers became sufficient? With judgment set, execution of God's sentence against him would be inevitable if not immediate (Is.24:21-22; cf. Rev.20:10). Therefore, with the creation of Man, a creature capable of procreation unlike the angels, the de facto removal of the only remaining, tangible barrier to Satan's execution was only a matter of time.

The principle of God's desire to retrieve what is lost and replace what is missing is clearly seen in scripture in the parable of the lost sheep (Matt.18:12-14; Lk.15:4-10), the law of levirate marriage (Deut.25:5-6), and, of course, in His longing for all mankind to accept the gift of Jesus Christ and return to Him (1Tim.2:4; cf. Ezek.18:23; Matt.18:14; Jn.12:47; 2Pet.3:9). There is ample evidence to suggest that elect mankind is, in effect, replacing fallen angelic kind in God's universal order (Lk.10:17-20; 1Cor.6:3; Rev.20:4). This principle is most clearly seen in the God-Man's replacement of the original covering cherub: Lucifer (the "light bearer") replaced by the Morning Star, Jesus Christ (cf. Is.14:12 with 2Pet.1:19; Rev.2:28; 22:16). Thus it is only fitting that the followers of the Morning Star should replace Lucifer's followers. In this way the wholeness and integrity of the creation will be restored, while everything that was lost will be replaced with something even better: willing worshipers of God in union with His Son, the God-Man, so that ultimately "God may be all in all" (1Cor.15:28). Satan's motives for precipitating

the fall of Man are therefore clear. Unwilling to repent, neither could he afford to accept the new threat the status quo entailed.

3. Man created for the glory of God in our choice of Him and His will over Satan's: The replacement of Satan and his followers with willing human worshipers, and the ample demonstration of God's love and righteousness through the sacrifice of His Son to save said sinful human beings abundantly redounds to the great glory of our God. After watching the events of human history unfold, the elect angels (and, in fact, all creatures) are moved to praise and glorify the Lord Almighty for such matchless grace (cf. Ps.148-150):

To the One who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb [be] the blessing and the honor and the glory and the power for ever and ever! Revelation 5:13b

It is for God's praise, for God's glory, that we have been created (Is.60:21; Jn.17:10; 21:19; Rom.6:20; 9:23). This praise arises not only from us but through us, and does so at every stage of God's plan for our lives, at salvation, throughout our Christian lives, and in the glorious eternity to come:

Having foreordained us in [His] love for adoption to Himself through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will, for the purpose of producing (at salvation) ***praise for the glory*** of His grace which He has graciously bestowed on us in the Beloved [One]. Ephesians 1:5-6

In whom we also have an inheritance, having been ordained according to the design of Him who is working everything out according to the desire of His will, that we who have previously placed our hope in Christ might serve the purpose of generating ***praise for His glory*** (in life). Ephesians 1:11-12

[The Spirit] who is a guarantee of the inheritance that is ours in the [future] redeeming of what we have been working for (i.e., our resurrection and reward) bringing ***praise for His glory*** (in eternity). Ephesians 1:14

By making us and by saving us through Christ, God shows His love and exposes the devil's lies. In us, in what He has done for us, the glory of God shines forth, and those who love Him cannot help but praise Him:

Everyone who is called by my Name, ***for My glory I have created him***, I have formed him, indeed, I have made him. Isaiah 43:7

As the passages above indicate, it is only *regenerate* human beings (i.e., believers in Christ) who form the echelon of replacement for fallen angelic kind and bring glory to God thereby. Human beings who choose to reject God's gracious gift of Jesus Christ will share the fate of the devil and his followers in the lake of fire (Rev.20:11-15). This too is a part of the demonstration of the

righteousness of God, and also redounds to His great glory. Not only will the entire universe witness His gracious provision of mercy towards all who turn to Him, but all who oppose His will, Satan and all rebels, be they angels or men, will be crushed materially (in judgment) as well as spiritually (through the demonstration of human history). And everyone, whether rebellious or regenerate, will eventually acknowledge the majesty, the righteousness, the glory of God:

By Myself I have sworn. From my mouth a righteous word has gone forth, which will not be revoked, that every knee will bow to Me, and to Me every tongue will swear. And so they will acknowledge Me: “Only in the Lord are righteousness and might.” Before Him will come all who raged against Him and they will be put to shame.           Isaiah 45:23-24

It is in the nature of God not to let a lie stand, but instead to expose all lies to the blinding light of the truth (Eph.5:11-14; cf. Ps.76:10). Human history constitutes, in effect, the “last judgment” of fallen angelic kind, a vivid, living demonstration of their error and utter sinfulness in the course of which “every mouth will be stopped” (i.e., every excuse destroyed: Rom.3:19; cf. Ps.107:42; Mich.7:16) and at the end of which every knee will bow and tongue declare the glory of God and the grace of God in the gift of His Son our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom.14:11; Phil.2:10-11).

## **II. The Creation of Man**

Although we owe our creation in part to God’s response to the rebellious defection of the devil and his followers, we have ever been in God’s plan, and ever in His love. God was under no obligation to create angelic kind. He was under no obligation to create the human race. He did not have to give His Son to die for us. He did not have to pay that awful price the magnitude of which we can only dimly hope to comprehend. Yet create us He did. In making us, He shared Himself with us. He blessed us in making us with blessings that have only just begun to flow our way. To create us, to save us, though it cost Him His Son, to make us part of His family, to take us to Himself and ultimately to come to reside with us forever, these are the acts of a God who is love itself, and we are truly blessed to call Him Father.

### **1. The Image and the Likeness of God**

According to the first chapter of Genesis, God created Man and Woman on the sixth day of restoration. After the heavens had been restored, and the earth refitted and replenished, when all conditions were suitable and everything marvelously in place, God gave life to our first parents, Adam and Eve, forming them and depositing them in a place of perfection:

Then God said, “Let us make Man in our image, according to our likeness, *so that he may rule* over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over the beasts and over the whole earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth”. So God created the man in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.           Genesis 1:26-27

As Genesis 1:26 indicates, the express purpose of Man's creation is his rule and oversight of the newly reconstructed earth (along with its creatures). This purpose is reemphasized at several points in the more detailed narrative of Adam's creation in Genesis chapter two:

Now Man did not yet exist *to care for the land*. Genesis 2:5b

So the Lord God took Adam and placed him in the garden of Eden *to care for it and to guard it*. Genesis 2:15

Satan was the first trustee of earth, the original Eden, where he held the prestigious position of "covering cherub", i.e., the guardian of the throne of God on the Holy Mountain of the primeval, as yet unblemished earth. It was this pristine earth of which he seized temporary control in his bid to lead the angels in revolt against the Lord Almighty. Placing Man on this same earth, now rejuvenated, with a mandate similar to the one which Satan had rejected, is a clear indication that God meant Man (and his progeny) to assume a role very similar to the one abdicated by Satan (and his followers): namely, faithful, obedient supervision of God's creation. Now as we have seen, while angels and men are quite different in some important respects (most notably in the qualitatively superior longevity, knowledge and absence of corporeality possessed by the angels), we do share one critical similarity: both species possess spirituality of a type that mirrors the image and the likeness of their Creator; both species are intelligent, sentient, morally responsible, capable of being put in a position of responsibility. But the most critical point of comparison in each case, for both Man and angels, is the ability, indeed the necessity, of making *a conscious choice* to serve faithfully.

For the angels, the tangible test was continued allegiance to God or defection to the devil; for Adam and Eve it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen.2:16-17). But for both species there was a test *and the corresponding ability of spirit to choose*. Beyond all argument, God could have created innumerable beings to serve Him who would have been incapable of sin or rebellion. But God desires instead creatures who will choose for Him of their own free will, who will love Him and serve Him and worship Him *willingly* (Jn.4:23). To be proper replacements for Satan and his followers, mankind had to possess a spiritual makeup that was essentially the same as the angels in two important respects: 1) the ability to make responsible and responsive choices (with the mental and emotional assets to support this quality), and 2) individuality (i.e., a personality unique and independent from all others in the species). Like the angels (who are, after all, also "sons of God": Gen.6:2; Ps.29:1; 89:6; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), Man is a creature capable of exercising and responding to authority within the parameters laid down by God, and, like the angels, every one of us must make these essential choices for ourselves. These two essential qualities of spirit (i.e., the ability to choose for God and the individual responsibility to do so) are referred to in the Genesis 1:26-27 description as the "image and likeness of God":

Then God said, "Let us make Man *in our image, according to our likeness*, so that he may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over the beasts and over the

whole earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth”. So God created Man in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.  
Genesis 1:26-27

It is almost universally acknowledged that the purpose of the description “in our image, according to our likeness” is to mark out the similarities between Man and God. Naturally, the difficulty of comparing infinite God with finite Man makes any such analogy problematic, but as men and women of faith, we understand that God was well aware of this when He gave these words to Moses to pen. “Image and likeness”, when properly understood, do in fact give us a wonderfully precise description of the ways in which this new creature would be like His Maker.

The first thing to understand about “image and likeness” is that the points of analogy between God and Man are entirely *spiritual*. And while it is true that more than one misguided theologian over the course of the millennia has attempted to bring Adam’s physical shape somehow into the picture of “image and likeness”, as Christians who believe in a God who made the universe and is Himself entirely spiritual, we must of necessity reject such fanciful notions out of hand.

Secondly, and this point is considerably more controversial, the “image” of God and the “likeness” of God, though both spiritual, are not identical. Besides being different words, “image” and “likeness” are likewise introduced by different Hebrew prepositions with quite different meanings. Man is said to be made *in* the image of God, but *according to* the likeness of God. The preposition *be* (b), translated “in” above, expresses a much closer relationship than the preposition *ce* (k), translated “according to” above. “Image” represents mankind’s common spiritual *essence*, and is analogous to the *divine essence* common to all three members of the Trinity. “Likeness” represents the distinct *personalities* of individual human beings, and is analogous to the *different persons* of the three members of the Trinity. Man’s spiritual nature is thus more closely parallel to God’s image than to God’s likeness, because all human beings do share a common spiritual essence (analogous to the “image” of God wherein the Trinity possess the exact same essence), but is less closely parallel to God’s likeness, because the Trinity, while composed of three separate Persons, is nevertheless “One” and always work together in every way, while human beings are constantly making individual choices independent of each other.

This combination of features was essential if Man were to fulfill the role assigned to him in the plan of God. Everyone of us had to be able to make his own choices (“likeness”), and everyone of us had to have the same inherent ability to choose (“image”). Like the angels, we possess delegated authority that parallels the sovereignty of God (“likeness”), along with the spiritual facets and abilities to make proper use of it (likewise paralleling in a very finite way the infinite essence of God: “image”).

The Hebrew word translated “image” in Genesis 1:26-27 is *tselem* (,lj); its Greek counterpart, also meaning “image” (as used in the Septuagint and New Testament), is *eikon* (εικων). Both *tselem* and *eikon* refer to Man’s spiritual mirroring of God’s essence. In scripture *tselem* means “image” in a fairly concrete sense. The word is often used for statues of pagan idols which, after

all, are meant to be exact replicas of some god or other. On this analogy (transferred to the spiritual realm), the image of God would seem to be a very clear reflection of His Sovereignty: Man acts for God (in paradise) and even *as God* in certain instances. God made us to serve Him, therefore when we are behaving properly we are indeed acting in His stead. We are *el* (la), a “small g” image of *the* God (*'elohiym: ,yhvla*) “God with a capital G”:

I said, “You are gods, and sons of the Most High, all of you.” However, you shall die in the manner of Man, and fall like any other [human] prince. Psalm 82:6

Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your law: ‘I said, You are gods’?”  
John 10:34

It makes perfect sense, therefore, to find this analogy of creatures called “mighty ones” (i.e., “gods”) applied to the angels as well as to mankind, because by His delegation they too share in the authority of God (*the* Mighty One):

I will praise You with all my heart. Before the angels (lit. “*the gods*”) I will sing of You.  
Psalm 138:1

Everyone who serves an idol will be put to shame, all those who praise images. Worship Him, all you angels (lit. “*gods*”). Psalm 97:7

What is Man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you care for him? *You made him a little lower than the angels* (lit. “*the gods*”), you crowned him with glory and honor. *You made him sovereign* over all the works of your hands, you put everything under his feet, flocks and all cattle, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the skies and the fish of the sea, and whatever swims the paths of the seas.  
Psalm 8:4-8

This last passage, Psalm 8:4-8, is particularly apropos of our study because it provides a link between men and angels as God’s delegates here on earth. The angels are described as “mighty ones”, “gods” with a small “g”, while Man, we are told, has been made “a little lower” than these entirely spiritual creatures who were the first to enjoy God’s delegated sovereignty. Nevertheless, it is *Man* who has now been made sovereign (as God’s representative) over the earth and everything that God has created on the earth (*in place of* earth’s original angelic sovereign, Satan, as we know from other scriptures such as Is.14:12-20 and Ezek.28:12-19).

Now it is true that mankind fell (corporately, or “positionally”) in Adam (Rom.5:12-21; 1Cor.15:21-22). It is also true that, as a result of Adam’s fall, Satan is the present “ruler of the world” (Lk.4:6; Jn.12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 1Jn.5:19). But the devil’s usurped sovereignty has never gone and will never go unchallenged by God (Gen.3:15; Rev.20:10). God has used (and continues to use) the sons of men to challenge the devil’s temporary sovereignty which was destroyed positionally (i.e., in principle) by the Son of God in His victory on the cross (Is.42:3-4; Matt.12:20; 1Cor.15:54-57; Col.2:15; 1Jn.5:3-5) and will be destroyed experientially (i.e., in

practice) at His return (Ps.110:1; Rev.19:11-21). For it is Christ who is the *exact image* of the Father (Heb.1:3). And it is Christ who will rule over the earth in complete and perfect sovereignty as delegated by the Father (Is.9:6-7) until all His enemies have been crushed and the kingdom can be handed over to the Father (1Cor.15:24-28). Then we shall witness the Father's unchallenged rule over the new heavens and earth where "righteousness dwells" (2Pet.3:13), where there shall no longer be the slightest trace of evil (Rev.21:8; 22:3).

Psalm 8 thus describes Man acting properly in his capacity as a true servant of God, ministering in God's creation according to God's will. So it is not at all surprising to discover that this passage finds its ultimate prophetic fulfillment in the Last Adam, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ:

For it is not to angels that He subordinated the world to come (which is our present topic), but someone testifies at some point saying, "What is Man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels, you crowned him with glory and honor. You made him sovereign over all the works of your hands, you put everything under his feet." For in subordinating the world to him, He left nothing that was not subordinate to him. However, we do not now yet see the world in subordination to him. But we do now see Jesus crowned with glory and honor on account of the death He suffered, even Him who became "a little lower than the angels" [for a brief span] so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of us all.  
Hebrews 2:5-9

All of the scriptures just considered refer to the idea we have discussed above, namely that the central point of the image of God in Man is *the ability to exercise and respond to authority*, to act sovereignly in God's place where He so delegates, and to be responsible to Him for our actions. This key characteristic of spirit requires other obvious mental and spiritual aspects and assets (such as self-consciousness, mentality, conscience, etc.). But just as the sovereignty of God is the coordinating characteristic of His perfect character, so the ability to judge and govern, and to be morally responsible (in terms of our own lives along with whatever God places in our charge) is the key quality of comparison between the essence of God and the essence of Man, between God as archetype and Man as His image:

Then God said, "Let us make Man in our image, according to our likeness, *so that he may rule* ....." Genesis 1:26a

The Hebrew word translated "likeness" in Genesis 1:26 above is *demuth* (tvmd); its Greek counterpart, also meaning "likeness" (as used in the Septuagint and New Testament) is *homoioima* or *homoiosis* (ὁμοιωμα, ὁμοιωσις). Both *demuth* and *homoioima/homoiosis* refer not to our common mirroring of God's essence, but to the fact that we have an individual responsibility to seek, follow and serve God. "Likeness" then refers to mankind's multiplicity in terms of many, unique and individual personalities. In this point, by analogy, we parallel the persons of Trinity (though even more loosely than we parallel His essence-image for the reasons discussed above). The fact that the pronouns in Genesis 1:26 are plural ("Us", "our image")

makes it very difficult to exclude the Trinity from this passage. We share the image of God on an overall essence basis, but the likeness of God relates to the fact that just as the Trinity is “We”, so mankind is composed of *many different members*, each of whom shares the image of God (and the corresponding *individual* responsibility to seek, follow and serve Him).

This is the account of the generations of Man: Throughout the period (lit., “day”) when God was creating Man, He made him (i.e., mankind) in His likeness. He created them male and female and He blessed them and He called their name “Man” on the day He created them. Now Adam lived 130 years and he fathered [a son] *in his likeness, according to his image*, and he named him Seth. Genesis 5:1-3

The “day” or period discussed here includes not only the original creation of Adam and Eve but also all the time which has passed since as the phrase “the account of the *generations* of Man” makes clear. Therefore, as a summary statement which includes both original creation and the subsequent procreation of mankind (i.e., the “generations of Man” wherein every human being is given life by God; see section II.3 below, “The Human Spirit”), the phrase in Genesis 5:1, “He made [mankind] *in His likeness*”, can be explained as a deliberate conflation of the dual phrase used in Genesis 1:26 “in our image, according to our likeness. This technique is no doubt used by Moses because more than the original man, Adam, are in view (so that the focus naturally shifts to the multiplicity of mankind, but with the “in” retained to recall the essential free will each individual possesses; note that in Gen.9:6 where the case is individual it is again *in His image*). And also in the case of verse three here, the wording, far from being a crux of interpretation on account of the reversal of the prepositions used with image and likeness (*be* and *ce*, “in” and “according to” respectively), actually helps to confirm the points just expressed. The critical distinction between Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 5:3, quoted immediately above, is that the *subjects* of the two passages are entirely different: in Genesis 1:26-27, the subject is **God**; in Genesis 5:3, the subject is **Adam**. Obviously, a comparison based on an analogy with Man will of necessity be quite different from one based on an analogy with God. This fact accounts for the reversal whereby we have in Genesis 5:3 “*in his likeness*” and “*according to his image*”. Between a man and a man, “likeness” or individuality is exactly parallel: all of us are human beings (contrasted with the comparison of Man to God in Gen.1:26). However in terms of “image”, when comparing man to man, the comparison becomes less exact here, because now we are not contrasting divine essence to similar (in principle) human essence, but we are instead comparing a whole man (body and spirit) to another complete person: without question Adam and Seth, though similar in terms of species, were at the same time very different, even to the naked eye (not to mention the differences of mind, emotion, aptitude -- all the factors that make for differences in personality). Reversing “in” and “according to” is the only way to make clear, based on the pattern set in Genesis 1:26, this distinction between the “man to man” image-likeness relationship on the one hand, and the “Man to God” image-likeness relationship on the other.

We have already seen that mankind has been created for the glory of God. While this glorification of God is primarily accomplished by what He does for us (most especially in the

sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ on our behalf), we too have a role to play through the exercise of our will here on earth. Our image and likeness to God, that is, our self-determination and separateness, our ability to choose for God and the individual responsibility to do so, our limited sovereignty and its common disbursement (to a greater or lesser degree) to all members of our species, are aspects of spirit without which it would be impossible for us to participate in this glorification process (otherwise known as human history). Simply put, God is glorified by our obedience, by our response to **His** sovereign authority. Our will is not really “free” in the sense that we can choose the course of our lives without consequence. We really have only one choice: obey God. If we do, God is glorified by our obedience. If we do not, we suffer the consequences (and God still enjoys a measure of glory by dealing with us in justice, though He would have preferred to deal with us in love). No, we really do not have “free will” in the overarching sense of the phrase. Either we choose to do God’s will, or we end up choosing to follow the present “ruler of this world” by default (Gal.5:16-17). Either we accept His sovereign authority over our lives, an authority He possesses by nature of being God, an authority He has underlined to an unimaginable degree by the price He has paid for us through the death of His only Son, or we reject Him for the usurped authority of the devil’s world (1Jn.2:15-17). If we seek Him, if we follow Him, if we serve Him, **if we obey Him**, we will find that in our lives, in our spiritual gifts, in the production that flows from the ministries He assigns, we will be partakers in the delegated sovereign authority of God that was bestowed upon Adam so long ago. But instead of ruling over the perfection of Eden, our task is to manifest the glory of God by contesting whatever part of this battlefield called earth that the Lord has assigned to us. Whatever the spiritual gift, whatever the ministry, whatever the effect God has granted us, these are spheres of God’s delegated sovereignty every bit as significant as Adam’s charge over Eden. We serve at His pleasure, in His might and for His glory, demonstrating God’s power at work in our hearts here on this alien domain, once the devil’s charge (but spurned), once Adam’s charge (but lost), now the arena wherein some of Adam’s fallen seed **do** choose for God – because He first chose us – rejecting the devil’s authority, accepting God’s sovereignty, and glorifying Him in Jesus Christ.

Thus Man, as a replacement for Satan and the fallen angels, had to have the image and likeness of God, i.e., he had to be capable on 1) **an individual basis** (likeness) of 2) **exercising authority** (image) as delegated by God in order to reflect His glory by acting as His faithful steward (in place of the rebellious usurper: Eph.2:2), and of **responding to** divine authority (through faith in Christ after the fall). Since His victory at the cross, Christ is now our immediate authority, our “head”, all power and authority on heaven and earth having been granted to Him (Matt.28:18; Col.2:10; cf. Matt.9:6; Jn.5:27; 17:2; Eph.2:20-22):

Any man praying or prophesying with [hair] hanging down from his head dishonors his Head (i.e., Christ: cf. v.3). And any woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered (i.e., hair torn and unkempt as a sign of mourning) dishonors her head (i.e., husband: cf. v.3). For then she is one and the same with her who has been shaved [as a sign of disgrace]. So if a woman is not keeping her hair in order [through styling, pinning, braiding, etc.], let her be shorn. And if it is a shameful thing for a woman to be shorn or shaved [and it is], then let her wear her hair properly arranged. For a man ought

not to wear adorned hair [an effeminate mark of submission] since he is the *image and glory* of God. A woman, on the other hand, is the glory of her husband.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:5-7

And everyone of us, if we reflect the Lord's glory with no "veil" obscuring our faces (i.e., with unsullied Christian witness), is being transformed *into the same image* (i.e., become more Christ-like) so as to reflect an ever greater degree of glory - exactly what is to be expected with the Lord's Spirit as the agent of our transformation.

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:18

A comparison of the use of the word "image" in the two passages above reveals an apparent (though only apparent) contradiction: in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7, Man still bears the image, while in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:18, the fact that we Christians should be in the process of being transformed into "the same image" has seemed to many to suggest that we do not at present possess the image of God (or at least that it has been marred in some way, and so needs to be repaired). The root cause advanced for this putative "defacing" or "erasing" of the image of God is Adam's fall. But at the heart of all such theories is inevitably the misconception that the image (usually undistinguished from the likeness) is, at least in part, related to the body of Adam. In fact, as we have shown above, both the image and the likeness of God are entirely spiritual. Since the fall, our bodies have become subject to corruption and infected by sin, but our spirits retain the same two critical facets bestowed upon them by God on the sixth day of re-creation: 1) the capability of exercising and responding to authority ("image"), and 2) the responsibility for our own individual personalities ("likeness"). 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:7 clearly states that Man is still the "image and glory" of God (exercising and responding to God's delegated authority as appropriate). And on closer examination, moreover, it becomes clear that 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:18 is talking about something quite different. In that passage the "same image" which we as Christians are being enjoined to emulate is *that of Christ* (cf. Eph.4:24; Col.3:10). Christ is the *exact* image of the Father (Heb.1:3), and our ultimate role model who followed the Father's will in perfect obedience (e.g., Matt.16:24; 1Cor.11:1). The "image and likeness" which is our common heritage as human beings is spiritual – but we are born in sin (Rom.7:18 & 24). As human beings, we have the potential to seek, follow and serve God, to willingly strive to transform ourselves into His Christ-like followers, but this requires obedience and response to God's authority in first believing in and then following Jesus Christ. Only in this way can we fulfill the potential of His "image and likeness" and bring the glory to God for which He created us, then *re-created* us in Jesus Christ (Jn.3:3).

## 2. The Creation of Adam

In respect to the issue of "image" versus "likeness", therefore, the creation of Man (Adam and Eve) in Genesis 1:26-27 can be summed up with these two general principles:

1) We are all made in the *image* of God. That is, we all share an identical type of spiritual essence whose most salient feature is our ability to understand, exercise and respond to

authority for the purpose of being obedient and faithful stewards of God on earth, living and working for Jesus Christ (i.e., true “free will”, the ability to respond positively to God).

2) We are all made in the *likeness* of God. That is, we are all unique personalities with an individual responsibility to respond to God’s authority (i.e., ultimate “accountability” before God for how we use that free will as individuals).

While Genesis 1:26-27 elucidates this relationship between the Creator and His creature, Man, in *general* terms, in Genesis 2:7, we find a detailed description of the actual event of God’s *specific* creation of the first human being, Adam:

And the Lord God formed the man (i.e., Adam’s body) from the dust of the ground, then blew into his nostrils the life-giving breath (i.e., his human spirit), and [thus] the man became a living person.                      Genesis 2:7

It is important that we have this description of Adam’s creation in addition to the Genesis 1:26-27 passage, for while that first passage tells us primarily about the essential aspects of Man’s *spirit*, Genesis 2:7 describes for us the creation of Adam’s *body* and God’s quickening of that body by infusing it with a human spirit.

In Genesis 2:7, Adam’s body is said to be “formed” or molded from the earth. The Hebrew verb used there for constructing the first man’s body is *yatsar* (רָצַץ), while in Genesis 1:26-27, two different verbs, *’asah* (הָסִי) and *barah* (בָּרָא) were used, meaning “make” and “create” respectively. Although there is an overlap of meaning in the usage of these three creation verbs in the Old Testament, they are not entirely interchangeable, especially where God’s creation of mankind is concerned. In that regard, each verb generally has a specific meaning as follows:

- *yatsar* (רָצַץ): “to form”: generally used of the **body**
- *barah* (בָּרָא): “to create”: generally used of the **spirit**
- *’asah* (הָסִי): “to make”: generally used of the entire **living person** (body and spirit)

This threefold usage is combined in Isaiah where we find the *purpose* for which Man has been created very clearly described:

Everyone who is called by my Name, for My glory I have **created** him, I have **formed** him, indeed, I have **made** him.                      Isaiah 43:7

In this passage from Isaiah we see a logical progression based upon the meaning of these three creation verbs. The human spirit is created first, then the body is formed. Finally Man is “made” through God’s breathing of the spirit into the body (exactly as in the Genesis 2:7 account).

That this is indeed the process of creation is obvious from an examination of the text of Genesis 2:7. To begin with, the Agent of Adam's creation is identified here as none other than "the Lord God" (*yhvh `elohiyim*: ,yhvla hvhy). Although all three members of the Trinity are called Lord, the Father's representative and Agent of creation is our Lord, Jesus Christ, the very One who has been chosen to lead the fight against the devil and ultimately to replace Satan as world ruler (Jn.1:3; Col.1:16; Heb.1:2). When He does so, it will be as the God-Man, a genuine human being who also possesses a body and spirit, but in eternal union with undiminished deity.

Everything in the context of Genesis 2:7 emphasizes the true materiality of Adam's body: 1) he is created from the dust (or loose dirt), emphasizing his material origin; 2) he (that is, his body) is "formed" (the Hebrew verb *yatsar*, rjy), emphasizing the plastic nature of the process and often used of the potter at work (e.g., Is.29:16); 3) the very name Adam (*'adham*, ,da) is closely related to the name for ground (*'adhamah*, hmda), emphasizing the man's close connection with the earth from which he was made.

Significantly, the material, plastic, earth-connected creation of the body, in and of itself, *does not* result in life – life occurs only after the Lord God puts a "living spirit" into this newly formed body. Moreover, it is only as a result of God's breathing of a human spirit (the "breath of life", i.e., "life-giving breath") into the first man, that Adam becomes a "living person". This process, observed by angels and recorded for all of Adam's posterity, makes it abundantly clear that 1) Adam is both a spiritual *and* a material being; 2) neither the human spirit nor the human body is meant to exist without the other:

For just as ***the body without the spirit is dead***, so also faith without works is dead.  
James 2:26

For we know that if our earthly tent-dwelling (i.e., our physical body) be struck, we have an abode [that comes] from God, a dwelling made without human agency, eternal in the heavens. For indeed we do groan in this one, desiring to put on our habitation which comes from heaven. And [even] if we do put off this present one, at any rate, we (i.e., our spirits) will not be found naked (i.e., "body-less").  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:1-3

### 3. The Human Spirit

Adam's creation serves as the pattern for us all. It goes without saying that our bodies are now formed indirectly through natural procreation, not directly by the immediate creation of God. Nevertheless, the pattern of body formed first, life-giving spirit introduced by the Lord later, obtains now as it did with the creation of the first man:

The God who created the world and everything in it, this is He who as Lord of heaven and earth does not dwell in temples made by human hands nor is He tended to by the

hands of men – as if He were in need of anything – He it is who ***gives life and breath*** and everything else to all [of us]. Acts 17:24-25

The passage above is reminiscent of Adam’s creation. Working backward in the process of creation, in Acts 17:24-25 Paul enumerates the same three elements in God’s construction of Man that are found at Genesis 2:7:

- 1) life (the living person – life resulting from the fusion of body and spirit occasioned by God’s implantation of the human spirit into our bodies at birth).
- 2) breath (i.e., the “breath of life” = the human spirit).
- 3) everything else (i.e., our bodies and what is necessary to sustain them in the world).

Most important for the purposes of our current discussion is that just as it was at Genesis 2:7, so in the Acts 17:24-25 passage “life” is the result of God’s gift of “breath”, that is, the “breath of life” which is the human spirit. Only after God places the human spirit into the body does life begin, and apart from this infusion of spirit, there is no life. Other passages of scripture confirm that human life is the result of God’s imparting of a human spirit, without which the body would be dead:

1) The human spirit is given by God:

Then [at death] the dust (i.e., the body) will return to the earth whence it came, and the spirit will return to ***God who gave it.*** Ecclesiastes 12:7

Thus says God the Lord, who creates the skies and stretches them out, who fashions the earth and its produce, ***who gives breath*** to the people upon it, even ***a spirit*** to those who walk upon it. Isaiah 42:5

2) The human spirit’s entrance into the body results in life:

Thus says the Lord God to these bones, “Behold, I am about to ***put a spirit into you so that you may come to life.*** And I shall place sinews on you, lay flesh upon you, and put skin over you. And I shall ***put a spirit into you so that you may come to life*** and know that I am the Lord. Ezekiel 37:5-6

Then He (Jesus) took [the dead child’s] hand and spoke to her, saying, “Child, wake up!” Then ***her spirit returned*** [to her], and she immediately got up. Luke 8:54-55a

And after the three and one half days, ***a living spirit from God*** entered into [the bodies of the two witnesses who had been slain by the beast], and they stood up on their feet. Revelation 11:11

3) The human spirit's exit from the body results in death:

If [God] should so purpose in His heart, and gather ***His spirit and breath*** to Himself, then ***all flesh would expire*** together, and Man would return to the dust.

Job 34:14-15

Then Jesus shouted out again in a loud voice and ***exhaled His spirit***.

Matthew 27:50

Then they began to stone Stephen while he called out and said "Lord Jesus, ***receive my spirit***."

Acts 7:59

The Hebrew words used for the human spirit are *ruach* (רוּחַ), literally "wind", and *neshamah* (נְשָׁמָה), literally "breath". The Greek word for the human spirit is *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), and is also the word used for both wind and breath. A point that Hebrew *ruach* and Greek *pneuma* have in common is that, in addition to the human spirit, they are also used in scripture to refer to the Holy Spirit or to literal wind (a fact that makes even more sense than is apparent at first glance as we shall see below in the next section: "Dichotomy"). What is clear at this juncture is that wind and breath are largely invisible, though both are very real phenomena. Breath-wind thus makes a perfect analogy for the immaterial, unseen part of Man which quickens the body and results in life upon implantation, that is, the human spirit:

a) The human spirit is who we are: The human spirit is more than just a life-force that animates the body; the human spirit is essentially "who we are". Our will and self-determination, our conscience, our understanding and mentality, our consciousness and self-consciousness are, while not independent of the body, essentially aspects of the particular, individual human spirit that is us. Below is a list of scripture passages touching on the human spirit in its facets, qualities and functions. Taken together, they paint a vivid picture of what the human spirit is in the Bible, namely our "inner person", the real "us". The spirit is the place of . . . . .

*conscience*: The spirit of Man is the Lord's lamp, searching out the inner chambers of his heart. Proverbs 20:27

*reflection*: For who among men knows the things of Man except the spirit of Man within him? 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:11a

*perception*: And Jesus, immediately recognizing in His spirit that they were reasoning thus to themselves, replied to them. Mark 2:8

*refreshment*: And in my encouragement, I rejoiced all the more over the joy Titus felt because his spirit was refreshed by all of you. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7:13

- wisdom:* But there is a spirit in Man, even the breath of the Almighty which gives him understanding. Job 32:8
- willingness:* The spirit is eager (i.e., to do God’s will), but the flesh is weak (i.e., so as not to follow through). Matthew 26:41
- volition:* After these things had occurred, Paul determined in his spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaea, then proceed to Jerusalem. Acts 19:21a
- intellect:* For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, how I continually make mention of you ... Romans 1:9
- personality:* [For I have already decided,] in the name of our Lord Jesus, when all of you are gathered together with my spirit by the power of our Lord Jesus, to hand such a one over to Satan for the destruction of his body so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:4-5
- mentality:* For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my [fleshly] mind is unproductive. What should I do then? I shall pray with my spirit, but also with my mind. I shall sing [praises to God] with my spirit, but also with my mind. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:14-15
- growth:* [You have been taught to] put off according to your previous behavior the old Man, the one that is being destroyed by deceptive lusts, and instead to be re-made in the spirit of your mind, and [so] to put on the new Man, the one that is created in righteousness and sanctity of the truth according to God’s standards. Ephesians 4:23-24
- knowledge:* For the Spirit Himself testifies to our spirit that we are God’s children. Romans 8:16
- worship:* For God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit (i.e., “spiritually”: with the human spirit responding to the Holy Spirit) and in truth. John 4:24
- blessing:* The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Philippians 4:23

When we die, our bodies return to the ground, but, as believers in Jesus Christ, our spirits (i.e., *we ourselves*) enter into the presence of God (cf. Rev.7:9ff.), temporarily clothed with an interim body (2Cor.5:3 [Greek]; Rev.6:11), to await resurrection and their (i.e., *our*) entrance into a new, permanent and highly superior home, the “resurrection body”. That the spirit so housed is really “us” is clear from Jesus’ story of Lazarus and the rich man. In Luke 16:19-31, we see an Abraham, *Abraham’s spirit*, who though temporarily clothed with an interim body in this pre-resurrection state seems in every aspect to be just as he was in life (except without toil and tears).

This is also true of Lazarus, and even of the rich man (except for the torments he now endures). The loss of our present bodies will not change the essential facts of who we are, and, since God made us as creatures who possess both spirit *and* body, we will never be “naked” (i.e., without any covering for the spirit: 2Cor.5:3). And the day will come when we shall receive our eternal body for which we so eagerly hope (Rom.8:23). Our bodies are important (1Cor.6:13), but rather than *being* who we are, they are more properly *tools* for who we are, that is, for the use of our spirits to be employed in the service of God for His glory which is our purpose (cf. Rom.6:20; 2Tim.2:20-21):

Therefore I entreat you by God’s mercy, brothers, to dedicate *your bodies* as a living sacrifice, well-pleasing to God – [this is] *your* “priestly-service” spiritually performed.  
Romans 12:1

Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you (whom you have from God), and that you don’t belong to yourselves? You were bought at a price. So glorify God *with your body*. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:20

Don’t you know that all the runners in the stadium run the race, but that only one receives the prize? Run in such a way so as to achieve what you are after. And again, everyone involved in competition exercises self-control in all respects. Those athletes go through such things so that they may receive a perishable crown of victory, but we do it to receive an imperishable one. So as I run this race of ours, I’m heading straight for the finish line; and as I box this bout of ours, I’m making every punch count. I’m “*pummeling my body*”, one might say, bringing myself under strict control so that, after having preached [the gospel] to others, I might not myself be disqualified [from receiving the prize we all seek]. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:24-27

For we must all stand before Christ's tribunal, so that each of us may receive recompense for what he has accomplished *through this body*, whether it be good or worthless.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:10

For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision that comes from the Spirit of Jesus Christ, in keeping with my expectation and hope that I will in no way be put to shame, but that now as ever, holding nothing back, Christ will be magnified *by means of this body of mine*, whether through my life, or through my death. Philippians 1:19-20

After the fall of Adam and its consequent corruption, however, the body often influences the spirit (i.e., “us”) for ill. So, as believers in Christ, we find ourselves caught between the body’s (now) pernicious influence and the divine influence of the Holy Spirit. Our spirits (i.e., “we”) thus face the choice in this life of whether to follow the Holy Spirit in service of God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord, or instead to give in to the desires, cravings and lusts of our sinful bodies:

The Spirit is what gives life. The flesh doesn't benefit you at all. John 6:63

Don't offer up your [bodily] members to sin as weapons of unrighteousness. But rather offer yourselves up to God as those now alive from the dead, and [offer up] your [bodily] members to God as weapons of righteousness. Romans 6:13

I know that nothing good dwells in me – that is, in my flesh. For to will what is good lies in my power, but to carry it out does not. Romans 7:18

So then, brothers, we are under obligation – but not to the flesh to live by its rules. For if you are living by the rules of the flesh, you are destined to die. But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the practices of the body, you will live. Romans 8:12-13

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no plans for carrying out the lusts of the flesh. Romans 13:14

But I tell you, walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out what the flesh lusts for. For what the flesh lusts for is contrary to the Spirit's will, and the Spirit is opposed to what the flesh desires. Since these are diametrically opposed to each other in this way, what you are doing is not what you yourself choose. Galatians 5:16-17

b) The human spirit is created by God: In six days, God re-established and refurbished the heavens and the earth. But the seventh day of rest is not to be interpreted to mean that from this point forward, God no longer creates, only allowing (as some would have it) His creation to roll along entirely on its own momentum. Our Lord, speaking about His own miracles (performed on the seventh day) addressed this matter directly:

Then Jesus answered them, "My Father is working right up until this present day. And I am working too". John 5:17

The human spirit is *not* passed down biologically through natural procreation (traducianism), *nor* was it "pre-made" in eternity past, then deposited in a heavenly storehouse for later implantation (pre-existence). The human spirit is the immediate creation of God (creationism):

Then they fell upon their faces and said, "O God, *God of the spirits* of all flesh (i.e., mankind), shall one man sin, and will you be angry with the entire congregation? Numbers 16:22

For I will not contend eternally, nor will I be angry forever. For [Man's] spirit would faint away before Me, even his breaths (i.e., human spirits) *which I have made*. Isaiah 57:16

Thus says the Lord, who stretches out the heavens and lays the foundations of the earth, who *forms Man's spirit within him*. Zechariah 12:1b

I charge you before *God who gives life to all things* ... 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:13a

At that time we had those who fathered our flesh to discipline us, and we respected them. Shall we not all the more submit ourselves to the *Father of our spirits* and live? Hebrews 12:9

c) The human spirit is implanted by God at birth: Adam and Eve, while not born in the manner of their progeny, do demonstrate the pattern of God's creation of every human life. Adam's body was formed by the Lord from the dust of the ground, and, immediately thereafter, the Lord breathed into his nostrils the "life-giving breath". It was as a result of this implantation of the human spirit by the Lord that Adam became "a living person". Eve's body was formed from Adam's, and we assume a similar "breath of life" to animate the body so made. For all human beings since, however, the process of physical birth has been the means of producing and providing bodies for us all. Along with physical death, physical birth forms the first of the two natural termini of human life that scripture takes for granted from Genesis to Revelation (Gen.4:1; Job 3:11; Eccl.3:2; 7:1; Rev.12:2). As the spirit departs from every human being at death (Eccl.12:7), so it is implanted in the body of every human being at physical birth. And just as it is the departure of the spirit which results in death (Acts 7:59), so it is the implantation of the spirit that quickens the new born, making him or her a "living person" after the fashion of Adam and Eve.

Therefore birth is for us what the Lord's formation of Adam's body was for him, that is, the point at which our life begins, when the Lord breathes into us our human spirit. The case of the first Adam (our common forefather) was unique; he is the only person whose body was formed by the Lord from the dust of the ground. In the case of the last Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, the taking on of true humanity by undiminished deity is the most unique event that has ever transpired in the history of the universe. His conception was also unique, for He was virgin born by the power of the Holy Spirit. But He came to share in our humanity so as to rescue us from the common fate of wrath that was our lot through our descent from Adam, and so His birth had to be after the pattern which we all have in common. He entered the world in the manner of us all, that is, by normal human birth and the reception of a genuine human spirit at birth (cf. Ps.22:9-10):

Therefore as [Jesus Christ] was coming into the world (i.e., at His birth) He said, "You [Father] did not desire sacrifice or offering, but you have *prepared a body* for Me". Hebrews 10:5

At that time (i.e., His birth) He [Jesus Christ in His deity] said, "Behold, I have arrived (i.e., been born) – in the scroll of a book it is written of Me – to do your will, O God". Hebrews 10:7

Though His body was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ entered the world when we all do: at birth.<sup>2</sup> This explains why at Matthew 1:20-21 the angel tells Joseph “that which has been engendered in her is from the Holy Spirit, and she *will* give birth to a Son”, and why at Luke 1:35 Gabriel tells Mary “the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for this very reason that which is being born *will* be called holy, the Son of God”. Both the grammar of these passages (Greek neuters: “that which”) and the prophecies here which are both primarily concerned with the *birth* of Christ (as is the case in all the Messianic prophecies; cf. Jdg.13:7; Is.7:14; 9:6-7; Lk.1:15), make it clear that it is not His conception, but His birth that is our Lord’s point of entrance into the world after the pattern by which we have all entered it: the physical birth of our bodies followed by God’s breathing into us of our human spirit. The star of Bethlehem and the angelic chorus that herald His arrival are celebrating not His conception but His birth (Lk.2:8-20), the point when He first drew breath as a human being (albeit the only divine One: Phil.2:6-7; Heb.2:14), for that is the point at which the Father brought His Son “into the world”:

And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” Hebrews 1:6 NIV

The Spirit of God made me, and the breath of the Almighty gave me life. Job 33:4

Let us once again return to the analogy of breathing. Recall that “breath” or “wind” is the basic meaning of both the Greek and Hebrew words for spirit (*pneuma*, πνευμα, and *ruach*, רוח respectively). Breathing is a function of our physical life that only occurs after birth and ends with death. Breath, a manifestation of physical life which (while not synonymous with it) is coterminous with that life, is therefore the perfect symbol and analogy for the life that begins at birth, when God puts our human spirit into our body (and ends at death, when that same spirit leaves our body). This is why Jesus, to explain our need for eternal life, told us we must be born again (not “conceived again”), for birth is the point where life begins by means of an act of God, whether it be the first or the second birth (Jn.3:3).

Thus it is the human spirit (eternal if we follow Christ to eternal life) that is all-important, not this flesh that profits nothing because it will not long endure in its present form. But the body is the battleground whereon this battle we wage against the “principalities and powers” of Satan is being fought out (Eph.6:12). We have mentioned that the human spirit (i.e., who “we” really are) will of necessity follow either the sinful flesh (influenced by the devil’s world and all that is in it)

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<sup>2</sup> This is not at all to imply that for this reason the fetus has no worth in God’s eyes. Quite to the contrary, the unborn are highly valued in scripture (Ex.21:22; Job 10:8-12; Ps.139:13-16; Is.44:24; 49:4-5). Further we may note that in the Bible children are considered a great blessing (cf. 1Sam.2:1-11 and Lk.1:46-55), with infertility seen as a curse (Hos.9:14; cf. Gen.38; Lev.20:20-21; 1Sam.1:11), and pregnancy as a blessing and occasionally even a means of justification (cf. Num.5:11-31 and Lk.1:25). Whereas, on the other hand, the sacrifice of children is an abomination (Lev.18:21; Deut.12:31; 18:10; Ps.106:37-38).

or the Holy Spirit. In order to fully understand the mechanics of this process, we must first consider a subject that we have so far deliberately avoided: the so-called “soul”.

#### 4. The Dichotomy of Man

In non-technical (and non-scriptural) discussions of this sort, the word “soul” is often employed much in the same sense in which we have used “[human] spirit” above. Probably no concept has been responsible for greater misunderstanding of what the Bible actually has to say about the constitution of Man than that of the soul as a supposed *third element* in that constitution. For the Bible does *not* describe Man as a trichotomous being (i.e., tripartite, composed of body, “soul” and spirit), but rather as a dichotomous one (body and spirit being the only two discrete elements of his nature).

a) Definition and Etymology: The word “soul” is of Germanic extraction, part of our common Anglo-Saxon heritage that forms the oldest stratum of the English language. All other things being equal, “soul”, our word for something spiritual, immaterial and animating, would not be a bad translation for the Greek *pneuma* or the Hebrew *ruach* (both of which we have translated as “spirit” above). The problem is that while “soul” could be a synonym for the human spirit (*ruach* and *pneuma*), it is misleading as a translation for the Hebrew and Greek words that are most often used to speak of individuality or personality, i.e., *nephesh* and *psyche* respectively (ωρν-ψυχη). For while there is no third, distinct element in Man’s constitution (and nothing in the Bible teaches that there is), translating *nephesh-psyche* as “soul” (an unfortunately common occurrence in the English versions), strongly (and wrongly) implies that there is just such an additional separate part to our human makeup.

When the Lord first breathed a human spirit into Adam’s newly formed body, the result was that he (Adam) became a “living *being*” (*nephesh chayah*, Gen.2:7). As is obvious from the context of Genesis 2:7 (and other commentary on this passage from the Bible itself: 1Cor.15:45), this phrase refers to the *whole person* of Adam as now being alive (something that was not true before the Lord gave him a spirit). Thus the words “living being” cannot refer to some third part of Adam’s constitution, for this phrase visualizes Adam *as a whole* and cannot in the context be limited to one part of him (i.e., the verse says “*he* became a living being/person”, *not* “he also then acquired a soul [in addition to his body and spirit]” or anything of the sort):

And the Lord God formed the man (i.e., Adam’s body) from the dust of the ground, then blew into his nostrils the life-giving breath (i.e., his spirit), and [thus] the man became a *living person*.      Genesis 2:7

Two elements are clearly present here: 1) the body, formed from the earth; 2) the spirit, breathed into the body by the Lord. The result of the combination of body and spirit is that the first man “became a living *nephesh* (*psyche* in Greek)”. Even if we were to translate *nephesh-psyche* here as “soul”, the distinctions made above should now be clear even so. Notice that the verse does

not say that the Lord also created a soul/person as some third, distinct element. Quite the contrary. When the two true elements of Man's constitution combine, **he** (i.e., in his entirety) becomes **a** soul/person (*nephesh*), so that beyond all argument, *nephesh* in this most critical of all anthropological passages represents the **whole person** (i.e., the combination of body and spirit to produce a single "living person" is what is being described, not the origination of some third, discrete part of that person). That is why wherever the word *nephesh* is used in the Old Testament, and wherever the word *psyche* is used in the New Testament, one can almost invariably translate these words "person" or "individual" or "self" (or make use of some other personal pronoun) in place of the misleading "soul" (compare the KJV renderings of the following: Prov.19:8; Is.32:6; 46:2; Lk.9:24-25; Acts 7:14; 1Pet.3:20):

Any **person** (*nephesh*) who sins unintentionally ...      Leviticus 4:2

Instead of consistently using the word "soul", for example, the NASB translates *nephesh* as "person" more than 70 times, and in various pronominal ways (i.e. "yourself", "herself", "themselves", etc.) another 70 or so times. The translation "life" or "lives" is used 182 times. On the other hand, "soul" is used as a translation for *nephesh* in less than 50% (238) of its total occurrences. Although this ratio is not as impressive in the New Testament in the case of the parallel *psyche*, the Greek equivalent to *nephesh*, still "person" is used 4 times, and "life" 43 times (compared to 47 times for "soul"). These numbers make it absolutely clear that in many if not the majority of instances in the Bible, the English word "soul" is irrefutably both inadequate and inappropriate to translate *nephesh-psyche*, a fact which in and of itself is sufficient to demonstrate that the traditional understanding of the "soul" as some third element in the nature of Man is equally inappropriate and inadequate. As it is used in the Bible (i.e., to translate *nephesh-psyche*), the term "soul" always has the **entire person** in view (because that is what *nephesh-psyche* really means: "the man became **a living person**"). This is also why the Bible consistently distinguishes between the real inner person (i.e., the human spirit as we saw above) and the body which houses it as the only two discrete parts of the divinely created human nature:

"And do not fear those who can kill your body, but are not able to kill your self (*psyche*). But fear rather the One who is able to destroy both your self (*psyche*) and your body in hell."  
Matthew 10:28

But [Jesus] was speaking about the temple of **His** body (i.e., two elements here: Him and His body).      John 2:21

I know a man, [a believer] in Christ – fourteen years earlier such a one was snatched up to the third heaven (**in his body perhaps, or out of it**, I don't know – God knows). And I know that this man (**in his body perhaps, or out of it**, I don't know – God knows) was snatched up to paradise, and heard inexpressible words which are not permissible for a man to speak.      2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 12:2-4

Being creatures who possess both body and spirit, it is also true that these two parts of our nature are intimately related. As we have suggested above and shall revisit in greater detail immediately below, the human spirit is, at present, limited in its capabilities of expression because of the limitations of our present bodies (Matt.26:41). Currently, our spirit has to work *through* our body (which is constantly struggling against the human spirit's will). For these reasons, the writers of scripture frequently refer to people in terms of the **whole person**, in which case the word "soul" (*nephesh-psyche*) is often the term of choice. But it is critical to understand that by "soul", the entire human being, body and spirit, is meant – the one thing that "soul" (*nephesh-psyche*) **never** means in scripture is the immaterial part of Man **exclusively**.

This principle actually helps to clarify passages of scripture which are often taken to be support for the trichotomist position:

For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even to the point of being able **to divide the spirit from its earthly life** (lit., the "soul") and the marrow from its bones; [The Word] acts as a judge of the thoughts and intentions of our heart. Hebrews 4:12

Just as the marrow cannot normally be separated from the bone without destroying life (especially from the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. perspective), so the spirit is, for all practical purposes, one with the life it enjoys in the body – only the Word of God, the most penetrating force in the world, could make such a distinction.

And may the God of peace Himself sanctify you **in every part**, and, may your **spirit, life** (lit. "soul"), **and body** be preserved **completely intact** and without blame at the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:23

"Life", or "soul" is here sandwiched in between the spirit and the body, because "life" (or "soul") is the result of body and spirit being combined by the Lord (Gen.2:7). Only in this union of spirit and body, complete and intact, can there be a "living soul", a "living being" (Gen.2:7):

For this reason it has also been written of the first Adam: "The man became a living person (*nephesh*)"; [but] the last Adam, [Christ, became] a life-giving spirit. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:45

For Adam and for us, the body is *psychikon*, i.e., attuned to the "soul" or earthly "physical life" we now lead in these present bodies of corruption, but when we follow Christ in resurrection, it will be *pneumatikon*, i.e., attuned to the human spirit and to the eternal life that we shall live with Him forever. In the verses that precede and follow 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:45, Paul explains this principle, and so it is worth our while to quote the passage at length here:

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. The body sown is corruptible, the one raised incorruptible. The body sown is dishonorable, the one raised glorious. The body sown is

weak, the one raised powerful. The body sown is *suitied to physical life*, the one raised *to spiritual life*. If there is a physical body (and there patently is), then there is also a spiritual one. For, so it has also been written: “Adam, the first man, became a *physical being* (*nephesh*), possessing life, but Christ, the last Adam, became a *spiritual being*, bestowing life.” However it is not the spiritual body, but the physical body which comes first, and the spiritual body follows. The first man was earthly, being taken from the ground. The second Man is heavenly. And as was the earthly man, so also are we of the earth. And as is the heavenly Man, so also shall we be when we too take on heavenly form. For just as we have born the image of the earthly man, so also shall we bear the image of the heavenly Man.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:42-49

The body is a home for the spirit, and *this* body we now inhabit is more “soulish” (i.e., more attuned to the physical life we now lead), while the resurrection body will be more attuned to our spirit, giving our spirit much greater rein than we can now even imagine for our service to and appreciation of the Lord:

For at the present time our perception [of heavenly things] is like [viewing] a dim reflection in a mirror. But then [when we meet the Lord] we will see [Him] face to face. Now I have only partial knowledge, but then my knowledge [of Him] will be complete, just as He has always known me.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:12

b) The heart: interface between body and spirit: The word “soul” is not the only biblical word that refers to the whole person, a combination of spirit and body into a living human being. The word “heart” (Hebrew: *lebh*, *bl* or *lebhahb*, *bbl*; Greek: *kardia*, *καρδια*) likewise refers to the human being as a unity, but with a special twist: scripture uses the term “heart” to refer to the whole person from an *internal* point of view, focusing on and encompassing all the facets of the inner life (e.g., mentality, volition, emotion, conscience, etc.):

Many are the plans of a man’s *heart*, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.

Proverbs 19:21

The “heart”, then is the Bible’s word for the *interface* between the body and the spirit. That is to say, when scripture mentions the “heart”, it is referring to the inner spiritual, mental and emotional functioning of our person, of our human spirit thinking, planning, emoting, deciding, *all through the apparatus of the body* (via the brain, the mind, etc.). In our present constitution, the body is a tool for our spirit’s expression, but a delimiting one. For example, genetic, developmental and environmental factors have a great deal to do with our current capacity for thought and memory, for emotional control and expression, in a way that will not be true of our resurrection body (which will be *pneumatikon*, i.e., designed to give our spirit full expression: 1Cor.15:44). When that great day of our resurrection arrives, we shall no longer be subject to the

limitations and the temptations of the home we now inhabit. But as things stand now, here in this present body of corruption, the limitations are severe, and the temptations intense. “It has not yet appeared what we shall be[come]” (1Jn.3:2), but what we are now, *who* we really are now deep inside is best summed up by the “heart” in its scriptural usage, for “heart” is the essence of our inner selves, where only God can know our true thoughts, our true motives:

For the *heart* is more inscrutable than anything else and beyond curing [of its duplicity]. Who [among men] can [really] know [what] it [is thinking]? “I am the Lord, the One who probes the *heart* and tests [a man’s] motives, to repay everyone according to the path he [walks], in fitting recompense for [all] he does”.  
Jeremiah 17:9-10

As to the term heart, in Hebrew, Greek and English, it does refer in secular usage to the physical organ that pumps life-sustaining blood throughout our physical bodies. Its selection as the “pith” of who and what we are as individuals is, therefore, no accident. As the queen among our bodily organs, at the center of our physical being, and inextricably bound up with the circulation of the blood, a fluid recognized from earliest times as essential to our continued physical existence, the “heart” was a natural choice to designate our inner person. “Blood is the [symbol of] the life-soul” (Deut.12:23) – *physical life*, that is, and it is in the heart that we generally imagine this life to be concentrated. This is why Old Testament scriptures connect the blood with the *nephesh*, the “soul” (Gen.9:4): when the blood flows out, so does the physical part of life, just as when the breath-spirit departs, so does the spiritual part of life. We can see the end of the physical life in the blood spilled upon the ground, but the spirit’s departure is invisible:

Who knows whether a man’s spirit rises upward or whether the breath of the beasts goes down to the earth below? Ecclesiastes 3:21

In spite of the body’s corrupted sin nature (Rom.7:18), God has demonstrated very clearly through His superintendence of its development (Job 10:8-12; Ps.119:73; 139:13-16; Is.44:2, 21, 24) and His loving provision for it (Matt.6:25-34) that He is “for” this body we now possess (1Cor.6:13). We are the human spirit, not the body (2Cor.10:2-6), but we live in the body, and the battle we fight for the Lord, we fight out on the battleground of the heart (the inner combination of the two), endeavoring to make our entire life, inner and outer, well-pleasing and acceptable to Him:

For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but are powerful for God, for the destruction of strongholds, destroying sophistries and every presumption that raises itself up against the knowledge of God, and taking every thought prisoner so as to obey Christ.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:4-5

But I perceive another law in my bodily members, waging war against the law in my mind and taking me prisoner – [a prisoner to] this law of sin that dwells in my body.  
Romans 7:23

By this we know that we are of the truth, and before Him we persuade our heart, that if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows everything.

1<sup>st</sup> John 3:20

c) The word “soul” used as a synonym for “heart”: Finally, it is necessary to point out that there are times when instead of “heart”, the center of the “living being” we now are (thanks to the union of our spirit and our body), writers of scripture employ “soul” as a term synonymous to “heart”. This development is common enough in literature. The specific literary figure involved is called *synecdoche*, the whole being substituted for the part. In the case of the use of “soul” for “heart”, the whole of our “living person”(“soul”) is substituted for the nucleus of that person (i.e., our “heart”, where all thoughts, emotions, decisions and pangs of conscience occur). This substitution has parallels in English: “my *very being* longs for thee”. Problems of interpretation only arise if one mistakenly takes this common literary device to mean that somehow the “soul” is a separate entity of our makeup (rather than the entire “being” we have seen it to be, encompassing our body and spirit in a living union):

You shall love the Lord your God with all your *heart* and with all your *soul* (i.e., your whole person) and with all your might. Deuteronomy 6:5

As a man thinks in his *soul* (i.e., his “heart”; cf. KJV), so he is. Proverbs 23:7

## 5. The Creation of Eve

Up until now we have been speaking of mankind in the generic sense, “Man” with a capital “m”, a term which comprises both genders of our species. Before we move on to the original status of our first parents in the garden of Eden along with their temptation, fall and judgment, we must first consider what the Bible has to say about the creation of Eve and its implications. To appreciate the nature of Satan’s attack on Adam and Eve and the consequences of their sin to all subsequent relations between men and women, it is first necessary to understand, by way of preface, that the status of the relationship between the first man and the first woman in paradise *before* the fall was very different from what would obtain when they had been expelled from the garden of Eden *after* the fall:

Then the Lord God said, “It is not a good thing for the man to be alone. I will make for him a *helper compatible with him*”. Now the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky from the dust of the ground and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever he called any living thing, that became its name. So Adam gave names to every beast and to all the birds of the sky and to every wild creature, but he did not find [one that could be] a helper compatible with him. Then the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and when he was asleep, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh behind it. And the Lord God sculpted the rib which He had taken from the man into a woman, then He brought her to Adam. And Adam said, “This now is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She shall be called woman,

because from man she was taken”. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, for the two will become a single body.  
Genesis 2:18-24

As it was with Adam, so the creation of Eve’s body is unique. Neither of our first parents were born, Adam’s body being formed from the dust of the ground and Eve’s constructed from part of Adam’s. In terms of her inner essence, however, that is to say her human spirit, we have no additional information given in the passage above. What we do have, however, is the statement in Genesis 1:27 that delineates the creation of the spiritual essence of both Adam and Eve:

Then God said, “Let us make Man (i.e., mankind) in our image, according to our likeness, so that he may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over the beasts and over the whole earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth”. So God created the man (i.e. Adam) in His image; in the image of God He created him; *male and female* He created *them* (i.e., both Adam and Eve). Genesis 1:26-27

Verse twenty-six clearly applies to all human beings, so that we may say that all mankind in a corporate sense must possess the image and likeness of God, and, consequently, the mandate to respond to God’s authority. Neither of these verses supply any basis for finding a *spiritual* difference between men and women. It must be assumed, therefore, that the human spirits of men and women are essentially the same, and that the mention of male and female categories in the following verse is strictly a reference to our respective *bodies*.

The first point (that of identical spiritual essence between men and women) is easily buttressed by scripture. In Christ, a spiritual relationship, there is “no male or female” (Gal.3:28); men and women are equally “fellow heirs of the gift of eternal life” (1Pet.3:7); and, in eternity, both are relieved of the institution of marriage with its respective biblical roles (Matt.22:30). We may also make a persuasive “argument from silence” and add that in all the passages of the Bible that speak of our hope, our resurrection and reward, one searches in vain for any evidence of significant distinction between men and women in eternity based on gender.

As joint possessors of an identical spiritual essence, moreover, men and women thus both have the same *opportunity* and the same *responsibility* of responding to God’s authority in an appropriate way (i.e., we each have both the “image” and the “likeness” of God to which the opportunity of free will and the responsibility of free will correspond respectively). In Eden, a perfect world without sin, we have every reason to believe that the issue of relative authority between Adam and Eve was in fact a non-issue because of the absence of sin and the perfect circumstances of Eden (see below). It is only after the fall that the relationship between husband and wife comes to turn on the issue of relative authority (a situation that will obtain only in this corrupt world). Just as the male role was altered by the fall (i.e., Satan usurped Man’s rulership over the earth and the perfection of Eden was replaced with the toil and hardship of this present world), so also the female role was changed dramatically in respect to authority relationships. For this reason, scripture is careful neither to deny woman’s spiritual equality, nor to minimize the post-fall authority of the husband despite her spiritual equality evident in the Genesis

account. For before God we are all equal, but in this present corrupt body, we all find ourselves under various forms of authority, all ultimately delegated by God, and our proper response to that authority is intimately connected to the spiritual conflict that now rages unseen all around us (Eph.6:11-12):

For man did not come from woman, but woman from man. Moreover, man was not created because of woman, but woman because of man. For this reason, a woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head (i.e., properly arranged hair) **because of the angels**. However, **in the Lord**, woman does not [have priority] over man, nor does man [have priority] over woman. For just as women are begotten by men, so men are birthed by women. **But everything comes from God.** 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:8-12

This passage clearly affirms what we have stated above, namely, that there are two ways of looking at this issue which are only superficially contradictory. Creation teaches both of these principles (just as Paul outlines them above): 1) the authority of the husband over the wife; and 2) the equality of men and women before God. Paul switches the order in which these two principles are treated in Genesis 1:26-27. He first reproves the Corinthian woman for tearing and disheveling their hair in mourning after the pagan manner (a practice that shames our hope in the resurrection: cf. Deut.14:1; Mic.1:16). Using the priority of creation as an argument for their obedience on this point, Paul argues that such a practice dishonors their husbands by effacing the symbol of respect they are due by this priority of creation (cf. 1Tim.2:13). However, having established the obligation for the Corinthian women to respond to their husbands' authority on this point of abuse, he is quick to anticipate the false conclusion that men are somehow "better" than women in the eyes of God. In truth, he tells us, we are all equal "in the Lord", with absolutely no advantage accruing to the male gender, nor any disadvantage to the female gender. This lesson too, Paul reminds us, is taught by the natural order of creation: since neither men nor women can exist without the other, it stands to reason that God does not place a premium on either gender. And in fact, all things originate from the creative hand of God, so that neither gender has any grounds for boasting – all of us are subordinate to God's authority. This last point – that "everything comes from God" – is crucial. Whatever authority a husband has over a wife, an employer over an employee, a government official over a citizen, a pastor over a member of his congregation, all these forms of authority have been delegated by God for His own wise and sovereign purposes, and it is well to remember that there is not a man nor a woman who is not subject to many forms of God's delegated authority as long as he or she continues in this present life. The predominate reason for the current distinction in authority between the sexes is the marriage relationship and the obligations it places upon both parties, but in eternity, there will be "no marrying nor giving in marriage" (Matt.22:30).

The present status quo of authority distinctions in the institution of marriage will not obtain in eternity, where there will be no corruption and no marriage. The relationship between the first husband and wife in Eden, however, occupies a middle ground between our present circumstances and our future hope. There was marriage in paradise (and certain central points of that marriage relationship continue today as they were in the beginning: Matt.19:3-9). But the

specific delineation of the husband's authority over the wife which we find stated in principle in Genesis chapter three (and spelled out in detail in the New Testament epistles: Eph.5:21-33; Col.3:18-19) was apparently lacking for the simplest of all possible reasons: it was unnecessary.

### III. Status Quo in Paradise

Eden, whose very name means "delight" in Hebrew, was a place of perfection. Nothing was lacking that could contribute to Man's legitimate happiness, nor was anything present that might make life bitter. God placed Adam in charge of the garden, making him God's delegated authority, God's "regent" on earth (Gen.1:26-30). The duties that fell to Adam's lot as a result of God's charge seem to have been entirely satisfying and enjoyable, while at the same time none too taxing or onerous:

- The garden was irrigated by a system of rivers and mist specially constructed by the Lord (Gen.2:6; 10-14).
- The trees brought forth a pleasant variety of sustenance "pleasing to the sight and enjoyable for eating" apart from any horticultural care (Gen.2:9).
- Boredom was not an issue, for God provided satisfying intellectual and physical labor, such as the classification and categorization of the complex and intricate system of flora and fauna He had created (Gen.2:19-20a).
- Nor was spiritual sustenance lacking, for the Lord placed in the center of the garden the tree of life for spiritual refreshment (Gen.2:9 with Rev.22:2), and visited our first parents for spiritual fellowship after their working day was done (Gen.3:8).

The one want Adam had, God remedied almost immediately, that is, his need for companionship. The elimination of this deficiency is, after all, God's stated reason for creating Eve: "It is not a good thing for the man to be alone" (Gen.2:18). Obviously, the Lord was aware of this fact before He created Adam (a point emphasized by the mandate in Gen.1:28 to "be fruitful and multiply"). But Adam was a human being, the exact same divine mix of body and spirit that each one of us are, so that God did not deem it appropriate to merely supply him with a mate in the manner of animals. Adam is instead allowed to discover his need for companionship through a heuristic process of observation (Gen.2:19-20), with the result that he can appreciate both his own need and God's gracious gift of Eve to him (Gen.2:23):

I will make for him a helper compatible with him.                      Genesis 2:18b

This verse is crucial to our understanding of the point we are now discussing, namely that things were different in the garden. Eve is not to be a servant, but, literally, "a help" (Hebrew: *rzi*, 'ezer). Secondly and critically, she is to be "someone who corresponds to him" (Hebrew: *vdgnk*,

*ceneghdo*), that is, someone who complements and fulfills him in all compatibility. The closeness and intimacy of the relationship between our first parents foreshadowed in this verse is underscored by Eve's creation. The Lord's formation of Eve's body from one of Adam's ribs adds the physical dimension to the spiritual one outlined in Genesis 2:18b above. In short, it would have been impossible for Adam and Eve to have been any closer, body and spirit, and still have been two distinct people. When the Lord presents to Adam this wife who was in every way an answer to his search for companionship, his words bespeak not only gratitude, but an appreciation for this God-given relationship of exceptional intimacy and closeness:

And Adam said, "This now is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She shall be called woman, because from man she was taken". Genesis 2:23

Ideally, based on the pattern in paradise, the marriage relationship should even now continue to be what it was then: closer than even the closest of all other human relationships, the parent-child relationship:

For this reason, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, for the two will become a single body. Genesis 2:24

Scripture, then, while emphasizing the closeness of the union between Adam and Eve, does not provide many specifics on the issue of authority between the first man and woman prior to the fall. We know that Adam was created first (cf. 1Tim.2:13), and that Eve was created for Adam, not the other way around (cf. 1Cor.11:8-9). However, neither the Genesis account, nor the New Testament references intimate an authority structure between husband and wife similar to the one instituted in Genesis chapter three by the Lord as a result of the fall of that first couple (Gen.3:16b).

The reason for this absence, as suggested above, is that such an authority structure was unnecessary in paradise. For instance, Adam and Eve had no monetary and no sexual problems. Given the extremely high percentage of marital difficulties today attributable to these two factors alone, one can appreciate immediately that this first marriage was operating on a much different "battlefield" than every marriage since. Furthermore, and perhaps more to the point, our first parents were sinless before they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Neither Adam nor Eve was initially capable of being selfish or hurtful, self-centered or insensitive. The garden was a world full of intriguing possibilities, all of them perfectly legitimate – with one exception. As long as our first parents abstained from the forbidden fruit, nothing was withheld from them, nothing was lacking for them, no personal ambition or desire that they could in innocence conceive was denied them. In short, there was essentially no area where authority might even have any opportunity to function between the first man and the first woman, for it was completely unnecessary. There was no occasion for Eve's will to bump into Adam's, because there was nothing that Adam could or would tell Eve to do or not to do, even if such a thing had occurred to him or to her (and that is doubtful given their innocence and their perfect surroundings). Indeed, *the only* negative prohibition was the command to abstain from

eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and this command came from God Himself and was equally applicable to both Adam and Eve. As long as they both followed God's will on this point, marital problems were an impossibility, and, therefore, the issue of "who was in charge" was an entirely moot point.

In status quo in the garden of Eden, then, God had provided this new species of spiritual creatures who, unlike the angels, possessed physical bodies, every means for complete fulfillment of their lives (both spiritual and physical). Adam and Eve (and their progeny, had it come to that) had the opportunity to experience the never-ending bounty of God's provision in paradise, perfect in every way, yet completely apart from sin. Even the short span of time that this state of perfection did continue was sufficient to demonstrate to the fallen angels the futility of their own designs and the hollowness of Satan's promises. For the perfect mix of spirit *and* body which God provided for our first parents was undeniably superior to any creature-possession that the devil could ever hope to engineer. Satan, of course, did not waste time in analyzing the situation, and soon found a devious method to induce our first parents to throw paradise away. But before we cast too wistful a glance back to the garden, we should consider that this fiasco too was anticipated by God's plan, and that the ultimate state of redeemed humankind will be even more glorious than Adam and Eve could ever have imagined in the garden, on that blessed day when we rise incorruptible in the new bodies that God has preordained for us who love Him and His Son.

#### **IV. The Fall of Man**

The creation of a new species of spiritual being, capable of moral response to God's authority, was rightly perceived by Satan as a threat, even a direct challenge to his continued existence. There could be no doubt that Adam and Eve were "aimed" at him. Mankind was ...

- Placed on the same world (now re-constructed) from which the devil had been so unceremoniously evicted after his rebellion (compare Gen.1:1 with 1:2).
- Entrusted with God's delegated authority over the earth and its creatures – a charge very similar to the one which Satan had abused.
- Commanded to multiply.

This last point must have been particularly disturbing to the devil. In perfect conditions, it would not be long until the population of this new species, so much like his fallen minions in all the morally important ways, expanded to the point of equaling the numbers of his followers. At that point, Satan and his angels would be de facto replaced in God's universe, person for person. And when earth was filled with a population of obedient, God-serving, morally responsible creatures, all responding to the Lord in the exact way that Satan and his followers should have done, well, the lake of fire had already been put into place at this point (Matt.25:41; Rev.20:10), and

judgment on Satan had already been passed (Jn.16:11). There could have been little doubt in the mind of the devil and his angels that their time was running out. All wishful thinking that might suggest otherwise would have been removed by the realization that this new creature also possessed a God-given, God-designed **body**, the central point, as we have posited it, in both Satan's original indictment of God and in his temptation of his would-be followers as well. One would have thought that, by now, Satan and his angels would have realized the impossibility of out-thinking God (let alone of out-maneuvering or of out-fighting Him). Rather than to throw himself upon God's mercy, however, the devil decided once again to take matters into his own hands.

## 1. The Temptation

That Satan should, upon recognizing the threat posed to him by the unhindered multiplication of mankind, choose to fight tooth and claw, is a clear indication of the degree to which he and his followers had already been confirmed in their evil. The devil's attitude is unequivocal: if Man is the proof of his rebellion, then destroy the proof; if Man is the replacement for him, then eliminate the replacement. Do not respond to God; rather, oppose God at every turn in every possible way.

a. God's last olive branch: The question may well be asked whether God's creation of Man did not have an additional objective besides checkmating, then replacing Satan and his minions. Did there not still remain some avenue for grace? Before the temptation and fall of our first parents, when Man had not yet fallen into sin, Adam and Eve were, in a moral sense, very much like the reprobate angels before their fall (with the notable exception of the limitation of their knowledge, a point to which we shall return below). At that point, our first parents were not in need of a Messiah. They had not yet passed the point of no return, and the devil's record in relationship to them, at any rate, was still unmarked. God had restored the earth; could He not also restore Satan and his followers, if they were willing?

Satan and his fallen angels must have observed Adam and Eve for a considerable amount of time before striking. What if this observation had led them to rethink their conclusions, to realize the impossibility of struggling against the God of the universe? What if they had seen reaffirmed in His restoration of earth and His creation of and gracious provision for this new species a glimmer of the grace that characterizes His perfect Person? What if they had come to see that the limitations of spirits in bodies (in the innocence of initial creation) were significant, and that their untrammelled spirituality was not, in fact, due to any desire on God's part to deprive them of anything? In short, what if Man was a lesson to the fallen angels just as he has come to be to the elect ones? Of the boundlessness of God's love and mercy there can certainly be no doubt. Indeed, we can really only dimly appreciate how much the infinite God loves His creatures, "not wishing for any to perish" (2Pet.3:9; cf. 1Tim.2:4), knowing even the number of the hairs on our heads (Lk.12:7), searching out every lost sheep (Matt.18:12-14), every missing coin (Lk.15:8-10). These scriptures, to be sure, refer to human beings, but God is also concerned for His

angels, “calling each of them by name” (Ps.147:4), so that “not one of them is missing” (Is.40:26). What, then, if Adam and Eve in paradise were the devil’s “last chance” to recognize through observing them the power of God, the justice of God, the grace of God, the mercy of God? The placement of Adam and Eve in the garden is often recognized to be an action taken by God against the devil, and rightly so. But what if, at the same time, it was also the Lord’s last olive branch to these wayward creatures, a last appeal to his reprobate children to return to Him?

In the event, by attacking Adam and Eve and attempting to destroy them, Satan gave undeniable confirmation of the evil that was in him, and set in motion the inexorable machinery by which God is defeating and replacing him. But it is especially in our God’s provision following the fall that we see His grace and goodness, His deep love for His creatures, shining through so clearly. Having fallen into sin, we needed a Savior, and He has provided us with Jesus Christ. Can there be any greater proof of the love that God feels for His creatures, of the hurt He experiences on their behalf, than that He was willing to hand His own Son over to death to rescue us? God’s provision of our Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate refutation of all the devil’s lies. There can be absolutely no doubt about the justice and mercy of a God who would sacrifice His own Son in order to pay for the sins of His fallen creatures (justice) and so rescue them from death (mercy). There can be no greater demonstration of His love:

In this God’s love has been revealed in us, that He sent His only Son into the world that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atonement for our sins. 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:9-10

In rejecting the final demonstration of the grace of God manifest in the creation of Adam and Eve, Satan and his followers have voluntarily taken up the cup of His wrath, determined now in their hardness of heart to drink it to the dregs, and so fill up the full measure of their sins (cf. 1Thes.2:16b). This seemingly irrational conduct on the part of Satan and his followers is reminiscent of Pharaoh’s opposition to the Lord’s demands to “let My people go” – a hardening of the heart to an absolutely unbelievable degree that in the process demonstrates God’s power, justice, and mercy. The all-out opposition to God’s plan that next transpires in our story lucidly demonstrates the confirmed sinfulness of Satan and his angels, heaping up veritable mountains of incontrovertible proof of the devil’s guilt and deserved fate.

We find in scripture no hint of any desire on the devil’s part to take note of God’s gracious provision to another, less powerful, but morally similar species, no indication that “learning” or “repentance” ever seriously entered the demons’ collective mind. Quite the contrary, the ferocious and devious attack of Satan upon Adam and Eve serves to confirm beyond all argument to the contrary that God was right and righteous in His judgment of the devil and his followers, for Satan’s response to this new development was to destroy, to annihilate, to *murder* these new creatures at the very inception of things (Jn.8:44). Let there be no doubt: but for the restraining hand of God, the devil and his demon army would even now make quick work of all of us who draw breath upon the earth (cf. Job chapters 1-2). In His grace, of course, God was not about to allow the devil and his angels to blast Adam and Eve off of the planet by means of their superior

angelic power. Satan, therefore, counterattacked in the most effective way that was open to him: temptation.

b. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil: The first man and woman, as we have already seen, were apparently free to do anything and everything that their innocent hearts could conceive. The one exception to this principle of complete liberty to enjoy God, His creation, and each other in a positive and wholesome way was the prohibition that God gave Adam against eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

Then the Lord God gave orders to the Man as follows: “You may certainly eat from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – from it you may not eat, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die”. Genesis 2:16-17

Before discussing what this tree was and why it was in Eden in the first place, one salient point, often overlooked in discussions of these verses, needs to be addressed: God in His grace not only told Adam not to eat; He also told him *why* not. Under no obligation to do more than make the matter plain through a straight-forward prohibition, the Lord nonetheless reinforced the ban on eating fruit from this one particular tree by adding an absolutely truthful explanation of the penalty for disobedience. This is no small point. Adam and Eve may have been in a condition of “innocence”, but that does not mean that they were childish or child-like, incapable of understanding anything beyond a flat “no!”. Indeed, their level of intelligence was most likely far superior to our own, uncorrupted as it was by sinfulness in any way.

God did not treat Adam and Eve like children, because they were every bit as mature and perceptive as any of us (only without sin). His disclosure of the pertinent facts was full and complete, and the critically important truth that death would follow disobedience turned out to be exactly the point where Satan did ultimately attack (by distorting this truth, as we shall see below). Nevertheless, God, in full knowledge of what would happen, still did not deny Adam and Eve this essential knowledge: as spiritual creatures morally bound to respond to His authority, it was important for our first parents to know not only what was prohibited, but also the consequences of disobeying the prohibition. In the perfection of the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve did not have a need to know about good and evil, but they did need to know the punishment for rebelling against God, for without such knowledge, the seriousness, the permanence, and the utter irrevocability of such a sin could hardly have been appreciated. Adam and Eve did indeed understand the gravity of violating this command, because the Lord God Himself made it clear to them. To have done otherwise would not have been in keeping with His perfect character.

As to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil itself, it is important to remember that it was planted (and thus created) by God Himself:

Now the Lord God caused to spring up from the ground every sort of tree which was pleasant to behold and good for food, and the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Genesis 2:9

This is essential to understand, because this famous tree, stemming from God's creative hand, was *not* evil in any way. Rather, eating from it (in violation of God's specific and unequivocal commandment) gave the partaker an expanded ability to distinguish between good and evil, it gave the ability to be "knowing good and evil". For sinful persons in the midst of the devil's world, the ability to distinguish between good and evil, between "right and wrong" as we should say, is of tremendous importance. This expansion of the natural conscience is now an integral part of our physical makeup as a direct result of our first parents' sinful partaking of the forbidden fruit (Rom.2:14-16). For those naturally inclined to be sinful, a clear grasp of what is sin (and what is not) is indispensable for navigating a safe course through the devil's world (not to mention being an indicator of our utter sinfulness and need for a Savior: cf. Gal.3:23-25). But for two perfect people in paradise, insulated from the evil in the universe authored by Satan, such knowledge was completely unnecessary. They were not subject to temptation or capable of sin in any way whatsoever – with the single exception of the prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a prohibition with a corresponding penalty out of all possible proportion to the pleasure of eating its fruit (easily duplicated from almost any other tree in the garden). Here is the wisdom and grace of God: Adam and Eve had no inordinate desire for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and no need for or independent interest in attaining a knowledge of "good and evil", ideas for which they lacked any frame of reference entirely. But God in His grace and in His wisdom so provided for them that if they *should* violate His command (and so experience immediate spiritual death, entering into a state of sin), they would then also acquire the knowledge that they would then require for their new fallen state: i.e., a knowledge of what was good and what was evil, of what was right and what was wrong. For, *after sinning*, this would be the only way for them to see God's goodness and their own sinfulness, and so discern the devil's deception.

A second tree stood beside the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the very middle of the garden of Eden: the tree of life. The tree of life was the most sublime of all the flora which God had created. Its fruit gave spiritual refreshment and provided physical rejuvenation (Gen.3:22 ; cf. Rev.22:2). It was the focal point of Adam and Eve's universe, and most likely the place where they met with the Lord "in the cool of the day" (cf. Gen.3:8). Had they merely refrained from that other, prohibited tree, they could have, they would have lived forever in bliss in the middle of this perfect paradise, constantly refreshed and restored by the fruit from the tree of life.

So why was it there, this other tree, this tree of a type of knowledge for which Adam and Eve had no need whatsoever, would only need, in fact, if they should disobey God and eat of its fruit? Why did the Lord place it immediately beside the tree of life, the focus and means of refreshment and spiritual fellowship? The answer to these questions is simple enough. By creating a tree whose fruit was forbidden to them, God gave our first parents the option of *not* following His

will, a will that clearly had only their best interests at heart, for violation and rebellion would result in immediate spiritual death. And just as God did not hide from them the consequences of disobedience, neither did He hide away the tree of the knowledge of good and evil itself. Nothing could be clearer about the choice Adam and Eve faced: life and death stood side by side in these two trees, the one a source of life and blessing which they experienced every day, the other a source of death, prohibited by God *and explained* by God (as we have seen). God wants worshipers, followers, believers who *want* Him (cf. Jn.4:23-24). In terms of power, He is more than capable of forcing us to do His will, but that is not the sort of God we have. Our God is a loving, merciful, *good* God, who will not force us to choose Him if we are determined in our hearts to rebel from Him. But as is clear from scripture, from human experience, and from the record of Adam and Eve, He always makes the issue crystal clear for us: to choose for Him is to follow a path of grace that He has lovingly constructed for our good before the dawn of time; to choose against Him, to rebel against His will, *that* is what takes the effort, a self-willed, arrogant, self-deceptive “kicking against the goads” that, from its inception to its ruinous conclusion, must break through all the barriers of grace and love that He has constructed in our behalf to guide us back to the true path. As sinners at birth, we are not in the situation of “maintaining paradise” (as our first parents were), but rather of “accepting salvation”. Everything that God has constructed, all nature, all science, all we know and see and think and feel, declares His existence (Ps.19:1-4; Rom.1:18-21), and yet everything we observe about ourselves and our fellow man virtually shouts that we are sinful and in desperate need of His help, His salvation (Rom.7:7-11). As Adam and Eve in the garden merely had to follow the unmistakably clear guidance of God to avoid death, so they and we outside of the garden only need to follow the powerfully magnetic pull of God’s truth in the gospel of Jesus Christ to transcend death through Him (Jer.31:3; Hos.11:4; Jn.6:44-45):

And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to Myself. John 12:32

c. The devil’s strategy: In order to continue enjoying paradise, Adam and Eve, created perfect, had only to refrain from something God had personally told them would kill them. Moreover, they knew very well what God had told them not to do, and had every reason to believe that what He had said about the dire consequences of violating His prohibition was absolutely true. For their entire lives (the period between their creation and fall, however long), they had experienced nothing but the favor, the blessing, the goodness of God. Even more to the point, there was no reason whatsoever for them to violate His will on the point of abstaining from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In fact, it is entirely doubtful that in the absence of the devil’s clever attack it would ever even have occurred to our first parents to eat this forbidden fruit, let alone actually do so.

Satan’s motives in moving against Adam and Eve have already been discussed and are clear enough. The propagation of these new creatures, willing to respond to God’s will would not only be a demonstration that other creatures could and would be obedient to God, thus vindicating His character against satanic slander and demonstrating the righteousness of His condemnation of the

devil. The spread of perfect mankind would also form a natural replacement for Satan and his angels: Perfect human beings who chose not to sin would have made a perfect complement to the elect angels, and a fitting replacement for the fallen angels who would not choose to be reconciled to God.

We have no precise information as to how long the devil waited to launch his attack. It stands to reason that, given his own experience, Satan would want to give Adam and Eve time to sin on their own. After all, the devil had done so without temptation, and we may assume that part of his defense before God had been that any sort of creature would eventually act as he had acted (i.e., sooner or later fall into sin and rebellion against God). But even though Man had possessed a freedom of the will comparable to that of the angels, it soon became apparent to the devil that Adam and Eve were unlikely to sin against God – without a push. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil had not the intrinsic attraction for Adam and Eve that the usurpation of universal rule had for Satan and his angels. The reason for this relative lack of interest in transgressing the bounds that God had set for them was rooted in the relative limitations of their knowledge and abilities. As terrestrial, corporeal creatures, mankind did not (and does not) possess an inherent knowledge of the spiritual realities of the universe, and was at the time incapable of leaving the earth in any case. This lack of extensive and multifaceted knowledge (as possessed by the angels), coupled with the absence of angelic power and ability, thus turned out to be a strength in terms of our first parents' resistance to temptation (and is a reminder to us all that the more one has – of anything – the more tempted to arrogance one is). But every strength also has a concomitant weakness, and the devil was quick to assess the vulnerabilities of this new species.

Prohibited by God from destroying the first man and woman physically, the devil designed an ingenious spiritual attack instead. If Adam and Eve's mental and physical limitations (relative to the angels) made the possibility of self-initiated disobedience remote, these very same limitations might open them up to a more subtle assault. Our first parents' appreciation of the omnipotence, the magnitude, and, especially, the truthfulness of God fell far short of the angelic perception, and this turned out to be an exploitable avenue for the devil's strike. Satan's followers had possessed vast angelic knowledge and perception, but not physical bodies, so the devil had concentrated his efforts to tempt them in the latter area. Adam and Eve, on the contrary, had perfect physical bodies, but lacked the knowledge and perception of the angels precisely because of their physical limitations, and so it was toward these limitations that Satan directed his attack. It was her relative ignorance of the glory, the power, and the absolute veracity of God that would open Eve up to temptation along these lines, and, once successful, a similar failure on Adam's part to appreciate the magnitude of God's knowledge and faithfulness would lead him to follow suit. Satan saw his opportunity and seized it. The strategy was carefully conceived. If successful, it would disqualify mankind from being God's regent on earth (thus regaining for Satan some claim to the mastery of his former realm), and would place mankind in the same or at least an analogous situation to Satan and his angels: fallen from the grace of God and under sentence of divine judgment. It must have seemed to the devil a perfect plan, and, in his arrogance, it is doubtful he had any idea that his actions were destined to set in motion God's gracious plan of salvation for mankind in which God Himself would partake of humanity, wrest

the world from Satan's grasp and cleanse the universe of the devil and his followers once and for all. Just as Satan had failed to appreciate God's final olive branch (as offered in the example of Adam and Eve), so he failed to realize that the all wise God had anticipated his every move.

## 2. The Fall

It is extremely important for every believer in Jesus Christ to understand the devil's method in his temptation of Eve, because his essential tactic in tricking her is the same one which always lies behind his attacks, namely, distortion of the truth. Truth is the one essential issue for Christians (Jn.8:32). Truth is what we are all about. Truth is why we are here. Our God is the God of truth (Ps.31:5), and in truth we are to worship Him (Jn.4:24). Without faith in the truth, we cannot please Him (Heb.11:6), and only by listening to His truth can we grow close to Him and serve Him effectively (Zech.1:3-4; Mal.3:7; Jas.4:8). God's word is truth (Jn.14:6; cf. Jn.1:1; 1:14; 17:17). It is the word of God which Jesus, the Word of God (Jn.1:1), always emphasized (Jn.18:37b), and it is only by our acceptance of and allegiance to the living Word through the written word that we even become "believers" at all (Jas.1:18). That is to say, "believers" are those who accept and respond to the truth of what God has to say about His Son. The first principle of truth is Jesus Christ (Jn.14:6). Once we accept Him, the truth of what the Father and the Spirit say about Him (Jn.14:16-17), then we enter into a life of learning about Him, about what He has to say to us, about what He wants from us (1Tim.2:4). Everything that emanates from Him is truth, the prime example being His Son who is, in fact, "*the Truth*" (Jn.17:17). Our Christian lives involve a great many issues, activities, decisions, tests and trials, but central to everything we do and everything we are as Christians is this truth which comes from God. To the extent that we appropriate His truth, learn it, believe it, test it, rely on it, live by it and are ready to die for it, we advance, we grow, we honor Him. Apart from what He says, we can do nothing, for apart from the truth of God, we do not even know what to do or how to do it. No action, no thought, no word from our lips can be right, can be true, without the knowledge of, the belief in, and the commitment to God's truth, as Jesus' final prayer on our behalf shows so well:

I have given them Your word, and the world hated them, because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. For they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. So make them holy *by means of Your truth – Your word is truth*. And just as you sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. I am consecrating Myself for their sake, so that they too may be made holy *through truth*. John 17:14-19

Today, we know where to go to find the truth: God's truth is found in the Bible, "the word of God, the word of truth" (Jn.17:17; Heb.4:12). Now Adam and Eve did not have a Bible, but instead they had personal instruction from the Lord God Himself (an epiphany, or pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ). This brings up an interesting and important point: the case of Adam and Eve is just one in a series of scriptural examples that prove beyond any doubt that lack of

faith and failure to grow spiritually have nothing whatsoever to do with the form in which God has made His truth available. No vision, no sign, no dream, no epiphany, no personal appearance of God Himself, no rapture to the third heaven, nothing, in fact, will serve to turn unbelief into belief, simply because of its form. For every Paul on the road to Damascus, there are millions and billions of lost souls who would never have responded the way Paul did (as vouchsafed by the multitudes that rejected our Lord in person during His first advent, or the rebellious activities of the Exodus generation who had seen so many of God's mighty miracles first-hand). The hard heart of unbelief is more impenetrable than any material known to Man. But God is just, and faithful, and merciful, and He well knows what manner and means will reach those who truly wish to seek Him.

The personal appearance of the Lord in Eden to deliver His mandates did not keep our first parents from sinning, and when Jesus came in the flesh, His teaching was often rejected (indeed, He experienced the rejection of all but the most faithful of His disciples: Jn.1:11; 6:60; 6:66). Similarly, there are many people who blame their lack of faith upon the form in which God's truth is currently "packaged", assuming (in ignorance) that somehow the Bible is "not quite" God's inspired Word. Unbelief always manages to find an excuse (as it did in Jesus' day), and the devil always manages to exploit this lack of trust in God and His Word (as he did in the garden). The essence of Satan's strategy in attacking Adam and Eve was the same then as it is now, namely, to drive a wedge of deception between the believer (or potential believer) and the truth.

And the two of them, the man and his wife, were *nude*, but they felt no shame. And the serpent, more than any other wild creature which the Lord God had made, was *shrewd*.  
Genesis 2:25-3:1a

The Hebrew word '*arum* (*,vri*), rendered as "shrewd" above, is very difficult to translate into English. It refers to a complexity of character which may either be laudatory ("prudent, careful, circumspect") or derogatory ("wily, crafty, cunning"). Thus the King James translation is, in one sense, quite good, for "subtle" is one of only a handful of English adjectives that can bear the meaning of "deep and complicated" in reference to personality without choosing between positive and negative attribution. Now this is a very important issue in the interpretation of Genesis 3:1. The serpent, along with all other living things on the earth, was one of the Lord God's own creations (Gen.1:24-25). We cannot be sure of its appearance before it was cursed to crawl on its belly, but one thing of which we can be certain is that such a creature would never have been capable of (or interested in) tempting his human sovereigns to sin (cf. Gen.1:26 & 28). "Subtle" and "shrewd" bespeak a quality of animal personality without at the same time attributing to the serpent an innate malevolence – what it did, it did under the control and guidance of the devil (as we shall shortly see).

But within these famous verses of scripture is an important point often overlooked in exegesis: the final verse of chapter two is intimately connected with the opening verse of chapter three, and the paronomasia between "nude" and "shrewd" (i.e., between '*arom* and '*arum*: almost identical in the Hebrew) serves as a very deliberate connection and contrast. Adam and Eve are naked,

and so unsophisticated in the ways of the world are they that they do not even perceive the necessity for what is perhaps the most basic of all human conventions, the wearing of clothing. One should expect nothing less from our first parents before partaking of the fruit of the forbidden tree: they had no cognizance or understanding of the difference between good and evil since everything they saw, or touched, or experienced in any way *was good*. Certainly they felt no shame at being naked – they hadn't even a clue what shame was.

In the animal kingdom, the wild creature who contrasted most sharply to our first parents was the serpent. His careful, circumspect, shy behavior was very different from the innocently open and straight-forward conduct of Adam and Eve. This was animal behavior, of course, behavior in quite a different category from our own, but inevitably viewed by us (and our first parents) in anthropomorphic terms (in the same way that we observe distinct “personalities” in our pet cats and dogs). Adam and Eve would certainly have even more reason to think in these terms if, indeed, some of what these pre-fall creatures uttered was perceptible to them (a distinct possibility since Eve, after all, does not seem at all shocked when the serpent addresses her). By calling the serpent “subtle” or “shrewd”, scripture directs our attention to his *worldliness* in contrast to Adam and Eve's “nude” *innocence*, without, at the same time, making the serpent seem intrinsically bad (he certainly did not seem so to Adam and Eve before the fall). Thus the serpent was the perfect choice for Satan's attack, and apparently a creature very familiar to our first parents because of his uniqueness. Because his “personality” bespoke a careful “wisdom” of sorts, he was just the mouthpiece the devil was looking for to spread his lies.

And he said to the woman, “Did God *really* tell you not to eat from any tree in the garden?”      Genesis 3:1b

This is not a “Balaam's donkey” situation (cf. Num.22:28-30). This verse and the ones which follow clearly depict a casual conversation between Eve and the serpent, that is to say, not an uncommon event (in contrast to Balaam being addressed by his donkey, something which had never happened before). The first woman betrays no surprise at the fact that the serpent speaks to her, and it seems quite clear that this was not their first conversation. As a creature with a “special relationship” to Adam and Eve, the serpent was Satan's obvious choice as a vehicle (through possession of its body) for attacking our first parents. The identification of the devil with the serpent here in the first book of the Bible is most clearly presented in its final book:

And the great dragon, *the ancient serpent*, the one called Devil and Satan, was thrown down; even he who *deceives* the entire world was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.      Revelation 12:9

However, what should have caught Eve's attention was not *who* was speaking, but rather *what* was being said. For the serpent's question contains a number of subtle indications that all is not right:

- the serpent refers to the Lord God with the more familiar title “God”, thus subtly diminishing His authority and bringing Him down to Eve’s level (cf. Gen.3:8, 9, 13,14).
- the serpent evinces surprise that the Lord God would go so far as to prohibit her from doing *anything*, thus subtly suggesting that He has unfairly deprived her of something desirable.
- the serpent mis-states what the Lord God actually did tell Adam (Gen.2:16-17).

This last point is the most subtle of all. Typically, the devil’s attacks center around a distortion of God’s truth. Satan was not looking to plant a new and obviously false idea in Eve’s head. His strategy was much more devious than that. Satan had found a weak link in our first parents’ armor, and by mis-stating God’s very specific prohibition, he was probing that weakness. No one would have been more surprised than the devil had Eve agreed with the serpent’s question. Nor did he suppose that she would express ignorance on the subject. On the contrary, Satan fully expected Eve *to correct* her misguided pet (“Did God really tell you not to eat from *any* tree in the garden?” *expects* a negative response). This approach had two advantages:

1) Based upon his observations of the first woman over what might very well have been an extended period of time, it was clear to the devil that some sort of diversionary attack would be necessary. Otherwise, the bizarre event of her pet acting and talking more like Adam and herself than a subordinate animal lacking self-awareness would be bound to raise Eve’s suspicion (and this had to be avoided at all costs). This seemingly innocent question on the serpent’s part cried out for correction. The serpent’s assumption was wrong, oh so wrong, demonstrably wrong, since he had observed the first couple eating from many a tree in the garden for lo these many years. This point, of course, should have occurred to Eve. Although it is true that she had no idea her little pet had been taken over by the devil, the question was so ridiculous as to be troubling. But Satan had correctly discerned that Eve’s natural urge to correct, to “educate” this weaker creature, her maternal instinct, if you will, would override her suspicions, and draw her into the dialogue.

2) Satan had also observed that Eve’s understanding of the Lord God’s command was imprecise. It is very likely that Adam is the source of the additional “rider” appended to the Lord’s command “and that we must not touch it”. Adam, after all, had been the one to whom the Lord had given the command directly – before Eve’s creation (Gen.2:15-18). Here we see Adam’s natural urge to emphasize an important prohibition (his paternal instinct, if you will). But the imprecision, however well meant, gave Satan an opportunity. Once the devil had managed to get Eve engaged in this conversation, he was confident that her false appraisal of what exactly it was that God had said would provide the leverage he needed. For as soon as she began to question God on one point, Satan knew that everything He had commanded would then become subject to interpretation (and disposal at whim).

The devil's strategy as employed against Eve is thus critically important for us to understand today, for his tactics remain essentially the same: first, involve us in a "dialogue", some form of subtle temptation, verbal and otherwise, which engages our egos and our arrogance; second, use this dalliance with him to throw the slightest shadow of doubt upon some aspect of God's word, God's commands, or God's character; finally, as soon as a fracture of distrust, a fissure of failing belief, appears in our shield of faith, then slam home whatever wedge will fit the crack.

Our entire Christian experience is predicated upon an initial and an abiding faith, trust and belief in God through the Person of His Son Jesus Christ, the living Word, as expressed in His scriptures, the written word. Satan will always be lurking to sever us from this faith, and his most effective methodology in doing so can be clearly seen in his attack on Eve: that is, the perversion of the word of God. It is no accident that in both the first multiple book of the Bible (the Pentateuch or Torah), and in the last book of the Bible, we are severely warned not only against subtracting anything from the Bible, *but also about adding anything to it* (Deut.4:2; Rev.22:18). Both the omission of critical truth and the addition of non-truth play right into the devil's hands. For if he can get us to compromise on one point, anything else is possible.

Then the woman said to the serpent, "We *may* eat fruit from the trees in the garden."  
Genesis 3:2

Had Eve stopped there, the entire course of human history would have been radically different. But she was not content to correct the serpent's mis-statement (though, as we have suggested, the question itself should have given her pause). Instead, she allowed herself to be drawn into the discussion which clearly lies behind this loaded-question. The entire thrust of Satan's carefully planned assault is to get Eve thinking about and discussing God's commandment concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (without, at the same time, alerting her suspicion). Having disabused her pet of his false notion, Eve simply cannot stop herself from repeating and explaining her understanding of God's command, an understanding which was noticeably imperfect (as Satan must have known only too well). Let it be noted that the serpent, as an animal, had absolutely no need to know about this prohibition: the command not to eat had been directed by God to mankind only. The gratuitous nature of the lesson she proceeded to give the serpent should also have set off some sort of warnings in the back of Eve's mind, but it is clear from the biblical account that the process of temptation was, as it so often does, gaining momentum with every step of the dance.

"But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said that we must not eat from it, *and that we must not touch it*, lest we die". Genesis 3:3

Although Eve was eager to give the serpent a "lesson" in what God had and had not said, it was most unfortunate that she was so very quick to follow her pet in referring to the Lord God (His Name as used elsewhere in chapter three: Gen.3:8, 9, 13,14) by the much more familiar "God". Familiarity, as the proverb has it, often breeds contempt, and the lack of respect engendered by this breach of etiquette was to cost Eve dearly. Whenever we, as Christians, seek to make it a matter of personal policy to always sanctify God in the eyes of all with whom we deal (respecting

His Name and His Person, giving Him the credit as due, testifying by our deeds as well as our words that we do trust and hope in Him), we can expect this commitment to be challenged by the devil (cf. Num.20:12; Matt.6:9). It is always easier to accommodate ourselves to lower opinions of the Lord held by those with whom we may be speaking. Such was Eve's situation, and instead of properly rebuking the serpent for his lack of respect for the Lord God, Eve chose to sink to his level. Accommodation is often a very valuable tool in communicating with others, but the one thing that can never be compromised is God's truth. Eve failed to see that a principle had been attacked here, the principle of the Lord God's dignity and, hence, His authority. Once Satan had effected a breach on this front, his victory was not far off. In order to pass this most difficult test, it would have behooved Eve to have had a healthy fear of God (cf. Ps.19:9; Is.11:2-3; 33:6; Lk.12:5). The last thing she needed in the face of the devil's wily attack was the feeling that she was somehow on equal terms with God, "more or less". This sort of arrogance is the height of folly, and has been at the root of many a shipwrecked faith in every generation since:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs 1:7

Ironically, Adam and Eve had first to reject the one principle of wisdom which they did possess and understand (i.e., "don't eat from the tree") in order to gain the "knowledge" that doing so had been a very bad idea indeed.

As the serpent's teacher, Eve was not particularly well prepared. First, she had added to the Lord's injunction (Adam's "rider" about not even touching the tree). Second, she had followed this up by mimicking the serpent's lack of respect for the Lord (calling Him "God" instead of "the Lord God"). And there is a third crucial mistake in her response which also demonstrates Eve's failure to grasp the key issues of life and death at stake here. Rather than using its rightful name, Eve calls the tree of the knowledge of good and evil the "tree which is in the middle of the garden" (Gen.3:3). This is a neutral-sounding name which not only omits the warning implied in "knowledge of good *and evil*", but also overlooks the source of life from which she and Adam drew daily sustenance. For there were, in fact, *two* trees in the middle of the garden (Gen.2:9). The other tree, of course, the *first* tree mentioned by name in Genesis 2:9, was the tree of life. This first tree, directly opposite the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, also served as a clear sign and symbol to our first parents. For it was a daily, visual and tangible reminder that their life of blessing and freedom from want depended upon their continued *partaking* from this first tree as much as it did upon their continued *abstinence* from that other tree. The tree of life, the one whose fruit sustained, maintained and enriched their lives, was *also* in the middle of the garden, and had *not* been forbidden by God. Only that other tree, the one whose fruit would most certainly bring immediate death, had been forbidden, with both the injunction and the consequence spelled out by the Lord God Himself. By positioning these two trees directly opposite each other in Eden's midst, God had made the issue of life and death perfectly clear in a graphic, spatial way: it was impossible to turn and face the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree which brought *death*, without first having *turned away* from the tree of *life*.

“You will surely *not* die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that on the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God [or “gods”], knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:4 -5

With this violent contradiction by the serpent, Eve quickly transitions from teacher to student. Having hastily (and faultily, as we have seen) set to correcting the serpent, she is now only too eager to drink in these cunning words. In this swift reversal of Eve’s position, we see the inherent weakness of conviction which is based upon emotion rather than absolute faith in the truth. That Eve did not have an unshakable faith in what the Lord God had said (and what she had assumed) about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is certainly proved by her willingness to accept the serpent’s lie in place of God’s truth. While it is certainly true, as many commentators have noted, that Satan undermined Eve’s resolve by appealing to her ego, and that his method of temptation was both deceptive and highly effective, the point cannot be made too strongly that if only she had really *believed* what God had said, she would have been more inclined to disbelieve these diabolical words which so directly contradicted our Lord’s words.

As we have had occasion to say time and again, it is a basic principle of the human spirit as conceived and constructed by God, that truth must first be rejected before the lie can be accepted. In her eagerness to become the serpent’s instructor, Eve had *not* made God the issue, but herself. Specifically, she had gloried in her own knowledge (as inadequate and defective as it was). As a result, when the serpent unexpectedly challenges her position, she is easily shaken, because she is not grounded firmly in the faith of God’s truth, but in the unstable emotional false confidence of her own ego. Further, since her position is built upon emotion and false information, there is no logical bedrock from which to mount a defense against this challenge. With the skill of a Socratic philosopher or a defense attorney, the serpent has led Eve into a forensic cul-de-sac. With her confidence shaken and her passive skepticism about God’s commandment exposed, she has been rendered receptive to the lies that now spew forth from the serpent’s mouth.

The devil (in the guise of the serpent) wasted no time in demolishing Eve’s shaky bravado. As he so often does when dealing with moral weakness (nonchalance about God and His word in this case), the devil launched a direct assault. His statement that Eve and her husband would “not die” as a result of partaking of the forbidden fruit was a compound lie. In truth, disobedience meant instant *spiritual death* (condemnation by and alienation from God), eventual *physical death* (as the process of degeneration began), and ultimate *eternal death* (in the absence of some amazingly gracious intervention by God Himself, of which possibility it is doubtful that even Satan had any clue at this juncture). Physical death, we know, would not come immediately after the first couple ate the fruit, but it did become inevitable, so that there is really not a grain of truth in what the devil had to say. From any point of view, this was a horrendous lie, not only because it was so untrue, but because it was meant, in effect, to mercilessly murder the first man and woman (Jn.8:44).

Satan’s lie was, in fact, so brazen, that Eve *couldn’t believe it wasn’t true*. The so-called “big-lie” phenomenon is one which has been repeated many times since in the course of human

history. Claims and falsehoods that are so bold and so outrageous as to contradict the obvious truth are often capable of stirring a latent and powerful arrogance set deep in the human heart. For instinctively we as a species seem to understand that if truth itself can be destroyed and negated, then there is no obstacle that can stand in our way, there is nothing to prevent us from storming the very gates of heaven itself (and joining the ruler of this world in his quest to unseat the Ruler of the universe). But this, of course, is an impossible “if”, and despite the waves of mind-numbing arrogance it may send pulsing through the dark places in our hearts, whether in universal terms or a simple statement in the here and now, truth shall ever stand, and the lie shall always be doomed to repudiation and defeat.

The possibility of disobedience with impunity, “eat and not die”, quickly transforms Eve from an advocate for God to a curious listener. Her zeal for God ebbs away rapidly and she becomes more than willing to give the devil his say (Rom.10:2). What she hears after this reassuring lie completes the transformation from opponent, to listener, to disciple: if only she will eat of the forbidden fruit, she will become “like a god” (the Hebrew word for God, *'elohiym*, *'yhv'la*, is, strictly speaking, a plural form, and can mean “gods” as well as God: e.g., Num.25:2).

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and was attractive to the eye, and that the tree was desirable for bestowing insight, she took some of its fruit and ate it, then gave it also to her husband with her and he ate.                      Genesis 3:6

True to the lesson she gave the serpent, Eve is still focused on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil rather than its fruit. This was unfortunate for her, because concentrating on the tree (which was merely the carrier of the fruit) clouded the crucial issue: *eating* its fruit was enjoined, not touching the tree that bore it. As a tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was apparently quite similar to the other trees in the garden, and that realization now sweeps through Eve’s mind: it bore fruit, pleasant to behold, and had a specific use – just like many (if not all) of the trees in the garden with which she had long been familiar. Seeing this particular tree as just one of any number in a much larger category (none of which had ever done her any harm) went a far way towards mitigating whatever healthy fear she still possessed. Eve’s unhealthy focus on the carrier of the fruit over the fruit itself also had the unintended consequence of emboldening her to eat. Touching can be accidental, and it certainly constitutes a much less dramatic involvement with anything than does “taking and eating”. Had the barrier been seen right from the start as the actual eating of the fruit, the very sensual and deliberate nature of the act might have given Eve pause and led her to reconsider. But, because of her erroneous understanding of the Lord God’s command, the barrier in her mind was the flimsy, almost arbitrary “touch-barrier”, and we can almost see her sidling over to the tree and gingerly tapping it with her fingertip as we would a hot stove. Once this easy, false barrier had been breached, Eve must have felt secure that no further consequence would ensue from eating the fruit itself.

Beyond both of these two points which result from Eve’s faulty understanding of God’s word (i.e., the generalization of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil into the category of benign

trees and the lowering of the transgression barrier in her mind), it must also be said that neither eventuality would have been of much effect if Eve had not lost her fear of God. What happened in her case is most important to note because it is a pattern for all of her children ever since. Ignorance, complacency and lust often combine to lead us into sin, and that was certainly what took place at the fall. Eve's relative *ignorance* of what God had said combined with her relative *complacency* about what the consequences of disobeying God might be made for a very weak shield of faith with which to meet the devil's attack. When challenged on her uncertain knowledge and assured that there would be no consequences, the prospect of "becoming god-like" was more than enough of a temptation to kindle her *lust* and strip away her meager defenses. This is the way the devil always works. He observes the chinks in our armor, our ignorance of the word of God, our disbelief, our doubts, our nonchalance about following in the footsteps of Christ (in general or on particular points), and then, armed with this critical "scouting report", he attacks, providing false information, false assurances, and tempting us (or frightening us) right when and where we are at our weakest.

The devil had a "file" on Adam too. Just as Satan had correctly discerned the most effective way to induce Eve to throw away her perfect life for a hollow promise and a vain hope, so he had shrewdly observed Adam's main point of vulnerability, namely, Eve. Men in love have been writing poetry to and about the objects of their affections for millennia, but it is often overlooked that the very first poem in human history was written by Adam on the occasion of the Lord God's presentation to him of his wife:

And Adam said,

"This now is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh.  
She shall be called woman, because from man she was taken".  
Genesis 2:23

This couplet, in Hebrew poetic form, effectively encapsulates for us Adam's enthusiasm for this captivating new creature. No English translation can easily reflect the beauty, simplicity and wittiness of this poem. For example, Adam's clever naming of the woman (*'ishah*: hwa) is an elegant paronomasia on the word "man" (*'ish*: wya) derived by adding a feminine ending to it – the sort of thing which cannot easily be duplicated in our own tongue. Adam was clearly motivated to do more than say "thank you" to God and "hello" to the woman; for this grand occasion he mobilized his considerable verbal talents to create an entirely new mode of expression (poetry), providing us with an exquisite and graceful first specimen of this entirely new genre. Obviously, Eve inspired him – and why not? Of all the marriages that have since transpired in the history of our race, this is the only one of which we can say of the bride and groom that they were "a perfect match" for each other (because God Himself made the match, making the bride specifically for the groom: cf. 1Cor.11:9). Nor could there be any more perfect location for a honeymoon than the garden of Eden. Eve and Adam both, moreover, besides living in a perfect place, were themselves perfect, with no possible source of rancor, division or estrangement save one: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When Adam returned to the center of the garden (after an enjoyable day of observing and classifying Eden's flora and fauna, no doubt), his expectation of another blissful homecoming to the woman he so adored was quickly overturned. The Bible does not record for us the scene when Eve met him that day, but we can be sure that Adam realized immediately that all was not right in Eden, and relatively certain that he, with his exceptional intellect, was quick to apprehend that Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit – the only potential source in Eden of “trouble” (a concept hitherto not experienced). Eating the fruit had instantly rendered Eve spiritually dead, had begun the inevitable process of physical degeneration, and had destined her for the carrying out of God's sentence of death in eternity (barring gracious intervention on His part). However we need not assume that her *body* had undergone any *noticeable* change that would have alerted Adam to the new situation. What did change though, what had to have changed significantly was her *behavior*. She was no longer perfect, and she knew it. She was now mortal, death was inevitable, and she knew it. She had been terribly deceived, was alienated from God and the life of God, and knew it. Her eyes were indeed opened, opened to all the fear and horror which her new status as a sinner bequeathed. Eve was in grave trouble, wracked with guilt, and terribly afraid. The state she must have been in when Adam came home we can scarcely imagine.

The mention scripture makes about Adam's part in the fall is that Eve “gave [some of the fruit] also *to her husband with her* and he ate”. These two short but all important prepositional phrases speak volumes about Adam's reaction to the alarming situation he encountered upon returning home that evening. The Bible is quite clear that Adam did not eat the forbidden fruit because he was deceived about what the consequences of so doing would be (1Tim.2:14). Adam knew very well that, by taking the forbidden fruit from his wife's hand and eating it as she had done, he too would suffer the three-fold death whose initial consequences he could plainly see being played out in the woman he loved. Confronted by the love of his life, his perfect soul-mate, weeping inconsolably and having passed irrevocably beyond the pale of paradise, Adam now faced an impossible decision. How could he possibly desert the one person who made him complete, his own flesh and bone? She was helpless, desperate, and in dire need. How could he just turn his back on her and walk away? The twin phrases “to her husband with her” make it clear enough that such was essentially Adam's thinking: he was “her husband”, and would stay “with her”. Adam did not flee at the sight of his fallen wife. He did not separate himself from her for a time to think things through. He did not consult God about the situation. Adam's compassion for this woman he loved so deeply was such that he stayed *with her*, consoled her, listened to her, gave in to her, and ate the fruit. Adam was not bullied into it; he was not nagged into it; he was not tricked into it. Contemplating the possibility of a life without Eve, and with his heart breaking to help her, he cast his lot in “with her” and thus joined her in death.

The romantic and noble aspect of Adam's decision should not inspire us. He was every bit as wrong as Eve. In fact his conduct was the more culpable, because he knew exactly what he was doing. Both of our first parents betrayed God (Eve in ignorance, Adam in cognizance), and both transgressed for essentially the same reason: failure to believe and trust Him. Eve was deceived about the nature and the content of what He had said; Adam failed to trust Him, failed to believe

that for a God who could create an Eve, nothing would be impossible. We are, of course, not told what “would have happened” or “might have happened” had Adam waited on the Lord instead of immediately trying to solve Eve’s problem for her in the only manner he could devise (i.e., by joining her in her sin), but with the entire Bible as our guide, the one thing we can say for certain is that “nothing is impossible for God” (cf. Gen.18:14; Job 42:2; Jer.32:17; Matt.19:26; Lk.1:37; 18:27). By assuming, as Adam may have done, that his added sinfulness would force God to “reevaluate”, the first man stepped into exactly the same trap of arrogance, the same false assurance, that had originally trapped the devil: i.e., assuming himself to be irreplaceable.

While it is altogether right and proper that we point out the failings of our first parents in this connection, it also behooves us to realize and understand that none of us would have done any better. Eve was the first human being ever to experience temptation, and the attack launched upon her by the devil represents some of his “best work”. With our current perspective, well-informed about Satan and his devices as we are, we might have done better, but then *so would have Eve*. Assuming a complete ignorance of the devil and his wiles, which of us would venture to say that he or she would not have succumbed to this most clever assault? Adam’s shoes are likewise very difficult for any of us to try on. What he lost when Eve fell was the perfect relationship, the perfect person, perfectly designed for him. We cannot really even imagine the duress such a loss put him under, and it would be well to admit that any of us would almost certainly have reacted in the same way.

Although the first Adam failed when confronted by Satan’s considerable deceptiveness, and although all of his progeny ever since has (with one exception) confirmed this dubious heritage, the Last Adam has left for us a stirring example of how to contend with the devil’s temptations. Christ met Satan’s best efforts not in a paradisaical garden, but in a desert at the end of a forty day fast and vigil. Satan’s threefold temptation of Christ was his masterpiece of deception, and only Christ could have withstood it, but we would do well to note *how* He withstood it. The Son of God, the Word of God Himself, met the devil’s charge with the shield of the word of God, refuting Satan’s words with God’s words. I can think of no better brief for the importance of learning what the Bible says and means (the basis, along with belief, of Christian spiritual growth) than the example left for us by our Lord. Every subtle temptation of the devil is laid bare for the lie it is and rebuked – by scripture (Matt.4:1-11; Mk.1:12-13; Lk.4:1-13):

1. The temptation to become distracted from God’s word:

And the tempter approached Him and said, “***If you are the Son of God***, command these stones to become bread”. But He replied, “Man’s life does not depend on food only, but on every word that comes from God’s mouth” (Deut.8:3).                      Matthew 4:3-4

Christ was hungry, not having eaten for forty days, and certainly had the power to turn stones to bread. This would have been a very easy act to justify, under the circumstances, and to rationalize. But our Lord had been led into this test by the Holy Spirit, so that it was without any doubt the will of God for Him to endure this trial, not to bring it to an abrupt end at Satan’s

urging (Matt.4:1; Mk.1:12; Lk.4:1). The hard thing about this test, the really difficult part of it, was not the hunger (although it is fair to say that any of us deprived of food for forty days would be sore pressed to resist the opportunity to eat when it suddenly arose after such a long period of time). No, for Christ, the deceptive part of this temptation was the challenge thrown in His face by Satan: “**If** you are the Son of God”. For the devil’s implication is crystal clear: the **real** Son of God wouldn’t be deprived like this, and would certainly be able to call upon God’s power to supply His legitimate needs. Christ’s intense hunger is merely a contributing factor to the temptation, for it is really the fact of His deprivation, used by Satan to reproach Him, that constitutes the real test. Christ’s situation here is analogous to that of Job’s. Job’s comforters failed to understand that his suffering was not deserved, but was instead part of God’s plan (the ultimate divine compliment, in fact). These men self-righteously assumed that intense suffering had to mean God’s disfavor (punishment for sin), and Job, who had up until their arrival endured the most intense persecution at Satan’s hands without faltering in his faith, was finally tripped up by the stinging reproaches of his erstwhile friends. Satan’s “if” is an attempt to break down our Lord’s resolve in the exact same way by prodding Him into “proving” the devil wrong.

But our Lord, instead of focusing on the words of the tempter (as Eve had done) or over-focusing on the reproach (as Job had done), gave instead his complete attention to the word of God. Jesus’ quotation of Deuteronomy 8:3 is riveting (as is every one of His scriptural answers to the devil’s challenges). He does not make Satan the issue, nor His hunger, nor the devil’s challenge to His true status as God’s only Son. Our Lord makes God the issue. And how does He do so? By quoting a small part of God’s truth that cuts through the devil’s lie like the sharpest sword. For Christ’s selection of scripture proves more than that He had memorized much (if not all) of the Bible as it existed in His day (the Old Testament). Christ’s absolutely appropriate choice of quotation shows that He also understood it and believed it. Unbelievers can memorize scripture. Only for believers can the Bible truly become an irresistible sword, and **only** to the extent that it is understood and believed.

Our Lord’s handling of the devil’s temptation is the perfect model for us to follow. Christ’s impeccable understanding of and absolute belief in God’s word gave Him the ability to rebut this deceptive and “right sounding” suggestion of the devil. For Jesus understood and believed from the Bible that sometimes it is God’s will for us to endure privation and hardship, in order to teach us that His word is more important than anything else, even food. In the context of Deuteronomy 8:3 (the verse Jesus quotes), the Israelites experienced hunger that they might learn through this temporary privation to trust God, to believe that whatever His reason for bringing on their short term suffering, He had only their best interests at heart. The use of this quote shows that our Lord understood that it was necessary for Him too to put God’s word and God’s will first, and to “learn obedience through the things He was suffering” in order to prepare Himself to face the ultimate reproach, the reproach of the cross (Heb.5:8; cf. Heb.2:18; 4:15; 11:26; 13:13).

## 2. The temptation to test God:

Then the devil took Him to the holy city, stood Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “***If you are the Son of God***, throw yourself down, for it is written that ‘He will command His angels concerning You’, and ‘They will lift You up in their hands lest You strike your foot against a stone’” (Ps.91:11-12). Jesus said to him, “It is also written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Deut.6:16). Matthew 4:6-7

Satan’s second temptation of Christ is very similar to the first. Once again, he is attempting to provoke Christ into disobedience by challenging Him to prove His standing as “the Son of God”. But instead of inviting Christ to abuse His special powers to do something legitimate (that is, eat when hungry, but at the wrong time), this time Satan entices Him to take an ordinary human action (i.e., jumping) to do something illegitimate (that is, without authorization to put the Father in a position of having to rescue Him).

Satan’s second temptation is more than just a wily variation on the theme of the first. The devil sharpens this particular arrow by giving it the cachet of apparent scriptural support. If the promise of angelic protection has ever applied to any human being, it certainly applied to our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Matt.26:53). Indeed, immediately after Christ’s successful negotiation of these temptations, the angels did minister to Him (Matt.4:11; Mk.1:13). This challenge to our Lord’s standing as the Son of God is at once more direct and yet also more subtle. Only the Son of God could expect to be rescued after following this suggestion of the devil. Now Christ was and is the Son of God, and was well aware from His perfect knowledge and understanding of scripture that these verses quoted by Satan did indeed apply first and foremost to Him as part of the body of prophecy in the Old Testament which looked forward to the coming of the Messiah for its complete fulfillment. For our Lord to refuse to jump ***might give the appearance*** that He lacked faith in this divine promise – to everyone except God, that is (and to those who have adopted God’s point of view as Christ did perfectly). Please understand that such a temptation would be of no effect if directed against you or me, because we are not ***the*** Son of God, and because we do not possess the perfect faith that Jesus did. You see, Christ ***knew*** that the Father would deliver Him and that the verses with which the devil was taunting Him referred uniquely to Himself. He could easily refute the devil’s insinuation that He was not really the Messiah by merely jumping and thereby showing Satan that he was dead wrong. The devil was daring Jesus to “prove” that He really believed it, and our Lord could easily have done so. But our Savior knew full well that the issue at stake was not His own honor and glory, but the honor and the glory of the One whose mission He had come to fulfill (Jn.7:18; 8:50; 8:54).

The living Word of God, a prodigy in the understanding of the Bible at age twelve (Lk.2:41-52), was now, after two additional decades of the most intensive study of the word of God, impervious to Satan’s guileful misapplications of scripture. He would have to be. Throughout His earthly ministry He would encounter similar reproaches that would tempt Him to end His personal suffering and silence the blasphemous insinuations of those who opposed Him. Perhaps the most galling of these (very similar to Satan’s taunt) would come as He hung on the cross, dying for the sins of those who were abusing Him:

***“If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!”***

Matthew 27:40b

3. The temptation to give allegiance to someone or something besides God:

Then the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. Then he said to Him, “All these I will give to you, if you fall down and worship me”. Jesus responded to him, “On your way, Satan. You shall worship the Lord your God and worship Him alone” (Deut.6:13). Matthew 4:8-10

It is often said that everyone has his price. Certainly we all have particular areas of lust where bribery of one sort or another will be more likely to succeed, and areas of weakness where pressure will be more likely to make our resolve crumble. Satan, as we have remarked before, is a shrewd observer who makes a point of gathering intelligence to use against us (cf. Job 1-2; 1Pet.5:8). The report he received on Jesus Christ, however, was most disheartening, for beyond His true status as a flesh and blood human being, there was absolutely no sin, no weakness, and, very importantly, no area of ignorance about the word of God. Nevertheless, the devil crafted a subtle strategy. He would offer our Lord something many human beings have desired, but no one has ever possessed: world rulership.

Again, however appealing *we* may imagine this offer to have been, it would have been much more so to Christ, for to this He had been born (Jn.18:37), and He was well aware of the scriptures that proclaimed this as His birthright (e.g., Ps.2:8-9). This time the devil’s “if” is not directed toward Christ’s status as Son of God, but presents instead a condition for fulfilling the offer: the worship of Satan. It is one of the devil’s favorite tricks to make us think that our receipt of blessings is dependent upon *him*, and our prior accommodation with him and his evil world system. Whenever we fail to acknowledge God as the source of all we have, we play right into Satan’s hands, and so become vulnerable to his manipulation. But Christ fully understood and believed that only the Lord God is worthy of our worship, for from Him only do our blessings flow (Deut.6:13).

Eve became distracted from the word of God and opened herself up to the devil’s deception (temptation #1). Adam put God to the test by throwing his lot in with Eve, vainly hoping that he would be “lifted up” before crashing to the ground (temptation #2). Both of them failed to trust God alone for blessing (provision of a wonderful life without the forbidden fruit in Eve’s case, provision of a wonderful life without the woman in Adam’s case), and so effectively gave Satan their allegiance in place of God through their respective sins (temptation #3). Satan’s use of these same temptations on Christ failed, because the word of God pulsed through Jesus’ heart, not merely as empty phrases, but as living truth, fully understood and fully believed.

We can only resist the devil by following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and taking the word of God into our hearts as He did, listening to it, learning and understanding it, believing it then acting upon it in faith (Jas.4:7). Eve didn’t listen well enough; Adam listened, but didn’t

believe well enough. When push came to shove, neither of them was strong enough in faith to maintain their allegiance to God under the pressure of the devil's assault. If we are to grow up spiritually and gain some measure of safety against Satan's deceptions, we must commit ourselves to the word of God, to understanding it and to making it our own through faith, because only in this way can we hope to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and avoid the stumbling blocks that tripped up Adam and Eve.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked, so they sewed together fig leaves and made garments for themselves. Genesis 3:7

The opening of Adam and Eve's eyes, that is to say, their sudden understanding of good and evil, was a tremendous shock and disappointment. What their now opened eyes perceived was that, by their disobedience of the Lord God's command, they had forsaken what was good and embraced what was evil. Their newly developed perspicacity of good and evil was only of any use *because* they had sinned and were now sinful beings. Eating the forbidden fruit immediately changed them and their progeny forever, polluting their previously perfect bodies with the corruption of inherent sin. From now on, sin would always be "crouching at the door" (Gen.4:7), so that an ability to distinguish between what was sinful and evil from what was good and right would be essential to the survival of the human race. For mankind to be inherently sinful without a conscience or consciousness of sin would make our continued existence as a species impossible. Equally tragic would have been the complete absence of any shame, any recognition of evil, any possibility of remorse (and potential repentance, should God provide a way). Viewed in this light, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in addition to providing a way for man to show his free choice for God (by abstaining from it), was also a most gracious provision, because, in the event of sin, it would, along with sin, provide the capacity to distinguish and recognize sin. Recognition of our sinfulness is always the first, essential step toward seeking relationship with God, for it is the conscience that separates the devil's lie from the truth of God, the truth that we are sinners and in desperate need of His grace:

[The nations] demonstrate that the law has been written in their hearts when their conscience testifies against them, and their thoughts alternate between allegations or even excuses. Romans 2:15

Along with the common human heritage of utter sinfulness, we also possess, thanks entirely to the grace of God, a natural consciousness of that sinfulness. This realization is gracious because it provides motivation for all who will respond to God to seek Him for a solution to the devastating problem of sin, sin that controls us, sin that destines us to physical death, sin that, unless it should somehow be blotted out, means our ultimate damnation for all eternity. It is the consciousness of sin and death that moves us to seek God.

God must, however, be sought in the proper way, His way. Nothing man can do to atone for sin or to make up for sin or to cover up for sin will ever be sufficient for God. Only the blood of His beloved Son is acceptable payment. No ritual, no good deeds, no amount of praying or working

or singing or chanting or self-effacement or fasting or self-affliction or any other activity of human energy will bring us so much as a single step closer to our God. Only what **He** has done for us through the sacrifice of His Son can save us from our sin, and only if we accept that sacrifice in the way He has ordained: the simple obedience of believing, of trusting, of following Christ, today, tomorrow and forever.

Adam and Eve were conscious of their sin. Instead of some grand vision, their opened eyes saw only their own guiltiness, their own sin. Their nakedness now testified against them, for now they had a sense of shame (unnecessary in a world without sin). But awareness of sin is merely the first step in the process of being reconciled to God. Our actions cannot do it; we have to wait for God to do it; we have to put our faith, our trust in Him, in the work of His Son, a fact for us since the cross, a promise for all those before the cross. Adam and Eve, however, did not wait for the Lord God to return to the garden. They decided instead to “fix” the problem on their own. They would “do” something to remove the problem of sin. Nakedness was the symptom, and that could be readily alleviated; it could be easily covered up:

“If I have concealed my sins like Adam, hiding evil in my heart ...” Job 31:33

So the first man and woman set to work busily manufacturing garments out of some suitably large leaves that graced one of the garden’s trees. After they had donned their new invention, their consciousness of sin did not leave them, nor did the sin they have since passed down to their descendants through their now mortal bodies. But at least they had managed to “cover up” the problem. Maybe God wouldn’t notice. Maybe God would find this sufficient. While their actions and thinking may seem ridiculous to us now, we should realize that covering sin up with fig leaves, the quick fix laid upon the problems of the devil’s world by which mankind thinks to score points with the Almighty and somehow reconcile this evil world to Him, has been in vogue ever since and is proceeding with a vengeance in our own day. Not only do we see the fig-leaf cover up in frequent use in individual cases, as, for example, whenever people engage in acts of charity or other “good” in order to compensate for their sinfulness. The fig-leaf cover up is particularly popular in group activity, in organizations which are Christian, putatively Christian, and non-Christian alike. Satan loves to encourage people, especially Christians, to become involved in schemes and activities that will “solve” the problems of this world, fig leaves on an incurable cancer of evil that can only be eradicated by the return of the Lord Himself. Just as Jesus is the only answer for the forgiveness of our personal sins (i.e., no amount of good works could ever expiate even the smallest single sin apart from Christ’s work for us on the cross), so it is equally true that only the returning Messiah will ever be able to suppress the world’s evil, injustice, and inequity. This does not mean that we should not be charitable as Christians or stand up for what is right against what is evil. But it does mean that when facing this issue we have to be very careful to do things God’s way. There would indeed be a solution for Adam and Eve in the sacrifice of the Son of Man for their sins and ours, but this was a solution which had to come from God. Substituting their own solution was wrong, was, in fact, evil masquerading as good, and we are given the details of this story to teach us the importance of facing up to our sinfulness and putting our faith in God’s efforts through Jesus Christ rather than in our own

efforts. No personal fig leaves that we might manufacture, human works designed to “make up” for our sins, will ever count for anything in God’s eyes when it comes to the forgiveness of sin. And this is true on a group level as well. Just as we have to accept the fact of our own sinfulness and put our faith in Christ for forgiveness, so it is folly to believe that through our efforts we can wash away the sinfulness of this evil world. If we wish to serve God (as we should), He will provide truly good and righteous ways of employing our spiritual gifts in the cause of Jesus Christ. But we must take care not to fall into the trap of trying to ameliorate the evil of this world.

How then are we to know what is a genuine Christian act and what is merely playing into the devil’s hands in the manner of merely making fig leaves? One good rule of thumb is that anything one does oneself (e.g., a cup of water offered in the Lord’s name) has the most chance of being legitimate service to the Lord, whereas anything that is done through an organization one does not control (i.e., outside of the local church) is highly susceptible to being coopted by one of the devil’s schemes. A second rule of thumb is that anything that genuinely helps individual people is much more likely to be true divine good, whereas anything that attempts to change a process or an institution or engages in any sort of political activity of any kind is very probably not. A third rule of thumb is that genuine Christian works are to be directed first and foremost towards other Christians or at least be concerned with evangelizing unbelievers (for material relief without spiritual content is ultimately pointless). Let us put these three rules together in a pair of extreme examples: on the one hand, a timely gift given by you as an individual to a person in need and accompanied by a clear representation that you are doing what you are doing in the Name of Jesus Christ would almost certainly fall into the category of genuine Christian good works, whereas a gift given by an institution to a group concerned with political issues devoid of any specific references to salvation through Christ would almost certainly fall into the category of fig leaf type “good” which is in reality evil (because it attempts to change or, really, cover up the evil of this world apart from true divine solutions which are always individual, personal, and spiritual).

Specific applications must be left to you, dear reader, for only he who is actually involved in any given situation is capable of judging aright. Ultimately, only Christians who are growing spiritually, seeking God and drawing nearer to Him through His word, have any serious chance of consistently discerning what is truly good in God’s eyes, and what is, on the other hand, merely a fig leaf thrown over sin, an attempt to bandage this evil world rather than recognizing its sinfulness and seeking individual spiritual solutions through faith and faithfulness in Jesus Christ (Rom.2:18; 14:22; 1Cor.11:28; 2Cor.13:5; Gal.6:4; Eph.5:10; Phil.1:10; 1Thes.5:21):

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by this renewal of your thinking (i.e., through obedience to the word of God; cf. v.1), so that you may discern what God’s will for you is, namely what it is good, well-pleasing, and correct [for you to do].  
Romans 12:2

### **3. The Judgment**

Then they heard the voice of the Lord God [as He was] walking about in the garden at the [time of] day when the evening breeze [came up]. So Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God in the midst of the garden's trees. Then the Lord God called out for Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" And Adam responded, "I heard your voice in the garden and was afraid because I was naked, and so I hid myself". Then He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree from which I told you not to eat?" Then Adam replied, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave to me from the tree and I ate". Genesis 3:8-12

The appearance of the Lord God in the garden quickly melts away the false confidence of our newly sinful first parents, dissolving their self-delusion, leaving only fear in its place. The sudden realization that their feeble attempt to cover over their sin is woefully insufficient puts the fear of God into them, and they rush to hide from Him for whom nothing is hidden (Heb.4:13). Their reaction is entirely understandable, for which of us would not find his rationalizations similarly shattered, his fig leaves similarly withered, if he were to be suddenly confronted by God Himself?

"Woe is me, for I am ruined. For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Isaiah 6:5

The effects of sin which had been so obvious in Eve's behavior are now similarly evident in Adam's response to the Lord God's interrogation. For Adam, whom we saw only hours before choosing to suffer the consequences of mortality with Eve in place of an immortal life without her, now, in his new, sinful state, has no qualms about attempting to pass off all the blame to the love of his life. Though often portrayed as amusing, the seriousness of Adam's betrayal should not be overlooked. For all Adam knew at this point, this "selling out" of his wife for his own sake might well have brought down upon Eve a swift and terrible vengeance from the Lord God. But Adam, now under the influence of the sin that has infected his entire body, is much more concerned about the consequences for himself than he is with the consequences for the woman for whom only shortly before he had sacrificed everything.

Adam's words, "The woman whom You gave to be with me", besides redirecting the blame toward Eve, also constitute a none too thinly veiled reproach against God. Creativity in shifting responsibility away from ourselves and pointing the finger at others (especially at God) is an all too common characteristic of sinful humanity. Adam's intimation that God is to blame for his sin because God gave him Eve is breathtaking. Is God somehow responsible for our sin and the trouble we bring on ourselves because He has graciously given us life and physical bodies and resources – without which sin would be impossible? Heaven forbid! This is a case of the pot reproaching the Potter (Is.29:16; 45:9; 64:8; Jer.18:4-6; Rom.9:20-21). Nevertheless, trying to hold God responsible for our evil *just because He made us* is a ploy one finds below the surface of nearly all evil rationalizations and is even older than Adam, for this outlandish accusation is at the heart of all the devil's lies.

Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And she replied, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate”. So the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, you are accursed, more than any beast or wild animal. You shall go on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. And I shall place hostility between you and the woman, that is, between your seed and her Seed. He will attack you head-on, but you will attack Him from behind”. Genesis 3:13-15

In an attempt to avoid responsibility, Adam had responded in a most circuitous fashion to the very direct question asked of him by the Lord God (“Did you eat?”), prefacing his response with a self-serving defense that sought to shift the blame (Eve gave me the fruit and You gave me Eve). Eve’s response to the Lord God’s interrogation, however, is a good deal less tortured and convoluted. Despite the fact that she is given more latitude to respond (“What is this you have done?” as opposed to “Did you eat?”), Eve simply states the facts: she was deceived by the serpent and she ate. For good reason Adam had found it necessary to offer a defense before answering God’s question. His sin had been committed in complete cognizance of the specifics of God’s prohibition, of the issues at stake, and of the consequences his act would have. Adam had no excuse, so in his guilty sinfulness he tried to manufacture one. Eve, on the other hand, did have an explanation (if not an excuse) and so had no reason to embellish her story. This is not at all to say that Eve’s conduct was excusable (sin is sin, whether committed in full knowledge or suborned by deception). But Adam’s sin was clearly inexcusable under any interpretation. The fact that Adam sinned in complete cognizance of what he was doing (and what effect it would have) is the essential reason why sin passes to all of us “through Adam” rather than through Eve (i.e., through the male line: Rom.5:12-21).

The serpent, as we have seen, was (and is) just an animal. But since he was Satan’s chosen vehicle for this first assault on mankind, the serpent was cursed for this association. He became (and remains to this day) a fitting symbol for the devil and his snake-like, deceptive attacks upon mankind. God’s judgment upon the serpent is thus most appropriate, for the reduction of this lithe and subtle creature to the status of crawling vermin serves as a reminder of and a memorial to the devil’s deceitful method of attack, lying in hiding, waiting like a viper to strike whenever we present him with the opportunity.

The Lord God’s further promise of future hostility between the woman’s Seed (Jesus Christ: cf. Gen.22:17 with Gal.3:16) and the serpent’s seed (all who follow Satan, and, in particular, antichrist) is a further confirmation that this judgment has broader implications. The prophecy of Christ’s direct assault upon the devil (accomplished at the cross), and Satan’s continuing tactics of sneak attack against Christ preeminently, and also upon His followers (in all generations of human history, and especially during the Tribulation under antichrist) is often called the *protevangeliium*, because it constitutes the first occurrence of the gospel message (i.e., a promise that God would Himself right mankind’s wrong and crush the adversary in the process). As the Seed of the woman, Christ is here clearly foreshadowed as taking on true humanity in order to attack the serpent head-on. This prophecy to destroy in a most direct fashion the devil’s power

over sinful mankind by striking at the serpent's head was fulfilled at the cross, where the hold Satan had won over mankind at the fall was finally broken:

Therefore since "these children" (i.e., believers given to Christ by God: v.13) have a common heritage of flesh and blood, [Christ] too partook of these same [common elements] in a very similar fashion (i.e., not identical only in that He was virgin born and so without sin), in order that through His death He might put an end to the one possessing the power of death, that is, the devil, and might reconcile those who were subject to being slaves their whole lives long by their fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15

When Adam and Eve sinned, a *threefold death* became the new reality of their lives:

1) They instantly experienced *spiritual death*, that status where we are, because of our sin and unrighteousness, accounted dead by a righteous and holy God who can in His perfection have nothing to do with us any longer (except on His own terms of grace: salvation from our predicament through our acceptance on a non-meritorious faith-basis of Christ's saving work on the cross). Eating the forbidden fruit contrary to the explicit prohibition of the Lord God destroyed our first parents' relationship with Him (spiritual death), leaving them helpless to alter or remove this alienation (as their fig leaf experiment demonstrated most clearly). Reconciliation would come, but on God's terms, as Adam and Eve both accepted and trusted in the Lord God's promise of the Seed.

2) Their bodies were also instantly rendered mortal. The process of decay and degeneration began immediately upon partaking of the fruit. Under the conditions that pertained in this antediluvian world, Adam and Eve and many of their children had, by our standards, exceptionally long lives, but even living a thousand years seems infinitesimal when compared to immortality. Eating the forbidden fruit contrary to the explicit prohibition of the Lord God also eventually destroyed their bodies (*physical death*). Even the restoration of their relationship with God through their faith in His promises would not erase this appointment with death (Heb.9:27), but God had promised them the Seed who would save them through His sacrifice. The "coats of skin" with which the Lord God would clothe them (Gen.3:21) in preference to garments of their own creation are a clear foreshadowing of Christ's work on the cross: in contradistinction to our own pitiful acts of what we would call good (fig leaves), God will only accept the blood of Christ as payment for our sin. The animals slain, their blood spilt to clothe us in our need, are pictures of Christ's death on our behalf (and such animal sacrifices would remain the dominant symbol for His death on the cross until the day of its fulfilment). As our first parents did, we too must stop relying on the arrogant acts of our own tainted "goodness" and trust instead in God's solution, Jesus Christ, if we are to live beyond physical death through the resurrection (Heb.2:14-15).

3) As a consequence of their spiritual death, Adam and Eve were alienated from the life of God (Eph.4:18: cf. Rom.5:10; Eph.2:12). As a result of their impending physical death, they would not be able to abide forever in this world (Heb.9:27). Already condemned, therefore, and

facing the end of temporal life, *eternal death* was the sentence that now hung over their heads, inevitably and inexorably approaching – unless they accepted in faith God’s solution in the Person of the promised Seed.

Though not always articulated, and more often than not deliberately obfuscated, this threefold death that is our common human heritage eventually impinges upon everyone’s consciousness. Our conscience teaches us how far we fall short of the holiness a perfect God demands (Rom.2:14-16), and we are only too well aware of the horrible and tragic end of life that is our collective lot. The fear and the terror we humans feel in regard to death is sign enough that, on some very basic level, we understand that through our own devices no good result waits on the other side. This fear is the devil’s ace trump. Through it he has entrapped uncounted millions, coaxing them into a variety of false religions that promise relief and solution, but without Christ. Jesus alone gives us the power to escape this fear through faith in Him and His resurrection.

To the woman He said, “I will surely multiply for you the labor-pains that follow conception: in pain you will give birth to children (lit. “sons”). For you will desire your husband, so he will rule over you”. Genesis 3:16

Along with the natural consequences of their sin (the threefold death), Adam and Eve receive, as the serpent did, specific additional judgments that suit the nature of their individual transgression. Eve’s first additional punishment, pain in childbirth, is a relatively straightforward one: sinful people in a sinful world beget children tainted by sin from the moment of their conception (Ps.51:5), so that it is only fitting that the process of bringing them to birth should be a painful one.

The second penalty is far more controversial and requires a few words of explanation. The Hebrew word *teshuqah* (hqvwt), translated “desire”, does not refer here to the female libido. Marriage in the garden of Eden had been a pleasant and an easy proposition. Adam may have been the titular “head of the family”, but, as we have seen, issues of authority would doubtless never have come up in such a perfect paradise between two sinless people. Outside of the garden, however, and between imperfect people, clearly delineated hierarchies are essential for all organizations, including marriage. By virtue of his original position as God’s representative on earth, on the basis of his priority of creation, and because of the fact that he had not been deceived, Adam would be heir to the authority position in marriage as would his male descendants – provided there would be any marriages (1Tim.2:13-15). It is well to ask what incentive Eve (or any of her female descendants, for that matter) would now have to put themselves voluntarily under someone else’s authority, especially given the fact that said person would also be imperfect and sinful. Part of Eve’s penalty, a curse that has been passed down to women throughout the millennia (in the same way that the serpent and Adam also pass down their individual penalties), is this “desire” for a husband, a marriage, and children (the meaning of the phrase “you will desire your husband”). This is not to say that men do not desire wives, marriages, and children, or that women would not do so without this curse, but while marriage is a sacrifice for all parties, in many ways it constitutes a far greater sacrifice for the woman,

because she must give up so much of her freedom to make it work. Without the “desire” of Genesis 3:16, we may surmise that far fewer women in the history of the world would have been willing to contract marriage at the price of having their husbands “rule over” them.

And to Adam He said, “Because you obeyed your wife and ate from the tree about which I gave you the commandment not to eat from it, the ground is cursed on your account. In painful toil you will eat from it all the days of your life. When you go to eat wild plants, you will find the ground producing thorns and thistles for you. And bread you shall eat [only] by the sweat of your brow, until you return to the ground from which you were taken. For you are dust, and you will return to dust”. Genesis 3:17-19

Adam’s punishment also fits the crime. Although he had enjoyed all the wondrous fare of paradise without expending any effort whatsoever, under the pressure of the potential loss of his spouse he ate the one fruit from which the Lord God had commanded him to abstain. As a result, by this one act of disobedience, Adam brought an end to the free bounty of the garden of Eden. From this point forward, Adam (and his progeny) would have to work for a living. The ground would no longer yield its crops without the effort of cultivation, and even the vegetation which would bear fruit apart from Man’s husbanding, would still yield it grudgingly, amid thistle and thorn. And the end of a life of toil would not be victorious accomplishment, but the disintegration of one’s body and of all one had accomplished upon the earth. Adam had understood before he ate the forbidden fruit that death would result, but this last curse, the vanity of necessary effort, was perhaps the most grievous and demoralizing of all (cf. Eccl.2:22-23 et passim). Thanks be to God that our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1Cor.15:58; Gal.6:9; cf 1Cor.3:10-15)!

Then Adam named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of every living person. Now the Lord God made clothes of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the Lord God said, “Behold, Man has become like One of Us in respect to his knowledge of good and evil. So now, lest he also keep stretching forth his hand and taking [fruit] from the tree of life and [so] live forever ...”. So the Lord God expelled Man from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. Thus He drove Man away, and placed in front of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword to block access to the tree of life. Genesis 3:20-24

We have mentioned above the coats of skin as part of the promise of the woman’s Seed to come. Animal sacrifice was not only commanded in the Mosaic law. It existed throughout the age of the gentiles and may be traced back to this original point of origin (cf. Gen.4:4; 8:20-21; 15:8-21). The bloody loss of life is a clear picture of the horrendous death that Christ would die on our behalf to rescue us from death (1Cor.5:7b). We are helplessly exposed to the ravages of sin – until God clothes us, taking away the shame of our nakedness through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

We have seen how through their sin, Adam and Eve brought upon themselves and upon us their children the threefold curse of death (the spiritual death of alienation from God; the inevitability of physical death; and the condemnation of eventual eternal death – apart from the provision of salvation). We have also seen how they brought upon us all the gender-specific curses treated above. But there was one final consequence to their sin. By their disobedience to the Lord God’s commandment, they also forfeited their right to reside in the garden of Eden.

It would be unthinkable for spiritually dead, sinful creatures to live forever in paradise. Such a state of affairs would amount to a festering cancer on the universe that would never be resolved. Eternal life can only work for perfect people (Adam and Eve) or people made perfect (as eventually we shall be through our faith in Jesus Christ: cf. Heb.12:23b). Paradise without perfection would be unstable, for God would eventually have to act to resolve such a situation (through fiery judgment). Furthermore, without the sure and certain knowledge of an impending physical death, human beings would have little motivation to consider their sinful manner of life and their need for a Savior to deliver them from sin and death.

Inasmuch as Adam and Eve had not refrained from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil despite their state of perfection, it was not likely that sinful mankind would voluntarily abstain from the tree of life after being expelled from Eden. God therefore placed “the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword” at the garden’s entrance to prevent any further attempts on the tree of life. The reference here is to the chariot of God with its sword-like flashes of lightning, carried by the cherubim (cf. Ezek.1:13). As His holy throne, this chariot symbolizes the presence of God Himself, and it is a sad final commentary on the fall of Man that the presence of God which had once been such a blessing to our first parents had now become an awesome and terrifying sight, blocking their access to eternal life, filling their consciences with guilt and the consciousness of impending judgment. Thanks be to God that He Himself has provided His children with a way back to the tree of life through the sacrifice of His own Son Jesus Christ on our behalf: He endured the judgment due us on the tree of the cross, that we might eat once more the fruit of life eternal.

To the one who wins the victory, I will give to him [the right] to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God. Revelation 2:7b

## **V. Status Quo in the Devil’s World**

The world that Adam and Eve entered after their expulsion from the garden of Eden could not have been more different from the perfect environment they had so recently taken for granted. Instead of abundant prosperity, ready at hand, they had entered a world of limitation, shortage and scarcity. Instead of a world where all their needs were instantly provided for without any effort on their part, back-breaking toil was now necessary for survival, and uncertainty for the future entered into the equation. Life was now a matter of pain, sweat, tears and trouble. Our first parents would also now experience for the first time the full gamut of destructive and sinful

emotions, including fear, jealousy and hostility. The domestic tranquility that had reigned in Eden as a matter of course would now be infected by anger, frustration, bitterness and resentment. Before too many years had passed, Adam and Eve would even come to see one of their own children murder his brother. And finally, in crowning futility, when they had lived out their finite years, the ground would receive them back to itself as the Lord God had proclaimed. Death would put an end to all they had worked and striven for in the sorrowful interim.

But God did not leave them orphans on the earth, completely bereft of all hope and of Himself. In the same judgment that rendered our first parents mortal, God also promised them the Seed who would one day crush the head of the serpent who had deceived them. Christ's sacrifice was also foreshadowed in coats of skin with which He graciously clothed them, replacing the garments born of their own efforts with symbols of the coming One who would one day die in their place. Thus before they even left the garden of Eden, God had given Adam and Eve a new tree of life to replace the one they had forsaken: that is, the cross of Jesus Christ (foreshadowed in the animal skins and in the prophecy of the Seed). Like their descendants after them, Adam and Eve were thus given the opportunity to regain the spiritual relationship with God lost at the fall. He Himself would make the promised sacrifice that would blot out sin and destroy the advantage the devil had gained, crushing Satan's head first at the cross and making a final end of him at the conclusion of history. It only remained for our first parents to accept our Lord's generous offer of boundless grace, trusting in Him for their deliverance from the inevitability of the grave, the unavoidable reality which had now become life's central issue. There is every indication they did so.

From a spiritual point of view, life remains essentially the same for us today as it was when our first parents trekked out of Eden some six thousand years ago. The critical issue for every human being is identical now to what it was then: we must all choose whether or not to accept through faith God's solution to the problem of sin and death (in the person of His Son Jesus Christ). For those who have no desire for reconciliation with God and for all who willfully reject His gracious offer of salvation on the basis of what Jesus has done, life in this world amounts to a temporary delay in God's judgment, the ultimate and inevitable result of the spiritual death passed down by Adam to all his progeny. For the unbeliever, no more important spiritual issues remain once he or she has been confirmed in unbelief. Satan does oppose unbelievers who, while they have rejected the truth of Jesus Christ, yet stand firm on the principles of natural law and natural truth, and the devil does make use of those unbelievers who are willing to follow him in opposition to everything their consciences say. However, in strategic terms, the unbelieving world is largely a side-show in the conflict between our Lord and the devil (especially in the case of all unbelievers who have passed the point of receptivity to evangelism). It is within the small believing portion of mankind where this spiritual struggle is, in the main, being contested, and it is believers who form the focal point of what is really happening on planet earth from the divine point of view.

Just as Adam and Eve were left in the world beyond the point of faith (i.e., after they had accepted the gracious offer of salvation through the promise of the coming Christ), so also we today are not immediately transferred to our heavenly home after salvation, but remain here in

the world to prove our faith, to grow in it, and to help others do the same. But this world is no Eden. As followers of God and believers in Jesus Christ, the last Adam who through His death on the cross redeemed us from the curse of the first Adam (1Cor.15:45), we can be forgiven for feeling ill at ease in this present world where we scarcely even seem to belong, for it is not a place where the knowledge of God abounds and the will of God is usually done. On the contrary, this parlous world through which we pass lies largely under the influence of the evil one (1Jn.5:19).

1. Sojourners in the Devil's World: Though no doubt relieved that the Lord God had not visited upon them a swift and fiery judgment, Adam and Eve would have been anything but comforted by the harsh realities of the new world east of Eden into which they were forced following their eviction from the garden. This, assuredly, was no paradise. Life was no longer wonderful, especially in contrast to the bounty so recently lost. Everything was now flawed, and strangely unsatisfying. The pain, the privation, the decay and corruption – and more than the anything else the absence of God – must have driven home the contrast to Eden.

Unlike our first parents, we do not possess the experience of a perfect Eden as a vivid point of comparison to this imperfect world we now inhabit. But despite the fact that familiarity tends to inure one to hardships, this unforgiving world of trouble and tears has a tendency from time to time to slice through even the most deep-rooted Stoicism, and through even the most fortunate circumstances, reminding us all that this is not a paradise designed by God for our happiness and pleasure. On the contrary, this is the devil's world.

That Satan's world of deep unhappiness is essentially corrupt is a truism evident at life's every turn. Everything decays. Nothing good lasts. Sin and evil are ubiquitous. And not too far down the road in every individual life lies the grave, the reward and legacy awaiting us all, no matter how blissful or disappointing our lives have been in the interim. Only God is truly meaningful here on earth, if we would but search for Him (Acts 17:27). Only Jesus Christ offers a solution to the futility of life and the inevitability of death, if only we would believe in Him (Jn.3:16). Only on the other side of this life is there true meaning, true fulfilment, true and lasting happiness, when we are at last re-united with the God who loved us enough to sacrifice His Son on our behalf, if only we have chosen Him in this present life over the deceptive vanities of the devil's world (Phil.1:23). Until that time, like our first parents Adam and Eve before us, we have been left in this strange and alien world where the blinding reality of God is largely obscured from view (once His creation is taken for granted: Rom.1:18-23), revealed almost exclusively in His Word to those who seek Him out. Until that time, we wait for something better as homeless wanderers in a world which finds our perspective and our hope worthless, even idiotic. But by our faith and the actions that faith produces, we show the world that we are not of it, do not love it, and acknowledge that we have no true part in it – except for the God who is the focus and the object of our love all the days of our sojourning here in the devil's inhospitable desert (cf. 1Chron.29:15; Ps.23; 39:12; 63:1; 84:5-7; 119:19; Heb.11:37-38; 11:13-16; 13:13-14; 1Pet.1:1; 2:11).

Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.  
Psalm 73:25 NIV

2. The Vanity of Life: In His judgment upon Adam and Eve, God laid down the fundamental calculus of human life outside of the garden: that we must earn our bread through sweat and toil throughout our short lives and afterwards return to dust (Gen.3:16-19). The curse of a life filled with difficulties followed by an inevitable death will only be removed when God has brought history itself to an end (Rev.22:3). In the meantime, the cycle of painful birth, thistles and thorns, and return to the ground from whence we were originally taken is destined to repeat for us, one and all.

“Utter futility! Utter futility!” says the teacher, “Everything is futility!” Ecclesiastes 1:2

Many men strive for things that cannot be achieved, for even with prodigious effort, achievement is not really within the power of Man to control:

The race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise, or wealth to the brilliant, or favor to the learned, but time and chance happen to them all.  
Ecclesiastes 9:11 NIV

And of those who do achieve what they have set their hopes on, many of them will lose what they have striven for, since everything in this life is ephemeral (cf. Is.40:6-8; Matt.6:19-21; Lk.12:14-21; 12:33; Jas.1:10-11; 5:2-3; 1Pet.1:24; 2Pet.3:10-13; 1Jn.2:15-17):

Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them. Ecclesiastes 9:12 NIV

And of those who do manage to retain what they have striven for all the days of their lives, death will ultimately bereave them of all their precious accomplishments. For death, in particular, makes a mockery of all human achievement:

What profit will a man have if he gains the whole world but loses his life?  
Matthew 16:26

The ultimate loss of life is the common heritage of all mankind, so that Jesus' words are particularly penetrating: unless some solution can be found to the overarching problem of our physical mortality, even achievement on a level unsurpassed in human history is essentially meaningless. Indeed, one may even make the argument, that the greater the achievement, the greater the futility, on account of the correspondingly greater loss involved at death. Along with life, the poor lose only their poverty in death, but the rich, successful person loses the things esteemed most in this vain, secular world. Death thus renders all secular achievements essentially pointless:

Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him.  
Psalm 49:16-17 NIV

Nothing we do is truly original (Eccl.1:10). Nothing we do will ultimately be remembered (Eccl.1:11). Despite all our efforts, death will snatch away from us all we have gained in this life “though we had named lands after ourselves” (Ps.49:11b), and we will be oblivious to the fate of our prized possessions after our departure (Eccl.2:17-21). Nothing is secure. Nothing is forever.

It is in this context that our Lord commanded us to look beyond the hollow rewards of this life to the true rewards, eternal in the heavens, which come from God:

Don't stock up treasures for yourselves on the earth, where moth and corrosion eat them away and where thieves dig through and steal them. But stock up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor corrosion eat them away and where thieves neither dig through nor steal them. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.  
Matthew 6:19-21

Even apart from this divine perspective, moreover, the essential vanity of human effort and the ephemeral nature of life is difficult to ignore or deny (for anyone conducting an honest appraisal; cf. Ps.39:4-5; Is.40:6; Lk.12:14-21; 12:33; Jas.1:10-11; 5:2; 1Pet.1:24; 2Pet.3:10-13):

Man is a mere phantom as he goes to and fro: He bustles about, but only in vain; he heaps up wealth, not knowing who will get it. Psalm 39:6 NIV

At no time in history has this truth been more clearly perspicuous than in our modern world of technology, affluence and leisure time, where the phenomena of apathy, depression and suicide are all in the process of increasing exponentially. That modern advances (which are supposed to be a blessing to human life) are found to be correlated instead with reactions of hopelessness may seem contradictory from the secular viewpoint. From the biblical viewpoint, however, the correlation seems perfectly reasonable. Apart from God, life *is* hopeless; therefore to the degree that mankind is relieved of the daily necessities (which for most of history have occupied human existence), one should expect this hopelessness to shine through with ever greater clarity. What is surprising from the biblical point of view is that this pall of futility does not hang even more heavily over the unbelieving world (a phenomenon to be attributed to the complete spiritual blindness which sets in once God is rejected).

While Satan uses a variety of techniques to control the human race, it is fair to say that to the extent that life's futility motivates mankind to seek eternal solutions to the hopelessness of temporal life, to that extent it is clearly in the devil's interest to direct humanity's activities into other channels (as best he can). And, indeed, much human effort over the millennia has been directed toward solving, mitigating or flat out denying the essential truth of the meaninglessness of life apart from God. Indeed, mankind has made a science of discovering interesting amusements and diversions to try and take the sting out of life – in vain. For the sin we have

inherited from Adam guarantees that the sting of death will continue to loom large for all who ever choose to take a sober, realistic look at the true dynamics of life (1Cor.15:54-57).

Oh the ineffable wisdom of God's judgment upon Adam and Eve! Giving them pain and toil in addition to an ultimate physical death was the best possible encouragement to look beyond this life for solutions. The promise of the woman's Seed (Christ) and the sacrifice for sin He would provide (foreshadowed in the coats of skin) were eagerly received and believed, at least in part because the contrast of the good life in Eden with the complete futility and hardship of life outside was so stark. God has not left us as orphans in this cruel world. Quite the contrary. He has made provision for our complete restoration to Himself through faith in the One who died for us, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The hardships of this life, and the essential pointlessness of it apart from God, are, in truth, a part of His grace, for they lovingly and effectively divert our gaze from the bitter life around us – if only for a brief, necessary moment – that we might seek something better.

Examined from the point of view of mortality, life (apart from God) is futile, pointless, and vain. Death destroys all progress, all accomplishment, all wealth. And no amount of progress, accomplishment or wealth can ward off death. Furthermore, as the days lengthen, all remembrance of the dead is eventually extinguished, so that the myth of "living on" in the memories of men, or in the "collective consciousness of the human experience" is pure gossamer, a fantasy that dissolves with the slightest touch. Not that it would or could provide any comfort for the dead if they were to be remembered for generations to come – for all the world to see, by the world's own empirical standard, their lamp has gone out and they are no more:

Anyone who is among the living has hope – even a live dog is better off than a dead lion! For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.        Ecclesiastes 9:4-6 NIV

Whatever shred of remembrance there is for the dead, it benefits them not a whit. Funerals and memorials are for the living. Life for the living, moreover, when examined from this same point of view (i.e., mortality), and contrasted with the perfect environment of Eden, is a terribly frustrating experience. For there is no truly compelling purpose for all the effort that goes on under the sun. All Man's labors are ultimately to put food in his mouth, but that mouth can never be permanently filled nor its appetite satisfied (Eccl.6:7). Whatever men strive for, enduring toil and pain, will not satisfy – only the unattained and the unattainable are truly attractive. And even they turn to dust before the eyes if the gaze is prolonged but a moment. If money is the object of desire, there will never be enough of it; if wealth is the objective, there is never enough to satisfy (Eccl.5:10). If you hoard wealth, it is useless to you; if you spend it for your enjoyment, you no longer possess it (Eccl.5:11). And if through toil and pain and effort wealth is achieved, it vexes the sleep of the rich, while the laborer sleeps sweetly after a simple meal (Eccl.5:12).

Toil and pain and effort – the new calculus of life after Eden demands it. Without such sweat and labor we would not eat. But no matter how long and hard and successful the work, it cannot ward off death forever, nor can it even provide lasting satisfaction. In light of the ultimate futility of life, both taken as a whole and viewed in terms of the pointlessness of effort beyond the bare necessity of survival, it is understandable that mankind has historically devoted itself to the principle of diversion, a principle that explains almost all human behavior of a non-spiritual nature:

Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die.            1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:32b

The secular conclusion above (presented by Paul as a perfectly logical *modus operandi* in the absence of any hope of eternal life) is a succinct way of stating the principle. If death be inevitable, and if life be an essentially dull and pointless continuum of toil and pain, what better way to “get through” than to devote oneself to diversions (of one sort or another). Work and accomplishment can serve effectively in this capacity as well. Anything that distracts us from dwelling upon the overall vanity of life fulfills the diversion principle.

Between birth and death, we human beings have nothing but time, time which must be served on this earth under the Genesis curse. We fill the time with work, with relationships, and with various pleasures and pursuits. We fill the time, we waste the time, we strive desperately not to be at loose ends with our time, lest the realization of life’s vanity dawn and bear heavily down upon us. To the extent that the effort produced by our time-filling, time-wasting activities is directed at all, it is inevitably directed toward the impossible goal of making ourselves happy (whether directly or indirectly). Whether a man toils a lifetime in the depths of the earth searching for treasure, or spends his days at the corner pub, happiness is the ultimate objective, and who can say which man is the greater fool? In the latter case, happiness stops almost instantaneously with “last call”; in the former, great success will only bring an end to the diversion of toil and bring on the realization that riches do not produce happiness (dispelling the illusion that motivated the distracting toil in the first place).

Do we not enjoy our pleasures? Certainly we do. Much of human ingenuity since Man’s expulsion from the garden has been devoted to the science of amusement. And in our modern western world of high technology and super-abundance, pleasures and diversions are available on a scale never imagined millennia ago. Never before has there been so much prosperity, and never has there been so much depression. The more we human beings have pursued happiness, the more unhappy we have become. The harder we have toiled for it, the more easily it has eluded us. The less pressing the necessities of life have become, the more despondent we have become. For the toil of work, the Genesis curse, is the one thing that is capable of effectively distracting us from the grinding realization that life is pointless. Work alone (along with the taking in of sustenance which work makes possible) is the one necessary element in life, and so provides a satisfying distraction unmatched by all other pursuits of happiness:

Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him – for this is his lot. Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy (lit. eat) them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work – this is a gift of God. He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart. Ecclesiastes 5:18-21 NIV

But as the last verse above indicates, work too is essentially a diversion. Challenging, time-consuming, satisfying work distracts the mind from reflection about the futility of life. The days pass productively (if pointlessly) so that the issue of vanity and futility never weighs heavily upon the heart. Without God then, the best mankind can hope for during these meaningless days under the sun is a challenging profession that occupies the energies, provides creature comforts, and a state of mind oblivious to the logic of mortality. The best that one can hope for, therefore, is to be like the animals, who pursue and enjoy sustenance and creature comforts, without being conscious of the approach of death:

I also thought, “As for men, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals. Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust and to dust all return. Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?” So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him? Ecclesiastes 3:18-22 NIV

From the Christian point of view, life is indeed tremendously significant. Only in life can we choose to follow Jesus Christ. And in the matchless grace and wisdom of God, the very vanity of life turns us to God by removing all other solutions; only in Him is there meaning and truth.

As Christians, it is all the more important for us to understand and appreciate the vanity of life, any aspect of life, which is not related to God. As Christians, we have come to God through Jesus Christ; we have as our mission the responsibility of growing in Him every day, and of helping others to turn to Christ and do likewise. How important it is for us who have recognized the pointlessness of secular life (and have opted to follow Jesus instead of the desires which the world esteems), how important it is for us not to “return to Egypt in our hearts” (Acts 7:39), not to let the cravings for the “good life” we have rejected for Christ’s sake regain control over us (as that first generation of the Exodus did to their grievous harm: Ps.78 & 106; 1Cor.10:1-5; Heb.3:16-17; Jude 1:5). This life is a desert which must be crossed, but on the other side is a land flowing with milk and honey, a land where our Lord Himself dwells. On our journey there, there will be trials and tribulations (2Tim.3:12), but God will never fail to refresh and revive and satisfy the heart which rests in Him:

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”. Hebrews 13:5 NIV

It is important for us as Christians to maintain our sense of proportion, our orientation, our true priorities, given that heavenly citizenship we affirm to be more valuable to us than all worldly wealth:

But whatever I had gained [in my former godless life], compared to Christ I have come to consider these things as losses. Indeed, I consider *everything* to be a loss compared to the surpassing importance of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord, for whose sake I have suffered the loss of everything, and consider [everything I have lost] as garbage, compared to gaining Christ, and being found in Him – not having a personal righteousness [developed] through [following] the [Mosaic] law – but having that righteousness [that comes] through faith in Christ, that righteousness [that comes] from God based on faith.

Philippians 3:7-9

As Christians, we still live here in the devil's world. Our Lord has a purpose for leaving us here, and was entirely cognizant of the dangers to our spiritual health here on earth, dangers which we continue to face every day (Jn.17:15). Even as we make our way through the world, it is critical that we maintain our Christian orientation and momentum, and not return to the values, the priorities, the lusts and desires which the world exalts in place of God (Rom.12:2; 1Pet.4:3; 2Pet.2:20-22). In order to survive in the world, Christians too need to work and eat (legitimate sources of secular pleasure and satisfaction); Christians are not enjoined from family relationships, or indeed from many potentially non-sinful activities in which the world engages for relaxation and entertainment; but Christians *do* need to recognize the fleeting and inconsequential nature of any and all activities not directly related to their primary relationship, their membership in the family of God the Father through faith in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The world, especially the modern, western world, is full of distractions that have the potential of becoming obstacles to our spiritual progress, idols, in effect, that may harm our relationship with God.

Satan has incorporated into his system of world rulership as many material distractions as possible. Affluence, the increase and spread of wealth, communication and technology are factors which, from one point of view, are very beneficial to the devil's control of mankind. For one thing, fear is a major element in Satan's manipulation of humanity, and to the extent that men enjoy and rely on such things for their happiness and security, to that degree the fear of losing them produces a sort of bondage which the devil is quick to exploit (cf. Heb.2:14-15 for the principle).

In order to prevent our enslavement to the delights of this world (as well as to its necessities), an area Satan knows only too well how to manipulate against us, we need to have a full and sober appreciation of what the world really is. We need to be very aware of the world's essential vanity and of the pointlessness of its distractions and diversions. We need to be able to keep the pressures and exigencies of life (as well as its pleasures and delights) in proper perspective. God is what is important in this world, and He will never abandon us. Knowing Him and serving Him is why we are here. Everything else is mere context. We are neither asked nor commanded to get through life without taking any joy or pleasure in worldly things. And we certainly will

not pass through the human experience without worldly pressures and problems (especially as Christians). But it is all these largely extraneous matters which we must compartmentalize, and *not God*. We dare not put God “in a box”, giving priority to everything the world sees as important (but which from the Christian point of view is ultimately inconsequential), and neglecting the One who made us, who bought us, and whom we claim is our Master. Whenever we allow the “weeds” of life to grow high, and fail to tend our faith, we endanger our spiritual growth. Necessary weeds, good weeds, bad weeds, whatever blocks out the sunlight of God’s truth, must be kept cut back if we are to fulfill the mission God has given us (cf. the parable of the sower in Matt.13; Mk.4; Lk.8).

Ironically, believers have a tendency to do better spiritually in times of severe testing than in times of ease and plenty (cf. Deut.8:10-20). One “weed” which can be particularly dangerous to the Christian perspective is the prosperity weed. In these last days it is especially important for Christians to avoid a pair of assumptions which are equally dangerous:

1) that affluence is *necessarily* a sign that God is blessing us, and therefore, if we are wealthy, that we must be doing just fine in our spiritual lives. God does provide material blessings, occasionally of an exceptional nature. He did bless Abraham and David with affluence, for example, though John the baptist and our Lord certainly did not live lives of material luxury. It is well to consider that in the history of the world, many unbelievers have experienced exceptional material wealth. It would be a mistake, therefore, to assume that affluence is any indication of spiritual maturity. To make but one further point on this subject, we who are blessed to live in this country (and consequently enjoy a higher material standard of living than most of the rest of the world) are not automatically “better” Christians than our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world where life is harder in this respect.

2) that the result of spiritual growth and a prosperous relationship with God is *necessarily* material wealth (i.e., the “prosperity gospel”). In fact, the opposite effect is certainly not without precedent, that is, the spiritually mature encountering greater testing on this score (e.g., consider Job’s trials, or Elijah’s privations).

Morbid over-emphasis on material prosperity has always been an occupational hazard of the human race in general, and, the closer we come to the end of history, the more we can expect this issue to increase as a threat to Christian spiritual growth. During this last era of the Church, the Laodicean era, there is destined to be an ever increasing tendency toward equating wealth and affluence with spiritual success (Rev.3:14-22). God is the source of all our blessing, material prosperity included. But the false assumption of spiritual maturity and spiritual safety based solely upon material possessions is extremely dangerous. This is true for many reasons, not the least of which is an all too natural tendency to become complacent in the Christian walk, assuming spiritual maturity on the basis of material prosperity:

I know your deeds, that you are neither hot nor cold. Would that you were cold or hot. But as it is, since you are tepid, and neither hot nor cold, I am on the point of vomiting

you out of my mouth. For you say [to yourself], “I am rich, and have become wealthy and have no need [of anything]!” But you do not realize that you are the one who is wretched and pitiful and poor and blind and naked. So my advice to you is to buy gold from Me that has been refined in the fire (so that you may become rich), and white clothing (so that you may be [properly] dressed and not have your shameful nakedness exposed), and medicinal salve to treat your eyes (so that you may see [the situation accurately]).  
Revelation 3:15-18

After all, the idea that the world is a wonderful place, filled with all sorts of delights which we have been put here expressly for the purpose of enjoying, is decidedly un-Christian. This is *not* the garden of Eden, but rather the devil’s world (at present), and we need to order our perspective and our priorities accordingly. Material prosperity, even when it really does originate from God, is a far cry from true spiritual wealth, and can very easily induce a false sense of spiritual security. As Christians, we need to take care to esteem the genuine “gold” our Lord and Master dispenses, that is, His word of truth, and remember that excessive concentration on the ephemeral gold of this world to the detriment of the truth of the word of God (upon which our relationship with Him is based) is both perilous and ultimately pointless. The issue is all the more significant in our materially prosperous world here in the last days of the Church, for prosperity in the realm of material possessions (which are admittedly essential for human life) often has the undesirable side-effect of breeding spiritual complacency. Affluence, however, is not spirituality. And if success in the material realm should cause us to neglect our commitment to God and to His Word, it is well worth asking whether such prosperity has indeed been a blessing.

Untroubled lives of ease in the midst of abundance are neither the norm nor the objective of the Christian life. The closer we walk with God, the more we can expect that walk to be opposed by Satan and his angels:

Indeed, all who are willing to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:12

Satanic opposition, then, should be expected by growing believers. Even when the advancing believer finds himself in the midst of material prosperity, it should not be assumed that the devil will allow that person’s Christian walk to go unchallenged:

Jesus said, “In truth, I tell you, there is no one who has left behind a house or brothers or sisters or a mother or a father or children or fields for My sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred-fold more in this present time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children – *with persecutions* – and in the age to come, eternal life.”  
Mark 10:29-30

Thus, Christian maturity and continued spiritual progress may or may not be accompanied by affluence (although the passage above refers to the “affluence” of being part of Christ’s Church), but they will certainly be accompanied by trials and tribulations:

Beloved, don't be amazed at the fiery ordeal of testing you are now undergoing, as if something out of the ordinary were happening to you. But to the degree that you are [truly] participating in Christ's sufferings, be joyful about it, so that at His glorious revelation, you may also rejoice with great gladness. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:12-13

Opposition from the world to our spiritual progress is the rule, not the exception, and it is largely through our successful response to such tests that we come to appreciate the truth of the divine point of view about the world – that its rewards (and so also their loss or absence) are of small consequence in comparison to the rewards of eternity, blessings that will never fade and will never be taken away:

Brothers, when you are being beset with all manner of trials, take pains to be joyful. For you should keep in mind that this testing of your faith develops perseverance. So let your perseverance develop fully, that you may become fully mature and entitled to a full reward, having been found lacking in no respect. James 1:2-4

Thus material prosperity in this present world is ultimately of little true account to those who have chosen to follow Jesus Christ. For in our trials and tribulations, whether we have material abundance or not, we have chosen to put our Master's priorities first; we have chosen God and His Son over the material prosperity which this world proclaims as its god:

No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or cling to the one and despise the other. No one can serve God and Mammon. Matthew 6:24

For the unbeliever, the issue is likewise a simple one. Having rejected God (and often even having denied His existence), he is forced to place an incorrect emphasis and inordinate importance on this present world. Such blindness, such self-delusion, such suppression of the truth about God necessarily elevates the world and its present ruler into the realm of "god" in the unbeliever's eyes:

God's wrath is about to be revealed from heaven upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness – on men who suppress the truth [about God] in their unrighteousness. For that which can be known about God [from everyday experience] is obvious to them, because God has made it obvious. His nature, though invisible, is nevertheless plainly apparent, and has been since His foundation of the world, for it may be clearly inferred from this creation of His – [this is true of] both His eternal power and His divinity – so that they are without any excuse: they knew about God, but they neither honored Him as God nor thanked Him. Instead, they gave themselves over to [the] vanity [of this world] in their speculations, and their senseless hearts were filled with darkness. Claiming to be wise, they became foolish, for they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for images and likenesses of corruptible men, of birds and beasts and reptiles (i.e., idolatry). Romans 1:18-23

This is the point at which spiritual degeneration begins for the unbeliever. As the passage above makes plain, everyone comes to appreciate the existence of the Creator, in most cases early in life; the fact that the majority of people in the history of the world have gone on to reject Him, replace Him in their thinking with other objects, and deny His existence altogether, does not change the truth of this principle. Once God has been rejected, some substitute or “idol” will of necessity be accepted in place of the ultimate truth (2Pet.2:21-22; and cf. Matt.7:6).

This process of substituting worldly concerns for God (“idolatry” by any other name: Eph.5:5; Col.3:5) is the inevitable path of unbelief. And it is important for Christians to have no illusions in this regard, lest we share in any way in the downward spiral that comes from choosing the vanity of this world over our relationship with God in Christ:

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you no longer live as the gentiles do in futility of mind, darkened in thought and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity [to God’s truth], they have given themselves over to sensuality to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. Ephesians 4:17-19

Hardness, blindness and self-delusion are inevitable results of rejecting truth and turning away from God. And once the “god of this world” has thus blinded the mind of the unbeliever (2Cor.4:4), the quest for God is quickly replaced by the idolatrous quest for happiness. We have it from Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived (apart from our Lord) that no avenue of human activity, no amount of success or accumulation of wealth can ever bring true happiness, for all such “chasing after the wind” is ultimately pointless (Eccl. chap.1-2). The great irony of the unbeliever’s search for pseudo-happiness is that once God has been rejected, life really *is* pointless and futile, even from the standpoint of true, spiritual happiness (which has been rejected along with God). Contradictorily, however, this “guaranteed futility” only serves to intensify the unbeliever’s struggle to achieve happiness and security in this ephemeral life (cf. Matt.6:32).

There is some twisted logic in the vain pursuit of temporal security and pseudo-happiness that characterizes the unbeliever’s lifestyle. For one thing, all the effort and striving involved in attempting to achieve these two illusory objectives do serve to cloud the issue of mortality. The question of death, after all, is one which is very uncomfortable for any unbeliever to inspect too closely or too often (apart from the aid of one of the many lies about death which the devil has spread over the millennia). Excessive introspection of the mortality issue (though justified by the circumstances of life for those who have not found resolution in Christ) is just too much for most people to take. And so it is that although our extremely limited life-span and the exceptionally fragile nature of our existence is without a doubt the most pressing concern for any given individual, it is largely (and foolishly) ignored. Death is an uncomfortable topic, especially for those who have not found eternal life in Jesus Christ. But death makes a mockery of all for which the unbeliever strives. What good are achievements, what good is wealth, if in a few short days, or months, or years, death rips you away from them? Even assuming a stable world (also

an uncertain proposition), nothing can last because we don't last. It is sadly ironic that the madcap rush for wealth, fame, glory, pleasure and possessions often serves to distract the unbeliever from the central truth of life outside of the garden: all these things are vain, because we shall all return to dust in the blink of an eye. The godless pursuit of pseudo-happiness (and false security) can never take the sting out of death, but for all those who are manically involved in it, it does provide distraction from death's approach. The unbeliever, after all, has every reason to fear death, more so than he may know. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find him engaged in a frantic cycle of activity, accepting any and all substitutes to blind his eyes to the reality of death's grim approach. The unbeliever, in short, although mortal, behaves *as if he were immortal*, and that is the essence of his folly. He stores up wealth, as if he will be around to enjoy it forever; he seeks glory, fame and achievement, as if it will not fade with his impending demise; he indulges himself in all pleasures, as if the grave will not put his enjoyment of them to an end. The Bible counsels the unbeliever to enjoy his work and daily bread as necessities which are also legitimate pleasures (Eccl.2:24-25; 3:12-13; 3:22; 9:7-10); in so doing, the days of his life slip by without an excessive contemplation of death, and without the frantic and pointless search for pseudo-happiness and false security. The best that the unbeliever can hope for, therefore, is to lack self-consciousness in the area of mortality, much in the same way as the animals, hunting for food and enjoying what God has provided, never giving a thought to the day of death (Eccl.5:18-21).

But for all those who seek after *solutions* to this fundamental human dilemma (apart the one true solution of Jesus Christ), the devil has a lie that, like some super-addictive drug, grasps its victims tight and seldom releases its prey. The devil's lie is that happiness can be achieved in this world apart from God, and that, with enough effort, security can be vouchsafed for such gains. Sufficient space has already been expended to establish the principle that death makes a complete mockery of this lie from the outset (for any and all who are willing to make a truthful appraisal of the essential calculus of human life in this world outside of Eden). This fact, however, has not prevented a majority of humanity from falling into the pseudo-happiness, pseudo-security trap. Having rejected the truth of God, most people in the history of the world have gladly embraced the myth of true happiness capable of enduring. The exact incarnation of this "myth-happiness" takes many forms, of course, and is sought in a multitude of ways, but, inevitably, it is never really achieved. It always remains vaguely future, no matter how wealthy, or famous, or successful, or powerful a person manages to become in this short life: "I'll be happy if only I get/do/experience \_\_\_\_\_." Filling in this blank merely opens up the way for other blanks that need to be filled in for the elusive, never-actually-achieved myth-happiness to be attained. The fact that human beings who have sought happiness apart from God seldom if ever seem to wake up to this progression of the never-ending finish line for a happiness they can never seem to catch is a measure of just how powerful the narcotic of myth-happiness truly is.

The reality, however, is that a personal Eden cannot be achieved here in the devil's world. There is, as discussed above, a measure of satisfaction and security to be had in the simple, non-self-conscious approach to life of involving oneself in one's work, one's family, and one's daily sustenance (Ps.127:3-5; Prov.5:18; Eccl.9:7-10). For believers who put God at the center of their

lives, of course, there is (as we have seen and will revisit below) abundant joy to be had in a life lived in the light of Christ, in anticipation of the glories of eternity (Phil.4:4; Jas.1:2-4). But from the purely secular perspective, all joy must of necessity be related to this life alone, the godless myth that has ever enslaved the world.

This heathen quest for “myth-happiness”, that is, satisfaction in life apart from God, is vain for two primary reasons: 1) apart from God, very little *can* truly satisfy; 2) apart from God, security can never be guaranteed. Beyond the simple, God-given pleasures of food, family and labor, the attainment of successive plateaus of wealth, fame, power or pleasure may entertain for a brief moment, but like a feast to a man with a full belly, they quickly lose their appeal, thus spurring the myth-happiness faithful on to the next level of dubious achievement as the cycle progresses on its never-ending way:

- Fame fades; no one can continue to capture the public eye forever; all glory is fleeting, and death eventually reduces all its remnants to dust (Eccl.1:11).
- Pleasure sates easily; no experience can be savored forever, like tears in a bottle; no experience can be exactly repeated or guaranteed for the future; and though one were able to push enjoyment into areas never before experienced, even these would eventually mock the practitioner, when in the end satisfaction drains away, leaving death to bring an end to pleasure altogether.
- Power is inevitably circumscribed by human limitations (among other things: Acts 17:26-27), and while its accretion may feed arrogance, arrogance’ appetite is a bottomless sea that can never be completely satisfied; and death eventually sweeps away even the most powerful ruler.
- Wealth likewise can never be sufficient; the more one has, the more obvious it becomes to the possessor that, after an initial flush, all the fame, pleasure and power it can provide do not ultimately produce lasting satisfaction; the more wealth, that universal secular solution which myth-happiness proclaims will certainly bring joy, the more frustration when joy is not achieved; and wealth brings its own troubles (Prov.13:8; Eccl.5:10-15).

The second point mentioned above, that is, the inability of the secular man to attain security for himself, his accomplishments and his possessions, is equally trenchant, for it drives home the essential fact of the futility of myth-happiness, even to the degree that it may be thought to be attained. Fame must be added to or it fades, yielding the irony that achieving a pinnacle of notoriety merely sets one up for a fall: what has been gained can be all too easily lost. The same is true of power and wealth – there is nothing a man can do to ensure that either will endure with absolute certainty. A brief survey of the history of the world will show definitively that wars, depressions, revolutions, climactic catastrophes (to name but a few of the more prominent and general sources of instability) have deposed many a ruler and impoverished many a millionaire.

Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them. Ecclesiastes 9:12 NIV

Do not strive to be rich. Put it out of your mind. For as soon as your eye lights upon [wealth], it is no more. Indeed, it will surely sprout wings for itself and fly off to the heavens like an eagle. Proverbs 23:4-5

Whoever loves money, never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too (i.e., struggling for wealth) is meaningless. Ecclesiastes 5:10 NIV

The sleep of the laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of the rich man permits him no sleep. I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son, there is nothing left for him. Ecclesiastes 5:12-14 NIV

Pleasure is even more ephemeral than wealth. Like mist, it cannot quite be grasped and held, and so the ability to repeat it is virtually impossible to ensure, even in the near term. That is not to say, of course, that mankind has not devoted an inordinate amount of its collective energies to devising ever more exotic and entertaining diversions, but this is in itself an argument for the biblical position that earthly pleasures (again, beyond the simple, godly ones) cannot really provide true happiness or real inner satisfaction. For if they could, one would think that our present, western world should be the happiest in history, inasmuch as devising and marketing entertainment has never before been carried to the heights we are now experiencing. But the reality is that we have also never before seen so many people so completely bankrupt in the spirit, so completely unsatisfied just as soon as the entertainment of the moment has passed. There has never been a place or a time characterized by so much depression, so many suicides, or such an intensive rush to push this pseudo-enjoyment of the world to ever new extremes – certainly *not* because people are building happiness upon irrepressible happiness, but rather because every successive round of invention leaves them just as empty the last.

All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite *is never satisfied*.  
Ecclesiastes 6:7 NIV

And whether it is pleasure or wealth or power or fame or any other avenue of pursuing happiness in this life apart from the truth of Jesus Christ, death ultimately will mock them all:

Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. Ecclesiastes 5:15 NIV

For all his wealth, a man will not abide [on earth forever]. He is like the beasts that perish. Psalm 49:12

Without the confident hope of life after death, what is the point of living long and prospering when afterwards one dies? Can a long life and the experience of material prosperity really soften the blow of death for the unbeliever when it finally arrives? It may do so for the living who feel less grief for someone who has died peacefully in a good old age and in a prosperous state, but does past experience, however blissful, really make the loss of everything an easier pill to swallow? While the average unbeliever generally makes a habit of ignoring the possibility of his own death (until it comes suddenly upon him), one thing is sure: no amount of achievement or wealth can forestall the inevitable:

Why should I fear in troubling times, when I am surrounded by the wickedness of my deceivers, those who trust in their wealth and boast in their great riches? Surely, no one can redeem a man [from God's hand], no one can pay a ransom to God for him. For the redemption price of a life is too precious for Him to relent forever, that one should live on forever, and not see corruption.                      Psalm 49:5-9

But while human beings are only too willing to accept the idea of the mortality of *others*, a sense of personal immortality, or, more correctly put, an ability to procrastinate mentally until the very moment of death, is the rule when one examines one's own life. Just as "somebody else's troubles" cause little anxiety, so the eventuality of death is always in another man's court, until the actual termination of life (at which point contemplation and re-examination is, needless to say, too late). Great wealth may help to postpone the inevitable (at least people seem to think that it can), but no matter what fastidious care we are able to take of our lives and persons, the delay achieved will ever be laughably insignificant (Matt.6:27). So despite the fact that our ephemeral nature is the prime lesson of life, human beings persist in running after wealth and accomplishments until some mythic, personal Eden be achieved, ever hedging in their gains and themselves, as if the brief moment would or could last forever. But in the absence of the hope of the resurrection, the hope of myth-happiness achieved and preserved continues to be the holy-grail of the unbelieving life, that, and the equally vain hope that grasping the brass ring for a few short moments will somehow take away the sting of death.

Attaining the goals and desires the world esteems may act as a narcotic to the painful and ephemeral nature of life, but, like all narcotics, striving and accomplishment have an even more significant dark side. As wealth and achievement grow, so does worry (cf. Matt.13:22). Worldly progress is, because of the nature of the world, vulnerable to loss, and even when very carefully and intelligently hedged, will never lose its essential fragility. This factor makes all who have bought into the struggle for myth-happiness (especially those who have experienced some measure of success) even more sensitive to the possibility of loss. The principle that "losing it is worse than never having it in the first place" creates an enslavement effect, a dependency that is every bit as great as narcotic dependency. Fear of loss comes to control the life of the successful to an even more intense degree than desire for gain motivates those who are still striving for "success". And even the brief "feeling of accomplishment" once success however defined is finally achieved is largely illusory, because it is really the element of "time and circumstances" under God's direction which is paramount in all human accomplishment, no matter how much

men wish to attribute their successes to their own efforts (Eccl.3:14; 9:11). And combined with an ever increasing “tolerance” for these successes (the principle that, as with narcotics, the exhilaration of every new gain and achievement tends to wear off with accelerating rapidity), fear of loss helps to ensure a constantly escalating cycle of futility. As we have seen, Solomon, the wisest sinner who ever lived, and a man who possessed greater means for the exploration of pleasure and met with more success in personal accomplishments than any man who has ever lived before or since, makes it quite clear (in Ecclesiastes) that no level of progress and prosperity ever changes this basic equation.

When these essential realities of life are faced honestly, it is easy to conclude with Solomon that “everything is wearisome, more so than a man can express” (Eccl.1:8a). Nothing is new (Eccl.1:9-10). Nothing lasts. If you build a bridge, it will eventually fall down; if you save a life, you have not staved off death forever. What delights and thrills you today cannot sustain you tomorrow, and the anticipation of new excitements inevitably surpasses the reality once achieved. There is no gain or accomplishment (beyond the necessities of life) that has not been ultimately motivated by the jealousy and envy of the gain and accomplishments of others (Eccl.4:4; cf. Prov.14:30b): if gold and diamonds were as plentiful as dirt so that anyone could possess them, then no one would value them or lust after them; it is not uncommon to hear complaints about old and outmoded devices (cars, computers, etc.), though the very possession of such things when first introduced was wildly coveted. How quickly the thrill of ownership and the joy of experience fades, only to be immediately replaced by the covetousness of some other possession or entertainment. And although the newspapers are daily filled to overflowing with the detailed accounts of the unhappiness of the rich, powerful and famous, such cautionary tales do not deter mankind one whit from pursuing headlong the same futile course: somehow *we* would be different if only *we* could have what they have.

On and on, in a never-ending cycle, the more knowledge we amass, the more miserable we become (Eccl.1:18); the more doctors and medical technology, the more suffering; the more wealth in the world, the more poverty (cf. Eccl.5:11); the more information available, the more ignorance reigns. As material prosperity increases and technology advances, as peace and security expand, the more complacent we become and the more easily the essential pointlessness and vanity of life can be ignored. And, bereft of God and His divine perspective, the unbeliever rarely “gets it”, rolling on instead, as if backward into the future, while the days slip away, only superficially accepting the ultimate reality of mortality, not really facing it, filling the days with whatever the menu of life has to offer, whatever best distracts from the inexorable approach of the day of death.

Everyone dies. The statement is banal – and yet profound. This essential truth of human life, the common legacy we have received as a result of Adam’s sin, has implications and ramifications that the world tries hard to ignore. Mankind in general over the millennia has hardened its heart against this simple truth, spending the balance of its precious time in complete denial of life’s fundamental principle of mortality. In this point, the unbeliever is not much better off than an animal, for what good is his consciousness of his own mortality beyond supplying him ahead of

time with the horrible news of his inevitable fate? Adam and Eve changed the rules, unalterably so. Before the fall, whatever pleasure they took could be repeated; whatever work they accomplished would endure; whatever accomplishments they enjoyed would last forever and could be enjoyed forever. Not so their progeny. Whatever we do, acquire or accomplish will ultimately turn to dust, and we will certainly precede our deeds into the grave long before.

There is a profound sense in which the mockery death makes of us all (and of all we do) is part of God's inestimable grace. Had God executed sentence against our first parents immediately in Genesis chapter three, there would have been no opportunity for repentance. On the other hand, if He had allowed them to continue to partake of the tree of life in their sinful state, there would have been no impetus to turn to Him. Only a limited life-span could provide both opportunity and motivation to repent and seize God's gracious provision of salvation and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Life outside of the garden is meant to be difficult; it is meant to be frustrating. For while it is all too possible for men to harden their hearts to the approach of death, for at least one brief moment in every life, God makes Himself known, that He might be sought and found as the only solution to the futility of life and the inevitability of death (Job 37:7; Ps.19:1-4a; Acts 17:26-28; Rom.1:18-22).

I have seen all the work that God has given Man to occupy himself with. [God] has made everything beautiful in its [limited] time; but He has also placed ***the [notion of] eternity in the hearts of mankind*** – and [He has done this], moreover, without Man being able to discover the work which God has done from the beginning unto the end.

Ecclesiastes 3:10-11

Cognizance of God, cognizance of the ephemeral nature of life (a sure indication of the sin for which mortality is the judgment), and cognizance of, even a yearning for eternity in the hearts of us all, are a combination of blessings to which the whole human race is heir, the proper response to which will ever lead us to God and the immortality we crave through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I know that everything God does will stand forever; it is impossible to add to it; it is impossible to take away from it. God has established matters in this way so that Men will be in awe before Him.

Ecclesiastes 3:14

From the Christian perspective, life is an entirely different matter, because it has purpose. Our time in this world is neither pointless nor futile, for we remain here in the devil's world as servants of God, as followers of Christ. Having recognized our mortality and our sinfulness, having acknowledged God and turned to Him through Jesus Christ our Lord, we know that for us immortality lies directly behind the mortality the world sees (or chooses to ignore); we know that for us rather than there being no ultimate point to anything we do, there is instead great significance to *everything* we do. For as believers in Jesus, we remain here as instruments of

God, as members of the body of Christ, in order to do His will, that others may likewise turn to Him through Christ and likewise grow in spirit through His Word day by day:

Then the Lord said to him, “Go. For he is My vessel, chosen to carry My Name before nations, and kings, and the sons of Israel.” Acts 9:15

I have given them Your word, and the world hated them, because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You protect them from the evil one. For they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. So make them holy by means of Your truth – Your word is truth. And just as You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. I am consecrating Myself for their sake, so that they too may be made holy through truth. John 17:14-19

Don’t you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you (whom you have from God), and that you don’t belong to yourselves? You were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:19-20

Don’t offer up your [bodily] members to sin as weapons of unrighteousness. But rather offer yourselves up to God (as those now alive from the dead), and [offer up] your [bodily] members to God as weapons of righteousness. Romans 6:13

Therefore I entreat you by God’s mercy, brothers, to dedicate your bodies as a living sacrifice, well-pleasing to God – [this is] *your* “priestly-service” spiritually performed. Romans 12:1

Believers are certainly not exempt from the dual universal curse of a lifetime of work followed by an inevitable death. Indeed, for the believer, the world is even less a garden of Eden than it is for the unbeliever on account of the devil’s strenuous opposition to our spiritual advance. However, in contrast to the unbeliever, he who has placed his faith in Jesus Christ can rest assured that his life is *not* futile, but is instead endowed with the most profound significance. For us, therefore, happiness in the accomplishment of life’s daily necessities is not merely an escape from the grim reality of pointlessness. When we enjoy work, food and family, we are not burying our heads in the sand, denying the underlying realities of life, but are instead living life in the light of our equally inevitable *eternal life*, knowing with certainty that, for us, death will not mean the end, but rather only the true beginning.

This is only part of the picture. For it is not only that the vanity, futility, pointlessness and true meaningless of the unbeliever’s life is turned completely upside-down by our reception of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, but we are also ushered into a new sphere of life, where our joy as believers has the potential of outshining any happiness the unbeliever has ever imagined. God is light and life, true joy and bliss. In Him, as part of Him, as members of His Son’s body and as vessels filled with His Spirit, every good thing we see and touch, every legitimate thing we think and say and do, can be about Him, and can bring exceeding joy, even in the midst of trouble and sorrow. The more we grow, the closer we walk with Him, the more abundantly the seed of His

Word is sown in our hearts, the more we can find an inner peace and joy, an all-conquering quiet happiness, that transcends the experiences of the world, whether mundane, or horrible, or pseudo-delightful (Jas.1:2-8).

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I [it] unto you.      John 14:27a [KJV]

Rejoice in the Lord all the time! I will say it again, *rejoice!*      Philippians 4:4

Though you have never laid eyes on [Jesus], yet you love Him. And though you cannot see Him at this present time, yet you have faith in Him. For this reason you rejoice with an inexpressible joy that bespeaks the glorious future to come, when you shall carry off in victory the ultimate prize - your life's [eternal] deliverance - which is the very purpose and objective of this faith of yours.      1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:8-9

The happiness we Christians can experience here in the devil's world, though profound, is nevertheless quite different from the effortless bliss Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden of Eden. Like the woman in childbirth, we anticipate the blessing to come in spite of our present pain, filled with the confidence that the experience of life, though at times excruciating, will yet give way to transcendent joy when our hope is fulfilled (Jn.16:21; cf. Is.54:1; 60:1). The Christian life is therefore "addition", not "subtraction"; that is to say, we too suffer all the trials and tribulations that are the heritage of mankind, *plus* the devil's opposition; and, on the other hand, we too can enjoy the simple pleasures of work, food and family (though without the nagging reality of ultimate pointlessness), *plus* the hope of everlasting life, eternal reward, resurrection, and an eternity with our Lord. The Christian life is thus neither asceticism nor hedonism. We are not here to totally withdraw from the world (1Cor.5:9-10), nor are we here to make full use of it (1Cor.7:29-31). We are here as God's servants, as God's representatives, and because of His grace and His goodness, we can always find solace in Him, refuge and restoration, hope and happiness in the midst of the pain and sorrow that pulse through Satan's world (Matt.5:3-12; Lk.6:20-23):

*Make us glad* for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.      Psalm 90:15 NIV

*Be happy*, even though you are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.

*Be happy*, even though you are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

*Be happy*, even though you are crying now, for you shall laugh.

*Be happy* when people revile you and exclude you and reproach you and disparage your reputation on account of the Son of Man.

*Rejoice and leap for joy* in [anticipation of] that [future] day, for behold, your reward in heaven is great; after all, your ancestors treated the prophets in the same way.

Luke 6:20b-23

The Christian life is a long journey through a trying wilderness (Acts 14:22). Like Israelites in the desert, we are marching on towards our own promised land, in full certainty that on the other side of Jordan lies a land flowing with milk and honey. Instead of a literal desert, however, we are trekking through the devil's world, where the snakes, scorpions, hardships and ambushes often take on more subtle forms. But despite the difficulties, we can enjoy the journey, living day by day in the light of our eternal future, confident in God's provision for us throughout the short time of our sojourning here in enemy territory, and looking forward with assurance toward that future day of resurrection and reward.

The day by day perspective, though scriptural, can, admittedly, be difficult to maintain (Matt.6:34). It is all too easy for us to "over-plan" (often mere worrying) and thus lose the divine perspective of what is going on here on earth (cf. Jas.4:13-17). God, after all, counts little difference between a day and a millennium (Ps.90:4; 2Pet.3:8-9), because nothing is impossible for Him, nothing is time-dependent. This world and its tawdry forms, we must never forget, are in the process of fading away:

For this world in its present form is passing away.           1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:31b NIV

The world and its lust are passing away.           1<sup>st</sup> John 2:17

Therefore we need at all costs to gain and retain the sojourner mentality that puts our primary mental focus upon God, upon being with Him and our Lord Jesus Christ forever, not allowing ourselves to slip into the unbeliever's pattern of morbid fascination and dangerous interaction with Satan's cosmos. We need to follow day by day in the footsteps of Abraham, who looked beyond what his eyes could see to a glorious future that even now has yet to be fulfilled:

By faith, Abraham, when He was called [by God], obeyed and went forth into the place he was destined to receive as an inheritance. He went forth, moreover, in ignorance of where [exactly] he was heading. By faith, he sojourned as an alien in the land he had been promised, dwelling in tents with Jacob and Isaac, coheirs of [this same] promise. For he was waiting for the foundation of that city whose architect and builder is God.  
Hebrews 11:8-10

These all died [while still walking] in faith, though they had not received the [fulfillment of their] promises. But [while they lived] they did catch sight of [these promises] from a distance and salute them, [so to speak], thus making it plain [to all the world] that they were [in effect] strangers and sojourners on the earth. For people who express [their faith] in this way make it quite evident that they are eagerly in search of a homeland [other than the place they now occupy]. Indeed, if these [believers'] hearts had yearned for the [land] from which they had departed, they would have had [ample] opportunity to turn back. But they were zealous for a better place, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. He has, in fact, prepared a city for them.  
Hebrews 11:13-16

To follow in these wanderers' footsteps, we need to continue to grow through the truth of God's Word every day (hearing it, learning it, believing it, and living it), grow toward the ideal of making every day, every punch count. God has not only given us the command to do so, He has also given us the means and the motivation. For we are marching forward toward the Kingdom of Heaven in the power of the Spirit He has poured out upon us, toward a reward, a resurrection, and an eternal relationship that will infinitely surpass anything that could ever be gained in this life.

Don't you know that all the runners in the stadium run the race, but that only one receives the prize? Run in such a way so as to achieve what you are after. And again, everyone involved in competition exercises self-control in all respects. Those athletes go through such things so that they may receive a perishable crown of victory, but we do it to receive an imperishable one. So as I run this race of ours, I'm heading straight for the finish line; and as I box this bout of ours, ***I'm making every punch count.*** I'm "pummeling my body", one might say, bringing myself under strict control so that, after having preached [the gospel] to others, I might not myself be disqualified [from receiving the prize we all seek]. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:24-27

Redeem your time, for the days are evil. Ephesians 5:16

Walk wisely in regard to those outside [the body of Christ], redeeming your time. Colossians 4:5

From time to time, we all stray from this steep and narrow path. We sin, we fail, we fall; but we are called to wash not to wallow, to grow closer to God, not to keep Him at a distance. Our sin nature is in fact our adversary's greatest ally. The "lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" that percolate through our corrupt bodies are ever present opponents that attract us to the meaningless things of life and will, if not mastered, draw us into the same life of vanity and futility we have escaped through God's grace in Jesus Christ (cf. 2Pet.2:20-22; 1Jn.2:16). As Christians, we are not here in this life to love the world, but to love God; we are not here to mold ourselves after the world, but after God:

Don't be a lover of this world, nor of what is in this world. If anyone is a lover of this world, a [genuine] love for the Father is not in him. 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:15

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by this renewal of your thinking (i.e., through obedience to the Word of God; cf. v.1), so that you may discern what God's will for you is, namely what it is good, well-pleasing, and correct [for you to do]. Romans 12:2

As believers, we still have to live here in the devil's world in order to fulfill the purpose God has for our lives. Like all human beings, we feel the pull of myth-happiness, the lie that tells us there can be satisfaction *apart from God* on the other side of our multifarious lust. But with God's help, through the truth of His Word and the anointing of His Holy Spirit, we have ample resources, both the knowledge and the power, to resist the lie (Jn.8:31-32; Gal.5:16-17). Such

behavior is completely unintelligible to the unbelievers amongst whom we move (1Pet.4:4). But the devil understands: we are true servants of the God he has defied, and his blood enemies by nature. For this reason alone, we will never, *can* never be at home here on earth as long as Satan exercises any measure of control. As long as this earth is in any sense “the devil’s world”, all who have sworn their allegiance to Jesus Christ will find it to be enemy territory.

3. The Hostility of the World: From the moment we turn away from the hollow manner of life handed down from generation to generation (1Pet.1:18), and turn instead to the living God through faith in His Son Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to Him, and at the same time alienated from the world. There can be no middle ground. Either we are friends of God, or friends of the world (Jas.4:4). Satan has done his best to structure the kingdom he tenuously controls and its mode of operation so as to invite compromise and involvement in the activities and values he sponsors. But God is holy. God is righteous. God is absolute, and the issues He puts before us (of accepting salvation first, and following Jesus Christ ever afterward) are equally absolute. To be sure, Christians sin, Christians stumble, Christians fail; but our imperfect obedience does not change the fact that God’s standards are unbending, unsullied and perfect in every way:

You adulterously unfaithful people! Don’t you know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God? Whoever wants to be a friend of the world establishes himself as an enemy of God. James 4:4

This world, often referred to in the New Testament by the Greek word *kosmos* (κοσμος, cf. “cosmos”), is and has been since the fall of Adam and Eve a place by nature antithetical to godly values and godly lives. In no small part for this very reason, scripture often refers to the physical earth, its population, and its present system of diabolical governance under the all encompassing moniker of “the cosmos”, that is to say, “the world”. For “the world” sums up not only geographic planet earth with its human population, but also the entire system of satanic influence with which the devil has been manipulating mankind since the first day our original parents fell into sin. The scriptural designation is both fitting and important, because it is truly impossible to separate one from the other, and extremely dangerous for Christians to try. Only God can sever the monstrous tie between the devil’s system of influence and administration (i.e., “Satan’s world-system”) from the anthropological-geological earth. Sever the two He will, but through His own might in Jesus Christ when He returns to crush Satan under His feet (Rev.20:1-10). Until that future time, everything the world is represents a threat to those who believe in Christ, to those who follow God and not the devil. Christians ignore to their peril this reality of the world’s essential evil and hostility towards them.

It is true that Satan’s rule is not absolute; he does operate under certain divinely imposed restraints – otherwise he would long ago have wiped the earth clean of all truth and of all who believe the truth. Even considering the fact that God is far from uninvolved in what transpires here on earth, we should not underestimate the pervasiveness and the power of Satan’s policies, for the term “the world” is essentially a description and summation of these policies. As a system designed and administered by the devil, the world (or “kosmos”) is uncompromisingly

and irretrievably hostile to God, to truth, and to all who believe. The implications of this truth for believers especially are profound. Not only can there be no compromise with a world-system established and administered by the devil, but it is also impossible for such a system to be “fixed” or “repaired” in any way. The world as we know it will never be, *can* never be a place without sin and without evil, not only because it is populated by sinful people, the majority of whom refuse to acknowledge its original Creator and Sovereign, but also and even more significantly because *the world is Satan’s operation* (within, of course, the confines set by God). Any and all efforts undertaken by mankind to create a “more humane” world, therefore, are ipso facto not only doomed to failure, but actually play directly into the devil’s hands. The world, as the devil’s system, is inherently hostile to truth and to those who acknowledge the truth. Satan’s system is designed to encourage atheistic attempts at improving the cosmos. And Satan himself is constantly fomenting and furthering such false quests in order to capture as many unwitting victims as possible.

The devil’s world will never be healed; the devil’s system will never be successful in creating a perfect environment apart from God, in “recreating Eden”. Indeed, Satan’s *kosmos* is really not designed to do so at all – it is to the contrary constructed to *appear* to have the betterment of humanity as a prime objective, in order to further the devil’s plans of enslaving and misleading as many people as possible. While masquerading as a kingdom of light, Satan’s world is entirely a kingdom of darkness, and so the scriptures describe it, making abundantly clear the distinction between God’s world to come and the present cosmos of evil.

For men of this sort are false apostles, workers of guile, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And it is no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 11:13-14

But you are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people to be preserved in order that you might proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light  
1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:9

[God the Father], who rescued us from the power of darkness and delivered us into the kingdom of His beloved Son.  
Colossians 1:13

The theme of light and darkness in the Bible is critical to understanding and appreciating to what an absolute degree the world is not only vain and pointless, but utterly evil. For just as the original cosmos, a place of brilliant light, was plunged into literal darkness at Satan’s fall, so following the fall of our first parents (in which, of course, the devil was instrumental) this present world became morally dark, and irremediably so. Following the fall of mankind and expulsion from Eden, our world was plunged into spiritual darkness (as it says in Rom.5:12, “sin entered the *kosmos*”). As a result, this evil world is now the devil’s “kingdom of darkness”, and in it there is no “light” whatsoever apart from God. In biblical terms, light is a very clear and potent metaphor for truth and holiness, while darkness, on the other hand, is an equally powerful symbol

of the lie and of all that is sinful and repugnant to God. Nothing good can come out of such utter darkness; the only hope for the world was that light would somehow reenter *it* through the grace of God. In His grace, God has always made the light of truth visible and available to mankind, even in the midst of Satan's light-less world, and this light of truth has always been embodied in His Son:

In Him was life, and this life was the light of men. And this light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not quenched it.      John 1:4-5

Jesus Christ is the true light of world, the embodiment of all truth, the living Word of God, the One who illuminates the sinful darkness with blinding, holy light.

I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.      John 8:12b

I have come into the world as a light, in order that everyone who believes in Me may not abide in darkness.      John 12:46

In this regard, Christ is clearly pictured as invading an enemy kingdom, a kingdom where evil and darkness reign. He is "sent" as the world's Savior (1Jn.4:14); He "comes into the world" as the true light (Jn.1:9-10); He "conquers the world" (Jn.16:33), and ultimately "triumphs" (Rev.5:5). The Bible's symbolism of Christ as diametrically opposed to the world we now inhabit is striking and unyielding: light to darkness. The implications of this symbolism are important, for they reinforce and validate what we have been saying from the beginning of this section: life without God is truly meaningless, and little wonder, for the world in which we live this life is dark and evil – only in God through the true light of the world, Jesus Christ, can we escape the darkness.

It should come as no surprise, then, that all who become "light in the Lord" (Eph.5:8) have from the point of salvation forward little in common with the world in which they walk. As was stressed above, we believers in Christ are no longer "of the world" (Jn.17:14-16), but are sojourners and aliens in a strange and hostile environment. The corollary to this principle is equally true and equally compelling: just as we have chosen God over the world, so the world has little use for us who have rejected it (Jn.15:18-20). The fact that the present *kosmos* is under the devil's influence makes this eventuality the more understandable (1Jn.5:19). As soon as we stop playing according to Satan's rules, we are no longer his subjects, but only interlopers in his realm. Thus we lose all further consideration on the part of the world and its ruler. By choosing Christ, we gain our lives, but lose the world, thus incurring its undying hostility (Matt.16:26):

I have given them Your word, and the world hated them, because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. For they are not of the world just as I am not of the world.      John 17:14-16

This hostility on the part of the world towards believers is complete and absolute. As those who reflect the light of God's truth (2Cor.3:18), believers naturally stir the resentment of those whose deeds are evil, those who love darkness and hate the light (Jn.3:19-20; 1Jn.3:12). No one challenged the world and its evil more than did the true light, Jesus Christ. And there can be no greater example of the fact that the world as a system of evil is incurable than what the devil's kingdom did to our Lord and Master. Though He was the true light of the world, the One who not only told the truth but *was* the truth, the One who came into the world to save all those in the world who would turn to Him, He was nevertheless crucified by the world (cf. Acts 3:13; 13:27-28; Rom.3:11; 1Cor.2:8; 2:14-15; 2Cor.4:3-4; 1Jn.3:1). As the Light of the world, He naturally incurred the world's hostility, because He exposed the world for its utter and unrepentant evil:

And this is the [basis for] judgment: the Light has come into the world, yet men loved the darkness more than the Light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone who commits detestable practices hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, lest his deeds be exposed [for what they really are].      John 3:19-20

As His followers, we Christians are targets of the same hostility, when we walk as He walked, for in so doing we reflect His light in an ungrateful world:

Though the world hates you, know that it came to hate Me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own. Now because you are not [a part] of the world, but I chose you out of the world, for this reason the world hates you.      John 15:18-19

You are the light of the world. A city built on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it illuminates everything in the house. Let the light within you shine in this way before men, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.      Matthew 5:14-16

Do everything [you do] without grumbling and criticizing, that you may be blameless and undefiled, children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as light-givers in the world.      Philippians 2:14-15

A world steeped in sin, populated for the most part by people who want no part of God (cf. Eph.2:1-3), and ruled by the devil will never be a "comfortable" or "friendly" place for those who choose to follow Jesus Christ. Of this we must be sure. There is perhaps no greater mistake a believer can make than to assume that he or she can ever have any true peace with this world and its diabolical sovereign (Jas.4:4; 1Jn.2:15-17). This is one reason why peace and prosperity are potentially harmful to the believer's spiritual equilibrium. For the devil is at work in "good times" too. Indeed, he does some of his most effective work on such occasions. Followers of Christ need to remember that the world is not an essentially "friendly" place where bad things happen only from time to time. Rather, it is an entire cosmos of evil where darkness reigns, a mad beast that can never be tamed, only destroyed (as God shall eventually do: cf. 2Pet.3:10-12).

Our gratitude is indeed due to God that in our time we have been the beneficiaries of much divine restraint, but during the Great Tribulation, the true nature of the world and of him who currently rules it will become manifest to all. Until that time, we Christians should be ever vigilant not to allow “good times” to blind us to the true nature of our relationship to the world. We are journeying through enemy territory, as did our Lord (1Jn.4:17b). God is our life, our love, but the world does not know Him (Jn.17:25). Therefore it does not understand us, sees us as weak and foolish (1Cor.1:28-29; cf. 1Cor.3:18-19), and is even resentful of us (Jn.15:18-19; 17:14; 1Jn.3:13). We are not “of” this present evil world (Jn.17:14-16), but in Christ have been delivered from it (Gal.1:4; Col.1:13), and crucified to it (and it to us: Rom.6:2-4; 7:4-6; Gal.6:14; Col.2:20). As citizens of the kingdom of heaven and as ambassadors of Christ, we still remain in it (Jn.17:15; cf. 2Cor.5:20; Phil.3:20; 1Pet.2:11), but are not to be conformed to it (Rom.12:2). From God’s point of view, the world is filled with spiritual pollution and moral corruption (2Pet.1:4; 2:20; Jas.1:27); as long as we are in it, we will have trials and tribulations (Jn.16:33), but through Him we will overcome the world (1Jn.4:4; 5:4-5) and come to judge it (1Cor.6:2).

Though we once walked as the world did (Eph.2:1-3), as soldiers of Christ we now walk in the way He has shown us, confident that this present, morally ugly form of the world will not long endure (1Cor.7:31), and determined to turn away from its evil, ever looking instead to the true Light that is our life.

You adulterously unfaithful people! Don’t you know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God? Whoever wants to be a friend of the world establishes himself as an enemy of God. James 4:4

Don’t be a lover of this world, nor of what is in this world. If anyone is a lover of this world, a [genuine] love for the Father is not in him. 1<sup>st</sup> John 2:15

While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that you may become sons of light. John 12:36

4. The Battlefield: As believers, we are sojourners in a world in which we can never truly belong, a world of vanity and of largely meaningless pursuits, a world that is by nature hostile to us, a world whose wounds will never be healed until Christ returns, a world of darkness where the truth of the Word of God (and those who believe it) provide the only light until the coming of the one true Light on that future day. But there is another dimension to be considered beyond our alienation to the world, beyond its essential futility, and beyond the enmity between it and us: the world is also a battlefield where the struggle between Satan’s present kingdom and the coming kingdom of heaven continues to be played out in deadly earnest (as has been the case since the devil’s fall).

For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against [angelic] princes, against [angelic] authorities, against the cosmic powers of this [present] darkness, against evil spirits in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12

So far then from being capable in any way of essential betterment or rehabilitation, this world, having passed from Adam's control, is now a combat zone where the devil and his minions, visible and invisible, are waging war against the plan of God. Therefore, we who have chosen for God through Jesus Christ are all combatants in this largely unseen conflict, like it or not, perceive it or not. We are living out this temporary life of the flesh on a battlefield, and cannot separate the two. We may choose to be poor soldiers in the fight; we may seek to avoid the fray as far as possible; we may (as many have done in the past and even more are predicted to do in the future) go "A.W.O.L." from our Lord or even desert to the enemy. But the fact remains, no matter how we choose to respond to it, that this world is the prime battlefield of the struggle between God and the devil, and this truth has more to do with the texture, course and purpose of our individual Christian lives than the things our eyes can see, than the things the world tells us are really important.

Endure hardship with me like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:3 (cf. Philem.1:2)

Satan has never and will never lose sight of his objective to hinder and oppose in every conceivable way the plan of God for salvation (because it necessarily entails his replacement). Therefore as soldiers in the army of the Son of God, we believers are of no inconsiderable interest to Satan.

Stay sober and stay awake [on guard]. Our adversary the devil roams about like a roaring lion, looking for someone he can devour. Resist him, strong in your faith, remembering that your fellow believers in this world are undergoing the exact same sort of suffering [that you are]. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8-9

We are more than interlopers in Satan's realm. We are chosen by God, choosers of Him, and eventual replacements for the devil's followers. We are sons of God whose continued existence here is a testimony to the power and faithfulness of God and a continual reproach to the devil. We are soldiers of truth, who seek to know, to live, and to proclaim the truth, whose very presence here on earth contradicts the devil's lies and threatens to undermine all that he seeks to accomplish. For nothing shatters the power of darkness like light.

The night is close to over, and day is near at hand. So let us put aside the works of darkness and put on [instead] the armor of light. Romans 13:12

It is therefore foolish to assume that we believers can somehow remain aloof from the unseen conflict that rages around us, especially since Satan's system can be seen in full operation throughout the world (if only we would open our eyes to look). Moreover, the devil and his forces, both human and angelic, are operating with the clear and discernible objective of opposing the kingdom of heaven with all possible means, and will be doing so with an increasingly desperate sense of purpose as the ultimate day of reckoning draws ever nearer.

Woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come to down to you, having [great] anger, because he knows that he has [only] a short time [remaining]. Revelation 12:12

But when the Son of Man returns, will He find faith on the earth? Luke 18:8b

We may not always have a precise understanding of the enemy's specific tactical objectives in all the complicated web of human (and angelic) affairs – after all, our intelligence as to the particulars of individual situations is necessarily limited. But scripture does make clear that we believers are primary targets of all the devil's martial assets, and that we are to order our lives accordingly. Failing to understand the dangers the world really poses, failing to maintain a conscious alertness as to our role as Christians in it, or, worst of all, falling into the devil's most insidious and effective trap of trying to improve "cosmos diabolicus", are mistakes that can put our entire Christian walk, our entire faith at risk. We have enlisted in the army of Jesus Christ, and until He calls us home, or the final trumpet blows, we have a fight on our hands here in the enemy's territory:

Fight the good fight of faith. 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 6:12a

I give you this command, Timothy my child, in accordance with the prophecies that were made long ago about you, that you conduct a good campaign, one that is in keeping with them. 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:18

I have fought the good fight. I have completed my course. I have kept the faith. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:7

When our life in the world is viewed in this light, we can see Satan's cosmos entirely for what it is: a battlefield wherein our adversary the devil has established many hostile fortifications, land-mines and booby-traps. It is a dangerous place garrisoned by his forces of darkness, an area under hostile fire wherein we are combatants. It cannot be emphasized often enough that the world is therefore not "fixable" any more than a combat zone can be "fixed" in any way before the enemy who disputes its control has been utterly defeated. At the Second Advent, Jesus Christ will return in glory to completely vanquish the forces of Satan, human and angelic. Until that day, as long as we campaign here on the devil's earth, we must fight our battles on the spiritual plain with the "sword of the Spirit", the Word of God (Eph.6:17):

For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but are powerful for God, for the destruction of strongholds, destroying sophistries and every presumption that raises itself up against the knowledge of God, and taking every thought prisoner so as to obey Christ. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:4-5

After the fall, when our first parents accepted God's gracious offer of salvation, they "hit the beach", so to speak, becoming, in effect, invaders of the devil's realm. From this time forward, the devil would hold as his enemies any and all who would choose to follow God, to think and act contrary to the manipulative system of lies that Satan has developed to keep as much of

humanity as possible enslaved to his will. Amid the set-backs, the trials and the tears, amid the harsh realities of life as Christians in the middle of the devil's realm, it is tremendously important that we learn this essential principle of Christian soldiering: whatever happens, you must not take things personally. As Jesus told us in very plain language, the world opposed Him, and so it will oppose all who belong to Him as well (Jn.15:18-19). This struggle for control of the earth, for the salvation of those who walk in darkness, for the spiritual advance and growth of all who follow Christ, this struggle is *not* about us individually; this struggle is about Jesus Christ. Despite the economic and technological "prosperity" that characterizes our present day and age, from a spiritual point of view we live in some of the toughest times the Church has ever experienced. The devil's system has never been so close to dominating world thinking and controlling world culture; and never since the tower of Babel has Satan been closer to forging a world-wide uni-culture (based on his intricate and multifarious lies). Everything that is in any way connected to the truth is under increasingly heavy assault from the forces of cosmos diabolicus. Under such trying circumstances, it is absolutely imperative that we who believe the truth, who love the truth, who serve and seek the truth, not take the devil's assaults on us personally. Because of the nature of the world as a battlefield in the conflict in which we are now embroiled and our status as followers of Jesus Christ, we must expect tribulation to be the rule, not the exception:

[They were] strengthening the hearts of the disciples, and encouraging them to remain in the faith, and saying "We must pass through many tribulations to reach the Kingdom of God". Acts 14:22

Remember this principle I taught you: A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. John 15:20

Indeed, all who are willing to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:12

Beloved, don't be alarmed at the fiery ordeal which has befallen you and is putting you to the test - as if something out of the ordinary were happening to you. But to the degree that you are [truly] participating in Christ's sufferings, be joyful about it, so that at His glorious revelation, you may also rejoice with great gladness. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:12-13

This "sharing of the sufferings of Christ" (cf. Rom.8:17; 2Cor.1:5-7; Phi.3:10; Col.1:24; 1Pet.4:13) is only occasionally the result of overt and obvious persecution for being Christian. More often than not, it comes instead from invisible, demonic sources or through human agencies in ways that are not overtly connected to attacking us for our Christianity per se. Satan has many minions, many means of turning up the heat on all who are determined to follow Christ in the midst of his kingdom and in despite of his lies:

Stay sober and stay awake [on guard duty]. Our adversary the devil roams about like a roaring lion, looking for someone he can devour. Resist him, strong in your faith,

remembering that your fellow believers in this world are undergoing the exact same sort of suffering [that you are]. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8-9

As believers in Christ, followers of Christ, ambassadors for Christ, indeed “little Christs” (as the name Christian indicates), we need to understand that the resistance, attacks and persecution we receive from our adversary the devil *are not personal*, any more than enemy artillery fire on a strictly human battlefield is meant for any one soldier in particular. Now the fact that Satan’s attempts to discourage us, seduce us and even to destroy us are not personal do not make them any less deadly. The point is, like soldiers in combat, we need to be able to react to the “shot and shell” in an impersonal, highly professional way. We simply cannot afford to allow our morale to be seriously damaged or even destroyed by the devil’s inevitable assaults. We are not unique. As the passage from 1<sup>st</sup> Peter quoted above teaches very plainly, *all* believers are subject to the same type of treatment. Satanic opposition is, quite frankly, a normal and continual part of the Christian life. Certainly, these assaults will take a variety of forms; certainly, they will differ greatly from time to time, from place to place, and from individual to individual. But the fact of their occurrence is a given. As long as we march across this battlefield, we are going to be subject to enemy fire, of greater concentration and intensity to the degree we increase in the effectiveness of our Christian lives (growing spiritually and helping others to do likewise).

This struggle is not about us, but we cannot avoid being completely involved in it as long as we hold our position on planet earth. With the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and session of our prince leader Jesus Christ (Heb.2:10; 12:2), the devil has lost his last opportunity to attack our Lord directly. We are the next best thing. And while we are hardly the exclusive targets of satanic operations in this world, we believers are nevertheless special “targets of opportunity”, whom the devil delights in tripping up, then accusing in the presence of God (Rev.12:10). When we are being “hit” by set-backs, suffering, even disaster, we, as potentially very emotional creatures, need to remember this principle of “not taking things personally”. Like Job, we don’t know, *can’t* know now the exact purpose that our individual episodes of suffering have in the plan of God; and like the unseen chariots that Elisha revealed, we can’t see the forces that God is deploying in our defense and support. Our job is to continue to advance up the hill God has given us to assault; we should expect the enemy to fire back (why wouldn’t he?). What we cannot afford to do is to become disoriented by the experience and take this satanic opposition personally, “as if some strange thing were happening to us” (1Pet.4:12-13), or as if we were the first to fall under the devil’s fire (1Pet.5:8-9).

This is, admittedly, a difficult perspective to maintain, but a very important one nevertheless. Most notable in scripture in this regard is the example of Job, who – after enduring tremendous and tremendously unexpected suffering with a patience that was destined to become proverbial – finally made the mistake of taking the experience personally in the end (as a result of the cold comfort doled out by his supposed friends). We can certainly understand Job’s reaction, his vehement “Why me, God?”, but we must also acknowledge that God has preserved his story for us for a very important reason: whenever we find ourselves under grinding, unexplained and unexplainable pressures, we need to be extremely careful *not to blame God* (1Cor.10:11-13).

When we groan, and moan, and complain about our lot, we are not far different from the soldier who is convinced that trench foot was invented by the enemy to plague him personally, or that his adversaries who are shelling his position have him personally in mind. Such notions are ridiculous. But how much more ridiculous is it for believers who profess to trust God, who claim to know something about His mercy and grace, to whine and complain that “God isn’t listening to me!” or to ask “Why did God let this happen to me?” Job didn’t realize that the intense suffering he was forced to undergo was in fact an incredible compliment. For God had in fact singled him out from all the believers of his day to reproach the devil:

Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you noticed my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth: a blameless man and righteous who fears God and turns away from evil.  
Job 1:8

Like Job, we too are in the dark about the particulars of the unseen conflict that rages around us. We know so very little about what is happening in heaven or in the invisible angelic realm here on earth that it is incredibly foolish (not to mention wrong) for us to ascribe our problems and difficulties to some indifference on God’s part - the very God who sacrificed His own Son to save us from hell. He did the most for us then; will He not also take heed of all our other problems as well (Heb.13:5-6, and cf. Rom.5:8)? We may know intellectually that He provides for us and protects us, we may also have believed this essential principle, but it is certainly a different matter to apply this truth when we fall under intensive enemy fire. It is all too easy to become focused on ourselves and our problems (massive and seemingly insoluble though they may seem), and forget why we are here and who we are here for; it is all too easy to take our suffering personally, and, if we are not careful, once we head down this slippery slope, to blame God. We are here for Him, for His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; we are here to serve God. We have pledged our lives to Him. Indeed, we claim to wait in eager anticipation of the next life, the eternal life that we have been promised by the Father and the Son which has been pledged to us through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Eph.1:13-14). Death, the inevitability that makes a mockery of life on this earth without God, no longer has any terrors for us, or so we say, for to us to die is gain (Phil.1:21), a blessed entrance into the real, eternal life we yearn for, into an everlasting fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord, into reward, refreshment and ultimate resurrection. If the worst that the devil and his world can do to us is to hasten our exit from this life of tears into the next with all its joy and glory, then why do we often behave as if this world and our residence in it will go on forever? We claim to be willing to give up our lives for Him; should we then blame Him the minute things seem to be going contrary to our personal plans?

Between this life and the next, we are here to serve God in whatever way He desires. There has never been a problem or a disaster or a heartache that He has not known about – long before the earth was made; and there has never been any situation that He has not made provision for – long before Man walked the earth. He is perfect; His plan is perfect; His provision is perfect. These are simply facts – to those who believe. God could have taken us home to Himself immediately at the point of our entrance into His family through faith in Jesus Christ, but He has left us here, in the devil’s world, on this battlefield called earth, to soldier on according to the Word with which we have been entrusted. The world being what it is (as we have seen), and

given the implacable nature of our adversary the devil, opposition, resistance and suffering are not the exception for Christians, but the norm. One of the biggest mistakes we can make as we proceed on this journey, this mission, is to forget where we are (the world), why we are here (to serve God), and what our Christian growth will cost (intensifying opposition from the adversary). The last thing we can afford in this dangerous and hostile place and in the face of such a wily opponent is to take the devil's harassment personally.

We are not here to do our own will, or to follow our own course, or to choose our own life apart from what God would have us do. Whenever our thinking begins to be dominated by personal concerns to such a degree that we lose perspective about our place in God's plan, our spiritual life is bound to suffer. We have of necessity many ties with the world (family, business, etc.). This is all the more reason to strive to keep God first in our thinking, our conversation, and the actual living of our lives, approaching the distractions of life (whether harassment or enticement) with the proper, *professional* Christian point of view.

I say this not to put a noose around your neck, but for your own good, [that you may live] for the Lord in a proper, steadfast and undistracted way. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:35

I mean this, brethren: there is not much time left. So in the future, let those who have wives be as those who don't have them, and those who weep as those who don't weep, and those who rejoice as those who do not rejoice – and those who make use of this world as those who do not take full advantage of it. For this world in its present form is passing away. And I want you to be free of worries. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:29-32a

It is all too easy, all too natural for us take our "eyes off the ball", to become distracted in this world from the real reason we have been left here, from the real Person we are here to serve. It is all too easy to become distracted from the Word of God and the truths it contains – even in the accomplishment of otherwise valid tasks. Martha became so distracted by her legitimate service that she not only neglected our Lord's teaching of the Word of God, but tried to draw her sister into the same mistake (Lk.10:38-42). We can't afford to let anything distract us from God or from our only means of knowing Him and drawing nearer to Him, the Word of God. Life makes many demands upon us, but if the appropriate functions of life draw us away from what is really important in this life, what is the point? The entire purpose behind all legitimate Christian service in the first place is to make possible the reception of the Word of God for the initial development of the unbeliever's and consequent deepening of our fellow believers' relationship with Him.

The more distracted we allow ourselves to become from the true issues of life, the more likely we are to lose sight of the battlefield, the objectives of this war we are waging, and our commander in chief, Jesus Christ. Satan appreciates this fact very well. The devil, moreover, is adept at making us squirm. He has a large "file" on every believer, you can be sure. He knows your most vulnerable individual "pressure points" (as would anyone with even average intelligence who could secretly follow you around for any length of time). Whatever Satan has "tried" on you that

has worked, be sure that he will use it again and again (at least until it stops working). In addition to subtle ambushes, Satan is also well versed in the direct assault, body-blows that in the common experience of mankind hit us all with tremendous force (e.g., disease and disaster). Yes, because of the nature of the conflict in which we are engaged, God “lets things happen” to all of us. If He did not, it would be like taking the tree of the knowledge of good and evil right out of the garden; it would have the effect of removing our free will from the equation; it would give us little opportunity to prove to the world and the devil, and to demonstrate to God, that we really do esteem Him more than anything in this life. After all, God desires, “genuine worshipers” (Jn.4:23). Without the continued choice to exercise our will in a negative way too, the validity of the positive choice to follow Jesus Christ could not be affirmed. God does “let things happen”, but we must never forget that all things happen for a purpose, His purpose, for His glory, and for our ultimate good:

And we know that everything works together for good for those who love God, for those who have been called according to His plan.                      Romans 8:28

You planned evil against me, but God planned it out for good.                      Genesis 50:20a

In fact, then, we have nothing at all to fear, and no cause for worry, since God is our Rock. We must not, therefore, react to adverse circumstances by taking things so personally that we forget the circumstances of our sojourn on this earth and begin to doubt our God. No matter how bad things get, God has not forgotten us nor forsaken us (Matt.6:25-34; Heb.13:5-6). God’s character is perfect in every way, and when we consider who and what He is from any aspect of that character, we are forced to admit that such a loving and gracious and faithful God could only have our best interests at heart, could only be operating beyond the ken of our limited human perception to work out everything for our ultimate good. God knows what is best for us and always has. He knew all that would happen to us in our lives, having in fact planned it all out in eternity past – for the best. He has also already provided for us and all our needs. As to the great care He has for us, nothing could demonstrate this more clearly than the provision He made for our sinfulness, our rebellion, our evil: He sent His only Son to die for us. God cares for us, loves us more than anything else in the world, and there is absolutely nothing in this world which can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (Rom.8:38-39). Is there really anything else we need to know? Not if we believe it, believe in who and what He is, believe in what He has done for us in sacrificing Jesus Christ for us. But these essential realities, facts of faith that the world rejects, have to be more real to us than anything our eyes can see. Indeed they *are* more real, but Christians have to affirm their reality by faith in every skirmish of every day as we make our way across this battlefield we call the world.

All this takes faith, and the building up of our faith requires in turn the diligent, daily intake of God’s Word consistently applied to life in order to grow. Only through the continuation of this irreplaceable process do the realities of heaven begin to become more real than the ephemeral “realities” our eyes behold. But once we have grown to this perspective, we may honestly say as Job did “the Lord gives and the Lord takes away; blessed be the Name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we will be opposed by the devil, but if we stand our ground the victory will be ours (Jas.4:7). As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we will be tested, but God will never allow the pressure to intensify beyond what we can actually bear (1Cor.10:13). As soldiers of Jesus Christ, we will know sorrow and suffering, but God will never leave us without superabundant comfort (Jn.16:7; 2Cor.1:3-7). As soldiers of Jesus Christ, when our race is finally run, we shall be able to look back on this short life and say with the apostle Paul that though in every way we were oppressed, we were not completely distressed, that though we were without lavish means, we were not left totally without them, that though we were persecuted, we were not left completely in the lurch, and that though we were thrown down, we were not destroyed (2Cor.4:8-9). When we came forth into this world, it was not the garden of Eden we found, but a battlefield where our enemy the devil held sway. May it be said of us all that in this life we served honorably – even with distinction – the One who enlisted us into His service by His own blood.

Endure hardship with me like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one on military campaign becomes involved in the affairs of normal life. [He avoids such things] that he may please the one who enlisted him. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:3-4

## **VI. The Last Adam**

Despite the difficulties faced by believers in this world, we have faith that when our time here is over, a new eternal life awaits us, one that cannot be compared to the life of trial and tribulation that is currently our lot (Rom.8:18; 2Cor.4:16-17). We know with the eyes of faith that this frail body and this sinful world are not the end (2Cor.5:1-10). We believe and understand through faith that all we see is temporary (2Cor.4:18), whereas the wonderful new world and marvelous new body we anticipate will last forever (2Pet.3:13; Rev.3:5). Despite our collective eviction from Eden through the sins of our first parents Adam and Eve, the gates of the eternal Eden, the New Jerusalem, now lie open wide for us (Matt.25:34; Rev.21:5; 22:14; cf. Is.60:11). Only our short tour of duty here in the devil's world now separates us from those ineffable glories to come in Eden replaced, restored and rendered better than before to an incomprehensible degree (Rev.22:1-5). And we know whom we have to thank for our deliverance from sin and death and from this world of sin and tears, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who by His death bought us out of this kingdom of darkness (Rom.3:24; Col.1:12-14; 1Pet.1:18-20), and His loving Father and ours who loved us so much He sacrificed His only Son on our behalf (Jn.3:16).

So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are accursed, more than any beast or wild animal. You shall go on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. And I shall place hostility between you and the woman, that is, between your seed and her Seed (i.e., Christ). He will attack you head-on, but you will attack Him from behind". Genesis 3:14-15

Adam was the first man, and through him sin and death entered into the world (Rom.5:12-14). But God did not abandon humanity. God anticipated our collective fall from grace in Adam's sin and proclaimed the good news of salvation through faith even before expelling Adam from Eden. God promised that Eve's Seed would one day come to crush the head of the enemy (Gen.3:15; cf. Gal.3:19). The One without sin would come to die for our sins (Rom.5:15-21), and so remove once and for all the problem of sin, the fear of death, and the inevitability of condemnation brought on by the fall of the first Adam (1Cor.15:21). To accomplish all this, God's own Son would have to become flesh (Is.7:14). Jesus would have to enter this world as a true human being (Phil.2:6-8), the "Last Adam" (1Cor.15:45), so that while we all face death as a result of our ancestry in the first Adam, we might all be made alive through our adoption as sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1Cor.15:22; Gal.3:26).

For this reason it has also been written of the first Adam: "The man became a living person (*nephesh*)"; [but] the last Adam, [Jesus Christ, became] a life-giving spirit.  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:45

It is therefore our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who holds the key to reentering Eden (Rev.1:18; cf. Matt.16:18-19; Rev.3:7), and He is the Gate by whom all may now enter into eternal life through faith (Jn.10:7-9; cf. Gen.3:24; Rev.3:20). We who have put our faith and hope in Him will indeed physically reenter Eden in resurrection (cf. Lk.23:43), not the temporal Eden of Adam and Eve with its opportunity for falling, but a new and glorious eternal Eden where there is no tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but only the tree of life (Rev.22:2; cf. Rev.2:7), the New Jerusalem on the new earth where only righteousness will dwell (2Pet.3:13; Rev.21-22). Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, is the One who has taken away the curse upon the first Adam and upon us his progeny, having become a curse for us all so that we might be blessed eternally in Him (Gal.3:10-14).

Therefore since death [came] through a man (i.e., the first Adam), resurrection of the dead also [has and had to come] through a Man (i.e., Jesus Christ, the Last Adam). For just as in Adam all die (i.e., all human beings are under Adam's curse), so also in Christ shall all be made alive (i.e., all believers are delivered from Adam's curse by being baptized "in" to Christ by the Holy Spirit).  
1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:21-22

Through our faith in Jesus Christ we have been baptized into Him (Matt.28:19; Rom.6:3-4; Gal.3:27; Eph.4:5; Col.2:12; 1Pet.3:21), and have become one Body with Him (e.g., Eph.1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4; 4:12; 4:16; 5:23-30). Through His act of sacrifice in becoming a man and dying for us, yes, and being resurrected for us, our Lord has wedded Himself to us all, to all saved mankind forevermore, so that we His Church are now His very Bride (Rom.7:1-4; 1Cor.6:15; 2Cor.11:2; Eph.5:23-30; Rev.19:7-9; 21:2; 21:9; 22:17; cf. Matt.9:15; 25:1-13; Jn.3:29). The Last Adam is therefore *the* Son of Man (Mk.8:31 et passim), the Firstborn of all creation (Col.1:15), the One in whom all things are now summed up in heaven and on earth (Eph.1:10; cf. Eph.1:22-23; Col.1:17). For all the problems of sin and death brought upon humanity by the first Adam and perpetuated by all his progeny have been washed away forever by the blood of the Lamb. The Last Adam has resolved the problem of sin and has conquered death for all time, so

that *in Him* there is now only eternal life, blessing and deliverance for all who truly belong to Him. Thus the Last Adam has not only regained all that was lost by the first Adam, including regency over the world (Col.2:14-15; Heb.1:3; 2:5-9; Rev.11:15), to be reestablished in practice at the Second Advent (Ps.2; 45; 48; 72; Is.2:1-5; Ezek.48:35b; Dan.7:14; Zech.14; Lk.1:32-33; 2Thes.1:6-10; Rev.19:11-20:6), but He has also opened up the gates of eternity to a better everlasting life in victory and blessing in the New Jerusalem to come beyond anything the Eden of old could ever have provided (Heb.12:22-24; Rev.21-22; cf. 1Cor.15:24-28).

For it is not to angels that He subordinated the world to come (which is our present topic), but someone testifies at some point saying, “What is Man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels, you crowned him with glory and honor. You made him sovereign over all the works of your hands, you put everything under his feet.” For in subordinating the world to him, He left nothing that was not subordinate to him. However, we do not now yet see the world in subordination to him. But we do now see Jesus crowned with glory and honor on account of the death He suffered, even Him who became “a little lower than the angels” [for a brief span] so that by the grace of God He might taste death on behalf of us all.  
Hebrews 2:5-9

Thus it is that we sons of the first Adam by physical birth have become sons of God by being born again through faith in the Person and the saving work of the Last Adam, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who suffered death on our account that we all might live together forever with Him in a resurrection body and an eternal paradise which will outshine in every way the status quo of the Eden of Adam and Eve. In this way, God has so ordained the events of human history that saved mankind can look forward to a future destiny that is in every way better than even the best which has gone before, but only because of the sacrifice of the Last Adam whose blood has blotted out for all time the original and resulting sin of the first Adam and those of all his progeny. Thanks be to God for this His indescribable Gift!

(12) So just as through one man (i.e., Adam whose antitype is Christ) sin came into the world and, through sin, death, and thus (i.e., Adam physically passing on his sin nature resulting in universal spiritual death) death spread to all mankind – for [obviously] everyone sins (i.e., universal sinning proves universal spiritual death), . . . (13) For [even] before the Law [was handed down], there was [indeed] sin in the world, but, when there was no Law, sin was not being taken into account [by us as it was after the Law]. (14) Nevertheless, sin did reign [over mankind during the period] from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in a manner similar to Adam (i.e., by violating a clearly stated divine prohibition), who is a type of the One [destined] to come (i.e., Christ, the Last Adam). (15) But the offense [of the former] is not at all like the *favor* [of the Latter]. For though it is true that the human race is perishing on account of the offense of that one man [Adam], how much more has the grace of God and His gracious *Gift* of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to this same human race! (16) Indeed, the *Gift* is not at all like [the universal death that came] through [that] one person who sinned. For [in the former case] the [divine] judgment [that resulted] from one [person led] to [universal]

condemnation, but the [divine] *favor* [based upon the sacrifice of the One has led] to the accomplishment of [universal] justification in response to many offenses. (17) For though it is true that on account of the offense of the one death reigned through that one (i.e., by Adam passing down his sin to his progeny), how much more will those who receive this abundance of grace, even this *Gift* of righteousness [through justification] rule in [eternal] life through [the sacrifice of] the One, Jesus Christ! (18) So then, just as through the offense of [that first] one [the progression of sin and death has fallen] upon all men resulting in [their] condemnation, so through the accomplishment of justification by the One, [God's countervailing progression of grace has led] to justifying the lives of all men [who believe in Christ]. (19) For just as through the disobedience of the [first] man the human race found itself sinful, so through the obedience of the One the human race will find itself [accounted as] righteous (i.e., justified), [through faith in Him].  
Romans 5:12-19

As believers, we have been baptized *by* the Holy Spirit “into” Jesus Christ, so that we are now “in” Him (1Cor.12:13; 2Cor.5:17; Rom.6:3-4; Gal.3:27; Col.2:12; 1Pet.3:21) and “in” the Father and the Spirit as well (cf. Matt.28:19; Eph.4:5). We are all sons of God in Jesus Christ (Jn.1:12-13; Rom.8:14; 8:19; Gal.3:26; 4:4-7; 1Jn.3:1), part of His bride and His Body, the Church (Rom.12:5; 1Cor.12:27; Eph.5:25-32; Rev.19:7-9; 21:9; 22:17). In addition to being baptized into Christ *by* the Spirit, all Christians have also been baptized *with* the Spirit, that is, we have all been given that spiritual unction which Christ promised us (Jn.4:13-14; 7:37-39; 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13-15; Acts 1:4-5), and we have this special empowering presence of the Spirit as a pledge, a guarantee of our salvation to come (Eph.1:13-14; 4:30; 2Cor.1:22; 5:5). As long as the seed of the Word we have believed remains in us through His Holy Spirit, we are incapable of continuing in the life of sin which leads to death (1Jn.3:9; cf. Is.6:13; Rom.8:9; 1Jn.5:16-18). Instead, we have been born again into a new, eternal life by responding in faith to the *water* of the word of God, the gospel message about Jesus, and by the leading of the *Spirit* of God (Jn.3:5-8). All who believe in Jesus Christ have this victory over sin and death through faith by the grace of God (1Jn.5:4; Eph.2:8-9). All who believe in Jesus Christ have their names written in God the Father's book of life (Ex.32:32-35; Ps.69:28; Dan.12:1; Phil.4:3; Rev.3:5). All who continue faithfully in their belief in Jesus Christ have this sure and certain hope of eternal life and resurrection, like an anchor entering into heaven itself (Heb.6:18-20). In Jesus we are certain of our blessed eternal destiny – as long as we maintain our position in Him with unwavering faith (Jn.15:1-8; Rom.11:17-24).<sup>3</sup> For He is the only way back to paradise.

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<sup>3</sup> See section II.2 of Bible Basics Part 2A: Eschatology, “Individual Eschatology for Believers”.