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the hearts and minds of Spirit-empowered
leaders for ministry where life and God
connect.”*

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Introduction to the Journal

The purpose of the Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism is to bless the church with pentecostal scholarship from the faculty of Bridges Christian College. One part of the journal is exegetical and the other part is more practical in nature. The rationale for such a broad scope is so that there will be literature for the biblical researcher and the ministerial practitioner.

Mission of the Journal

The *Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism* presents biblical exegesis, ministerial training literature, and research of church history through a Pentecostal hermeneutic.

Goals of the Journal

This Journal has the following goals.

1. To present exegesis of the Scriptures with a Pentecostal hermeneutic to help the church understand the Bible and its theological principles.
2. To demonstrate the unity of the Scriptures through intertextual interpretation of the Old Testament and New Testament.
3. To apply Scriptural principles to a Pentecostal, practical ministry environment.
4. To present research of the roots and traditions of the Pentecostal movement throughout church history.

Journal Categories

This Journal will present articles that are separated into the following categories:

1. Biblical Theology
 - This category presents interpretation of the biblical text with a Pentecostal perspective. Various themes and theological principles in the Old and New Testaments will be presented.
 - This section is primarily focused on research on the biblical text.
2. Spirit-Empowered Ministry
 - This category presents articles that provide guidance in modern-day, Pentecostal ministry topics.
 - The biblical text, historical concerns, and Pentecostal doctrines are taken into consideration. The emphasis in this section is on application of the biblical principles to Pentecostal ministry.

“THOSE IN PRISON”: THE “LEAST OF THESE” IN HEBREWS 10:32-35 AND 13:1-3

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1. Introduction

2020 has made the book of Hebrews come alive in new ways. Christians around the world are having to undergo intense persecution and cultural peer pressure. The call for the church to identify and sympathize with those who are persecuted for following Jesus is greater than ever.

In the following article, I attempt to enlighten the reader to particular passages in Hebrews (10:32-35; 13:1-3) that highlight how the early church handled cultural peer pressure. My goal is to answer whether the practice of remembering to attend to prisoners (Heb 13:1-3) is a fulfillment of Jesus' ethic on visiting persecuted believers in prison (Matt 25:31-46)? Can we find the “least of these” in the Epistle to the Hebrews? In what ways did believers care for each other? I hope that this article will help pastors develop a way for preaching these particular passages in Hebrews relevant to our current cultural challenges in the church.

1.1 Thesis Statement

The following article will attempt to prove the following thesis: Hebrews 10:32-35 and 13:1-3 emphasize the importance of believers joyfully sympathizing with those who are being persecuted for their stance on God's Word, and this relates to Jesus' teaching regarding the “little ones” and “least of these” in the Gospel of Matthew. The persecuted believers in the context of Hebrews were exhorted to fulfill Jesus' mandate to identify with believers who were persecuted and imprisoned whom he called the “least of these” (Matt 25:31-46).

1.2 Methodology and Outline

This article will advance the premise from a previous article that I wrote titled “The Identity of the ‘Little Ones’ and ‘Least of These’ in Matthew: An Evaluation of μικρῶν and ἐλαχίστων in Matthew 10, 18, and 25.”¹ Thus, the first section will summarize the argument from that earlier article regarding the interpretation of the “little ones” and “least of these” in Matthew.

The second section will highlight the church's earlier days in the context of Hebrews when they followed Jesus' mandate to identify with the persecuted believers. The author reminded the believers in the context of Hebrews to exhort them to return to their former commitment to the Lord.

The third section will show that the writer of Hebrews encouraged the church to apply what they did in the “earlier days” to their current situation. The church needed to remember those

¹ Justus A. Freeman, “The Identity of the ‘Little Ones’ and ‘Least of These’ in Matthew: An Evaluation of μικρῶν and ἐλαχίστων in Matthew 10, 18, and 25,” *The Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism* 1, no. 1 (Summer 2020): 6-18.

believers who were in prison and persecuted. This section will show that caring for the church and visiting them in prison was practiced in parallel New Testament passages, and it was practiced in the early church; no doubt, this was instinctively done because of the many exhortations in Scripture.

The conclusion will make the connection between the passages in Hebrews and Jesus' exhortation to serve the "little ones" and "least of these" who are his disciples. I will further demonstrate that Hebrews 10:32-35 and 13:1-3 are best understood as an exhortation to care for imprisoned Christians, and then I will explain the relevance of this passage to the modern day church.

2. The "Least of These"

In an earlier article that I wrote, I argued that the "little ones" (μικρῶν)² and the "least of these" (ἐλαχίστων) were persecuted believers, and Jesus' exhortation was for the church to serve and identify with these downtrodden followers. I attempted to show this through three main points in the article.

First, Jesus identified the "little ones" (μικρῶν) and "least of these" (ἐλαχίστων) as his disciples, and these disciples are persecuted and downtrodden believers.³ Matthew 10:42 reads, "And whoever in the name of a **disciple** gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."⁴ Thus, the "little ones" (μικρῶν) are disciples.

Second, Jesus specified the "least of these" (ἐλαχίστων) as his brethren in Matthew 25:40. Verse 40 reads, "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these **brothers (ἀδελφός) of Mine**, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'" This is consistent with how Jesus considered his followers his brothers and sisters. For example, in Matthew 12:46-50, when Jesus' mother and brothers were wanting to speak to him outside a house, Jesus responded in verses 48-50, "But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, 'Behold My mother and My brothers! 'For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.'" Therefore, the context of Matthew reveals that the "least of these" (ἐλαχίστων) are Jesus' disciples.

Third, the patristic evidence presents a mixed consensus regarding the identity of the "little ones" (μικρῶν) and "least of these" (ἐλαχίστων).⁵ This means that one can only make a Scriptural case and not wholly rely on the early church's interpretation. When one completes an

² Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Greek New Testament are from Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012). This is also abbreviated as "NA28."

³ Ibid., 6-11.

⁴ All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

⁵ Epiphanius the Latin (6th century A.D.) and Origen (A.D. 185-254) identified the "little ones" and the "least of these" as Jesus' disciples, while Pope Pontianus (3rd century A.D.) generalized the terms. See Freeman, "The Identity of the 'Little Ones' and 'Least of These' in Matthew: An Evaluation of μικρῶν and ἐλαχίστων in Matthew 10, 18, and 25," 15.

examination of the Scriptural evidence, Matthew's context demonstrates the specificity of the "little ones" (μικρῶν) and "least of these" (ἐλαχίστων).

3. Hebrews 10:32-35

The writer of Hebrews reminded the church to persevere in the midst of trial and cultural peer-pressure like they had done in their earlier days of faith in Hebrews 10:32-35. The text reads:

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, 33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers (κοινωνός) with those who were so treated. 34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. 35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

The following section will highlight four key qualities of Christians willing to associate persecuted followers of Jesus.

3.1 The κοινωνία with the Persecuted

The author reminded his readers about when they had endured such a "great conflict of sufferings" and had shared in the sufferings of fellow believers. Indeed, according to verse 33, they had literally "shared" (κοινωνός or "sharers") in the trials of those who were being mistreated by society.

The word κοινωνός is related to the noun κοινωνία, which is the word used in the New Testament, especially Pauline literature, for "fellowship" or "association."⁶ One can find an example of κοινωνία in Acts 2:42, where the church devoted "themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship (κοινωνία)." This indicates the significance of κοινωνία as it expressed itself in the believer's shared community. Further analysis of the word has revealed that Paul used it in a strictly religious sense and not in a secular one.⁷ For example, Paul used the word in the context of obtaining "the right hand of fellowship (κοινωνία)" from James, Cephas, and John in Galatians 2:9. Also, Paul used κοινωνία in reference to Christians having "fellowship" with Jesus (1 Cor 1:9), participating in the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (2 Cor 13:14), and participating or "sharing" in the blood and body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16). In Philemon 1:6, Paul also prayed for the "fellowship of faith" among the Christians would be edifying. The term was also used in ancient Greek literature to refer to those who had a common interest.⁸The term is

⁶ Verlyn D. Verbrugge, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology: Abridged Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 310.

⁷ Ibid., 311.

⁸ During one of the early Roman civil wars around B.C. 87, Gaius Marius (B.C. 157-86) partnered with L. Cornelius Cinna (first century B.C.) in a conflict with Pompey (B.C. 106-48). The text reads, "In this way he collected 6000 Etruscans and reached Cinna, who received him gladly by reason of their common interest

used in the New Testament to reveal the communal nature of believers with Christ and to emphasize the importance of believers bonding together in fellowship.

Raymond Brown summarizes the point nicely when he explains:

It had deepened their fellowship. Even if they had not suffered themselves personally, they had become partners with those so treated. The word partners is a familiar one (*koinōnoi*). Those who share with Christ in his sufferings also share inevitably and gladly in the sufferings of Christ's people. Such people will also be partners in Christ's coming glory.⁹

Brown's statement harkens back to what Jesus commanded regarding remembering the "least of these" in Matthew 25:31-46. Those who are willing to partner with the "least of these" in their persecution are also partners with Christ.

Therefore, in Hebrews 10:33, the term *κοινωνός* reveals the importance of Christians sharing in the troubles and struggles of persecuted Christians.

3.2 Showing *συμπαθέω* with the Persecuted

Hebrews 10:34 then reminded the church about how they "sympathized" (*συμπαθέω*) with those who were imprisoned for their faith as a way to remind them about the importance of "sympathizing" with those who are persecuted in their current context.

The context of Hebrews 10:34 indicates that the prisoners persecuted Christians are in view. The fact that the latter part of verse 34 reminds the church that they "accepted joyfully the seizure of your [their] property" confirms that persecution is the topic in the context. Thus, in the context of Hebrews 10:34, the author narrowed the act of visiting prisoners to those within the church.

The verb used for "sympathize" in verse 34, *συμπαθέω*, highlights the importance of Christians unashamedly relating to those put in prison for their faith. Both Donald Guthrie and Ray C. Stedman believe these are Christians who are in prison because of their faith.¹⁰ Indeed, in the first-century world, the conditions of prisons were difficult, and those who associated with prisoners risked exposure to persecutors.¹¹

The inter-testamental text, 4 Maccabees 13:23-27, records how seven brothers during the Maccabean revolts (B.C. 164-142) against Greece were tortured and executed as a result of their sympathies to the law of the Lord and each other. The text reads:

(*κοινωνία*) in the present enterprise." See Appian, *Appian's Roman History*, ed. T. E. Page, E. Capps, and W. H. D. Rouse, trans. Horace White, vol. III, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press; William Heinemann Ltd, 1913), 125.

⁹ Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews: Christ above All*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 192.

¹⁰ Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 15, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 224–225. See also Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1992), Heb 10:32–39.

¹¹ Leon Morris, "Hebrews" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 12*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 110.

23 Therefore, when sympathy (συμπαθής) and brotherly affection had been so established, the brothers were the more sympathetic (συμπαθής) to one another. 24 Since they had been educated by the same law and trained in the same virtues and brought up in right living, they loved one another all the more. 25 A common zeal for nobility strengthened their goodwill toward one another, and their concord, 26 because they could make their brotherly love more fervent with the aid of their religion. 27 But although nature and companionship and virtuous habits had augmented the affection of family ties, those who were left endured for the sake of religion, while watching their brothers being maltreated and tortured to death.¹²

The brothers' sympathy for each other emboldened them to relate to each other and stand for their convictions in the face of certain death. The noun form of συμπαθέω is used in the previous text (see parentheses in text) since the earliest copies of 4 Maccabees are in the Greek Septuagint.¹³ Verse 24 in the Septuagint reads, “οὕτως δὴ τοίνυν καθεστηκυίας (συμπαθοῦς) τῆς φιλαδελφίας οἱ ἑπτὰ ἀδελφοὶ (συμπαθέστερον) ἔσχον πρὸς ἀλλήλους.”¹⁴ The bracketed words are translated as “sympathy” and “sympathetic” in that order.

Thus, the Christians that Hebrews were written to were reminded about their sympathy for those suffering in prison. Paul called for this sympathy in 1 Corinthians 12:26, where he stated, “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” The apostles instructed the early church to sympathize with other Christians no matter if they were prospering or suffering because of persecution.

3.3 The χαρά of the Persecuted

The writer of Hebrews reminded his audience about their joy amid persecution in the former days. According to Hebrews 10:34, the earlier believers willingly allowed their possessions to be taken from them μετὰ χαρᾶς¹⁵ or “with joy.”

The uniqueness of the believer's relationship enabled them to endure such sufferings with χαρά (joy). Raymond Brown comments, “They joyfully accepted this plundering, looting and violence (10:34). No unbeliever could possibly have responded in that way to such dire trouble. A non-Christian may tolerate his troubles, but he cannot rejoice in them.”¹⁶

3.4 Followers of Christ and the Knowledge of their Future Possession

The end of verse 34 reminds the readers that they can joyfully sympathize with the persecuted because they know that their future possession of God's kingdom is worth the suffering. The

¹² *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 4 Mac 13:23–27.

¹³ A Greek translation of the Old Testament started in the third century B.C.

¹⁴ Alfred Rahlfs ed., *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 757.

¹⁵ The lexical or dictionary form of the word is χαρά.

¹⁶ Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, 192.

Christians can endure suffering because, according to verse 34, they live "knowing that you [they] have for yourselves [themselves] a better possession and a lasting one."

The word used for "know" in verse 34 is *γινώσκω* (to come to know), and it implies that Christians recognize the reality that they have a future possession that manifests itself in the form of God's coming kingdom.¹⁷ Donald Guthrie states, "they took comfort in the fact that their true treasures were in heaven, not on earth."¹⁸

Thus, the result of the Christian's faithfulness in the midst of persecution is a lifetime with Jesus. Leon Morris summarizes it nicely when he states regarding the church of Hebrews, "The possession in Christ is not subject to petty depredations like the earthly possessions of which they had been robbed. It is an abiding possession."¹⁹

4. Hebrews 13:1-3

Hebrews 13:1-3 provides the application of the reminder that the author gives in Hebrews 10:32-35. At the end of the letter, the author exhorts the readers to remember those who are in prison. The text reads, "1 Let love of the brethren continue. 2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. 3 Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body." The following section will address each verse consecutively.

4.1 Love for the Brethren

Verse 1 opens the chapter with an exhortation to continue to show love to the church. This first verse highlights the importance of the church caring for the rest of the body of Christ. Believers in the first century cared for each other by meeting physical needs, according to Acts 2:42-47. Acts 2:44-45 reads, "All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need." The believers' care for each other was the hope of Jesus, who said in John 13:35, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." One expresses this love through physical care according to the following verses.

4.2 Showing Hospitality

Hebrews 13:2 exhorts the church to show hospitality to strangers and the body of Christ. The New Testament extends the act of showing hospitality to all those in need, both in the church and outside. Paul explained in 1 Timothy 5:10 that respectable widows were to have a reputation for showing hospitality to strangers; however, this particular good act of showing hospitality was necessary for traveling Christians in the early church.

¹⁷ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1993), 550.

¹⁸ Guthrie, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, 224–225.

¹⁹ Morris, "Hebrews," 110.

Jesus taught that Christians were to show hospitality to their fellow believers. This was especially important for traveling believers. Matthew 10:40-42 reads,

40 He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 41 He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42 And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.

Craig Keener comments, "Receiving Jesus' representatives with even a cup of cold water probably refers to accepting into one's home the missionaries who have abandoned their own homes and security to bring Christ's message."²⁰ The mention of "little ones" includes more than ministers and other traveling Christians who were downtrodden that Christians willingly hosted, according to Robert H. Gundry.²¹ This parallels the exhortation in Hebrews 13:2 to show hospitality to strangers.

Paul taught the church at Rome to care for the needs of the saints and practice hospitality. He stated in Romans 12:13 that the church was to contribute "to the needs of the saints, practicing (διδάσκω) hospitality." Everett Harrison explains that Paul's use διδάσκω (practice), "Is strong, calling for an undiminished ardor in extending this courtesy to traveling believers. The Lord had encouraged his disciples to depend on such kindness during their missions (Matt 10:11). Without it, the spread of the gospel during the days of the early church would have been greatly impeded."²²

Early itinerant apostles and prophets required hospitality from fellow believers. A late first-century Christian document titled *The Didache* provides evidence of Christians practicing hospitality in the early years of the church after the apostles. For example, Didache 11:3-4 reads, "Now concerning the apostles and prophets, deal with them as follows in accordance with the rule of the gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as if he were the Lord."²³ In addition, Didache 12:1-2 reads, "Everyone who comes in the name of the Lord is to be welcomed. But then examine him, and you will find out – for you will have insight – what is true and what is false. If the one who comes is merely passing through, assist him as much as you can. But he must not stay with you for more than two or, if necessary, three days."²⁴ Clearly, early Christians practiced hospitality among their fellow itinerant missionaries.

Therefore, hospitality was encouraged in the early church. Serving those outside of the church was expected; however, the context of Hebrews 13 and parallel passages promote an exhortation to the church for showing hospitality to specifically Christians under duress. Based

²⁰ Craig Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 332.

²¹ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 203.

²² Everett Harrison, "Romans" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 10*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 133.

²³ *The Didache*, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 363.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 365.

on the textual evidence, the early Christians habitually showed hospitality to traveling Christians and Christian missionaries.

4.3 “Those in Prison”

Hebrews 13:3 exhorted Christians to visit other persecuted Christians in prison, and the church practiced this. Other passages in the New Testament parallel the exhortation in Hebrews 13:3. Likewise, the early church, namely the church fathers, practiced visiting persecuted believers in prison.

Donald Guthrie interprets verse 3 to be an exhortation to visit all prisoners, both Christian and non-Christian.²⁵ The New Testament commands Christians to care for the poor and the needy (Jam 1:27); however, it seems unlikely that the author expected Christians to sympathize and relate to those who were in prison for doing wrong. Hebrews 13:3 narrowed the exhortation to visit prisoners to fellow believers. The text reads, “Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.” I will comment on Hebrews 13:3 further in this article, but it is inconceivable that the writer of Hebrews desired the church to relate so closely to prisoners who were put in prison for doing wrong. 1 Peter 2 exhorts believers to live righteously in all societal contexts, and the text reads in 1 Peter 2:20, “For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.”

However, the strength of the argument for persecuted believers lies inherently in the context that culminates in Hebrews 13:1-3. I will highlight the context of Hebrews and other New Testament parallels in the following paragraphs.

The chapters leading up to Hebrews 13:1-3 exhort the church to remain steadfast in the face of opposition. Hebrews 10:36-39 reads:

36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. 37 For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. 38 But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. 39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Those who “shrink back to destruction” are not exhibiting faith that causes one to persevere amid trial. Furthermore, the next chapter (Heb 11) highlights examples of faith in the Old Testament. The examples of faith were of more than just miracles, but they were examples of faith amid trial. Hebrews 11:35-39 reads:

35 Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection; 36 and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they

²⁵ Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1992), Heb 13:1–6.

were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated 38 (*men* of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. 39 And all these, having gained approval through their faith.

These faithful, Old Testament saints were commended for their faith under dire circumstances. Yet, the theme of faith amid persecution does not stop there, but continues in Hebrews 12. The author tells the church in Hebrews 12:4 “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.” In other words, the author seems to be pointing out that they had not yet resisted to the point of martyrdom.²⁶ This fits well with 12:3 where the sacrifice of Jesus is mentioned.²⁷ Then the author explains that they undergo persecution as a means of discipline (Heb 12:7-11). The author explained in verse 11, “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

Moreover, the chapter begins with an imperative to let the *φιλαδέλφια* (brotherly love) continue. The remaining verses of the chapter specifically deal with the church. Hebrews 13:4 exhorts believers to have healthy marriages in the church. Verses 5-6 warn against the love of money. Verses 7-9, 17 exhorts the church to submit to the teaching of their elders. Verses 11-16 is a reminder to follow Christ’s example and way of sacrifice. Verses 18-19 is a prayer request. The context is too specific to the church for one to understand it as promoting a general ethic.

The command to visit persecuted believers in prison parallels other New Testament passages and examples where the Church sympathized with those imprisoned for the faith. The church prayed fervently for Peter when Herod imprisoned him in Acts 12:1-19. According to Acts 23:12-22, Paul’s nephew alerted the Roman guard to an assassination plot by the Jews when the Romans scheduled transport for Paul to Caesarea. Fellow Christians encouraged Paul when he arrived in chains in Rome (Acts 28:15). Paul desired for Philemon to stay with him during his imprisonment so that “he might minister to me [Paul] in my imprisonment for the gospel” (Philemon 1:13). Paul requested Timothy to visit him in prison in 2 Timothy 4:9. He also grieved when others deserted him during his imprisonment and court defense. 2 Timothy 4:16 reads, “At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.” Therefore, there is much parallelism in the New Testament that supports the interpretation that Hebrews 13:3 is an exhortation to visit imprisoned Christians.

Indeed, conditions in first-century prisons were dreary and deadly. There was a lack of light in the prisons, and the chains often chafed and corroded skin over time.²⁸ Food was scarce as well. “Without recourse to personal resources or the help of friends on the outside for food or drink, the prisoner’s prospects could be grim.”²⁹

The early church father, Ignatius (second century A.D.), also commended the Ephesian church for remembering him while he was in chains. In his letter to the Ephesians, Ignatius stated:

²⁶ Guthrie, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, 253.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ B. M. Rapske, “Prison, Prisoner,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, eds. Craig A. Evans and Stanley Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 828.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 829.

Being imitators of God, once you took on new life through the blood of God you completed perfectly the task so natural to you. For when you heard that I was on my way from Syria in chains for the sake of our shared name and hope, and was hoping through your prayers to succeed in fighting with wild beasts in Rome – in order that by so succeeding I might be able to be a disciple – you hurried to visit me.³⁰

When explaining to the church that imprisonment for the faith results in spiritual growth for the Christian, Tertullian (second century A.D.) stated:

The Christian outside the prison has renounced the world, but in the prison he has renounced a prison too. It is of no consequence where you are in the world—you who are not of it. And if you have lost some of life's sweets, it is the way of business to suffer present loss, that after gains may be the larger. Thus far I say nothing of the rewards to which God invites the martyrs. Meanwhile let us compare the life of the world and of the prison, and see if the spirit does not gain more in the prison than the flesh loses. Nay, by the care of the Church and the love of the brethren, even the flesh does not lose there what is for its good, while the spirit obtains besides important advantages.³¹

The last sentence of Tertullian's quote is relevant for this article. For it reveals that the church expected care and "love of the brethren" who were imprisoned. Thus, the Christian would not lack physical care while in prison.

Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215) also commented on the principle of visiting the "least of these" in prison (Matt 25:31-46). He stated, "He then is first who loves Christ; and second, he who loves and cares for those who have believed on Him. For whatever is done to a disciple, the Lord accepts as done to Himself, and reckons the whole as His."³² Clement affirmed the idea that the "least of these" are imprisoned Christians in need of visitation.

It is clear from the writings of the early church fathers that visiting Christians in prison was practiced and appreciated in the world of the early church.

Therefore, the author, in Hebrews 13:3, specifically designed the exhortation to encourage the church to visit and care for persecuted Christians who were in prison for their faith. I suggest that this is the best way to understand this ethic because it aligns with the numerous passages in the New Testament and early church evidence. Moreover, this interpretation fits into the background context of the church's early struggle with persecution.

³⁰ Ignatius, *The Letter of Ignatius to the Ephesians* in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. Michael W. Holmes (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 183.

³¹ Tertullian, "Ad Martyres," in *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. S. Thelwall, vol. 3, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 694.

³² Clement of Alexandria, "Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?," in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. William Wilson, vol. 2, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 599.

5. Conclusion

The exhortation to visit imprisoned Christians in Hebrews is a very relevant topic for today's church. Based on my research of Hebrews 10:32-35 and 13:1-3, I can conclude that the act of visiting imprisoned Christians, according to the writer, is better understood in light of Jesus' ethic of visiting the "least of these" in prison in Matthew 25:31-46. This does not mean that Christians did not serve or minister to non-Christian prisoners, yet, the context of Hebrews 10:32-35, 13:1-3 and Jesus' words in Matthew 25:31-46 narrows the perspective to refer to persecuted and imprisoned Christians.

First, the "least of these" who are in prison, according to Matthew 25:31-46, are persecuted Christians. I base this on the interpretation of the context of Matthew's Gospel, especially Matthew 10:40-42 and 12:46-50. The identification of the "least of these" as Jesus' ἀδελφῶν (brothers) narrows the "least of these" as one of his followers. I have shown that when Matthew was referring to Christian disciples when he used ἀδελφός in other places (Matt 12:46-50).

Second, Hebrews 10:32-35 reminded the church about their joyful sympathy with imprisoned Christians. The emphasis on Christian fellowship in the midst of suffering in this passage indicates that the prisoners were a specific group. Also, the early church had their possessions taken as a result of their faith. The context emphasizes endurance in persecution.

Lastly, Hebrews 13:1-3 exhorted the church to show hospitality to the church and remember persecuted Christians in prison. The act of hospitality to strangers and travelers was no doubt practiced to those outside of the church; yet, the emphasis in the context is on caring for the lowly Christians in the church. Likewise, there were expectations that the church would visit and remember imprisoned Christians. This practice finds parallels in Scripture (Paul's imprisonment) and early church literature.

Therefore, there is a connection between the "least of these" in Matthew 25:31-56 and "those in prison" in Hebrews (Heb 10:32-35; 13:1-3). This connection reinforces the idea that the church is to remember and align itself with Christians who are persecuted for their faith. The application to be made to the modern church is that one should not be afraid nor forget his or her fellow Christians who are persecuted for the name of Christ. Indeed, the κοινωνία of the church includes joyful sympathy with those who are suffering for standing on God's Word and claiming the name of Jesus.

THE THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF DEATH AND THE AFTER LIFE

Richard Miller, Ph.D.

Introduction

Humanity's fascination with death pre-dates the beginning of history. The reality of death for the human body remains certain. The difficulty for people of all ages revolves around the unknown. This unknown results from the "non-temporal"¹ aspect of death. One cannot be in a condition of life and death simultaneously. A barrier between the two realms prohibits one from relaying information back to the living; however this barrier does not stop people from speculating about the after life. Today people have written books about the living who have died and were revived. This phenomenon conceivably has taken place throughout history. Individuals have reported various experiences. Raymond Moody compiled a list of experiences from interviews he conducted. The events which Moody described from his investigation may help humanity understand why the people of old believed in after life. Moody listed and discussed various experiences such as: 1. Hearing the news of one's death by the doctors. 2. Feelings of peace and quiet. 3. Noise or music. 3. The dark tunnel. 4. Out of body experience. 5. Meeting others in the after life. 6. The being of light. 7. The review of one's life. 8. The border or limit. 8. Coming back.² These experiences when related to the living would have a strong influence upon the outlook of death and the after life.

The search for the answers of death and the after life begins with the traditions of the Ancient Near East. The beliefs of the Semitic peoples of the past may reveal truths about the Hebrew Scripture's understanding of death and the after life. The author of this article reviewed the influences of the traditions which may have impacted the Hebrew Scriptures and a review of the Hebrew Scriptures which potentially discussed the topic of death and the after life. The theological development from the earliest Hebrew concepts down to the post-exilic times demonstrates the historical development of this theological concept. The next consideration reviewed the significant differences between the Septuagint and the Masoretic Text. An analysis of the intertestamental theological development revealed in the Apocrypha and the Qumran Scrolls was analyzed. The final theological development revealed through the church's understanding of death and resurrection. The author attempted to trace the development of *Sheol* and the emergence of a doctrine of bodily resurrection by God. This resurrection which found fulfillment in Jesus Christ became the foundation of the Church.

Semitic Influences upon Hebrew Thought

The concept of שְׁאוֹל (*Sheol*) found in the Hebrew Scriptures began long before its canonization. The cultures in and around the Near East influenced the family traditions of Abraham. The terms used by the other groups varied from culture to culture, yet the understanding for death and the place

¹ Ladislaus Boros, *The Mystery of Death* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), 4-6.

² Raymond A. Moody, Jr., *Life After Life* (Carmel, NY: Guideposts, 1975), 16-63.

of death remained universal. Thomas Podella emphasized the difficulty in coming to a firm definition of שְׁאוֹל (*Sheol*).

Zentraler Begriff zur Bezeichnung der Unterwelt, des Totenreichs ist im Alten Testament שְׁאוֹל. Die ethymologische Herleitung dieses Wortes ist immer noch unbefriedigend.³

This difficulty developed out of the lack of information to cross reference the word שְׁאוֹל (*Sheol*). Only one Aramaic usage of the term has been found in archeological material.⁴ This does not allow for accurate comparisons between the biblical and non-canonical materials. Nevertheless, scholars continued the comparisons. Their work has provided valuable information.

James Barr contended that שְׁאוֹל (*Sheol*) was not a derivative of the “Yahwehistic religion.” He believed that the Israelites inherited their concepts of שְׁאוֹל from the ancient past which existed as part of natural religions of the period. Barr continued to press for the understanding that nothing which is understood by the prophets of Israel was original in their religious understanding of שְׁאוֹל (*Sheol*).⁵ Because of these forms of consideration, the investigation of שְׁאוֹל (*Sheol*) must begin in the traditions of the Ancient Near East (ANE).

People’s understanding of death in the ANE has many common characteristics. They believed that the dead existed in a comatose state of being. This state allowed for the sleep metaphor when attempting to describe the condition of the person in the death process.⁶ The Ugaritic text illustrated this thought in Aqht:150f.

hm t'pn 'l qbr bny tšann bšnth, ⁷

They fly over the grave my son
They violate him in his sleep⁸

People found the sleep metaphor an effective explanation to illustrate the death condition. This metaphor also gave a psychological boost for the tragedy of death. If one sleeps, the impact from the emotions of death on the living were softened.

The Gilgamesh epic revealed insights into the mind of the Sumerian culture. Gilgamesh was “granted dominion and heroism” in this world but not immortality.⁹ Gilgamesh reigned as a great king in his day yet immortality eluded his grasp. The epic revealed the reason Gilgamesh did not succeed in his attempt to obtain immortality.

³ Thomas Podella, “Gundzünde alttestamentlicher Jenseitsvorstellungen lAav,” *Biblishe Notizen*, 43 (München 1988): 75. Translation by the author of this paper: Title of article– “Old Testament Basis of the After Life in the idea of lAav” Translation of quote: “Central concept to designation of the underworld, realm of the dead is lAav (*Sheol*) in the Old Testament. The etymological root of this word is still unsatisfactory.”

⁴ Walter L. Michel, “Death in Job,” *Dialog* 11 (Summer 1972): 185.

⁵ James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 30.

⁶ Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 183.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Author’s translation.

⁹ Walter R. Bodine, “Sumerians,” *Peoples of the Old Testament World*, ed. Alfred J. Hoerth, Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 29.

‘Gilgamesh, where are you hurrying to? You will never find that life for which you are looking. When the gods created man, they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping. As for you, Gilgamesh, will your belly with good things; day and night, night and day, dance and be merry . . .’ (X, iii, 1-14)¹⁰

Humanity’s search for immortality reached back to the beginning of history.

Since no person had been successful in obtaining immortality in human form, the focus of humanity changed to the life beyond death. The first forms of death rituals naturally evolved out of the family unit. At death, one’s family members normally cared for the deceased. This ritual must be accomplished in order for a successful transition into the after life. In the Gilgamesh Epic Tablet XII: 150-153 illustrated the significance of being properly buried.

“He whose body lies (unburied) on the steppe, hast thou seen (him)?” “I have seen (him). His spirit does not rest in the underworld.” “He whose spirit has none to take care of him, [or Who has none among the living to make food and drink offerings to him.] hast thou seen (him).” “I have seen (him). What was left over in the pot (and) the pieces of bread that were thrown into the street he eats.”¹¹

The traditions of the ANE required the deceased to be properly buried, given proper meal and drink offerings. If these rites did not occur, the deceased was doomed to an inferior after life or no after life.

In another epic from the Sumerian literature, Inanna journeyed to hell and returned to life. The gods granted this life. The significance of this story reveals the utter bleak hope of those in hell. Inanna ruled her world with wealth and power. During her decent into hell the lords of the underworld began to strip her of all her worldly possessions at each entry gate. First her crown, then her fine jewelry, and finally all of her clothing were taken from her. In the end the lords of the underworld hung her upon a wall naked for all to see. The story of Inanna ends with her life being restored after her ministers prayed to the gods of heaven.¹² The story of Inanna resembles some of the characteristics of people who had died and were revived from death. Possibly this epic resulted from a person’s near death encounter.

The earliest Hebrew traditions develop out of the Mesopotamian and Canaanite mythologies.¹³ These mythologies accepted the concept of three divisions of the universe. The first division named the “Heavens.” The second division called “Earth,” and the final division was the netherworld or *Sheol*. Appendix one illustrates this idea of the universe as seen by the traditions of the ANE. Bernard Land and Colleen McDannell have developed a theory of

¹⁰ Severino Croatto, “The Hope of Immortality in the Main Cosmologies of the East,” in *Immortality and Resurrection*, ed. Pierre Benoit and Roland Murphy (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 23-4.

¹¹ Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamech Epic and Old Testament Parallels*, Second. ed., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949, 101.

¹² N. K. Sander, *Poems of Heaven and Hell from Ancient Mesopotamia* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), 135-150.

¹³ Bernhard Lang, “Afterlife Ancient Israel’s Changing Vision of the World Beyond,” *Bible Review* 4 (Feb. 1988): 12.

correlating the traditions of Israel with the other cultures of the time. They saw four layers of tradition for the Jewish thoughts on death and the after life.¹⁴

The first layer of tradition came from the Semitic understanding of the three fold compartments of the cosmos (A. Heaven, B. Earth, and C. *Sheol*).

Heaven: Those on the earth used the priests to communicate for the needs of the nation as a whole. They communicated to the gods of the heavens. Their needs included such things as rain, fertility, victories in battle, health, etc. The heavenly gods ruled over national affairs of the clan. This worship occurred as a public event and required the participation of all the people as a nation.¹⁵

Sheol: The primary god of the underworld was “Mot.” He ruled with various other “infernal gods” with the ancestors. The ancestors helped their family members with decision about the future. If the dead did not receive the proper reverence, they also had the power to inflict harm. The condition of the dead in the underworld depended upon their proper entry into the underworld. A proper burial became important to the people. If a body became desecrated before burial and/or was not buried, the person’s soul would descend into the lowest and darkest parts of *Sheol*. This made communication either difficult or impossible. The dead did not receive any punishment as the concept of “Hell” but functioned in a more diminished capacity.¹⁶

The Canaanite influence can be seen in the Ras Shamra materials. The Canaanites personified the god of the underworld. They named him “Reshef the Destroyer, lord of the arrows.”¹⁷ The Israelites also understood the god of the netherworld through the use of personification. Hosea personified the power of death in Hos. 13:14.¹⁸

The worship of the dead involved individual family units and was a private affair. The proper worship of the dead directly impacted the welfare of the individual and not the nation. Communication with the dead primarily involved one’s own deceased relatives. In life people would seek the advice from their parents and grand parents. After their death the living relatives accomplished this desire by the priestly rituals. The dead ancestors became as gods to the clan.¹⁹

The dead reunited with their ancestors. One’s position in *Sheol* depended upon the life one lived prior to death. A righteous and elderly person who’s living relatives properly buried the body and followed all the proper customs fared better than a person who lived an evil life and was not buried properly. “To die meant to change one’s place in the ritual universe.” This process was a slow change. The body needed to be prepared for the burial. This ritual removed the body from the view of the celestial gods. Covering the body with dirt allows the body to come into contact with the underworld. As the flesh slowly decayed the person slowly sank into the realm of *Sheol*.²⁰

¹⁴ Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven a History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 1-22.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1-3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1-5.

¹⁷ Arnold Toynbee, Arthur Koestler, and others, *Life After Death* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1976), 107.

¹⁸ NAS Hos 13:14 Shall I ransom them from the power of *Sheol*? Shall I redeem them from death? O Death, where are your thorns? O *Sheol*, where is your sting? Compassion will be hidden from My sight.

¹⁹ Bernhard Lang, “After Life Ancient Israel’s Changing Vision of the World Beyond,” 15.

²⁰ Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, 5-6.

Both kinds of ritual -- the public one addressed to the celestial gods and the private one appealing to the ancestors in the netherworld -- existed at the same time and were practiced by the same people.²¹

The lack of formal evidence from archeology to support Israel's participation in the worship of ancestors must be seen in the prohibitions imposed by Moses.²² Those who see Deuteronomy as written in the time of Josiah would apply this prohibition to the reforms of Josiah. The problem of worshipping the dead persisted even until the reign of Josiah. The problems existed within the tribal clans and individual family units. The Israelites worshiped Yahweh as a nation and the individual families desired to communicate with their deceased loved ones.

The second layer of tradition came during the Yahweh only teachings.²³ The teachings rejected the notion of worshipping the dead. Yahweh was the God of the living and not the dead. The leaders and prophets forbid the worship of the dead. Yahweh required complete obedience and dedication. The dead lost their significance.

The preaching of the prophets during the difficult periods of foreign domination (Assyrian and Babylonian) brought condemnation upon all who failed to worship the one true God, Yahweh. The judgment upon the people resulted from the idolatry and ancestral worship. The people of Israel were a people of Yahweh. King Hezekiah attempted to make this initial reform and Josiah completed the reform.²⁴ The new requirements given by Josiah and the revived laws of Moses placed "stricter taboos on dead bodies. . . . The living and the dead must be eternally separated."²⁵

Death meant the removal from the land of the living and from the presence of Yahweh. The results did not settle the questions of why man must be separated from Yahweh. Therefore, the theologians of the time looked for alternate perspectives. The psalmist considered the possibility that Yahweh would not allow the injustice toward the righteous by the unrighteous to continue. God would reward the righteous after death. This theme of justice dominated many of the Psalms. The next section of this article deals with many of these issues.

Josiah's reforms prohibited Israel from worshipping the dead and the gods of *Sheol*. This prohibition caused the people to lose hope in the after life. Yahweh was the God of the living and the dead would now have no hope from either Yahweh or the gods of *Sheol*.²⁶ In the early history of Israel, Israel fail to understand that Yahweh ruled over all nations or places. This realization developed in the final stages of the prophetic ministries of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The prohibition to contact the dead was not completely outlawed until the reign of Josiah²⁷ (2 Kg. 23:24 see

²¹ Ibid., 5.

²² NAS Dt. 14.1 "You are the sons of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave your forehead for the sake of the dead. Dt. 18.10 "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,

²³ Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, 7-8.

²⁴ NAS 2Ki 23:24 Moreover, Josiah removed the mediums and the spiritists and the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

²⁵ Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, 9.

²⁶ Ibid., 10.

²⁷ Norman Snaith, "Justice and Immortality," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17 (Sept. 1964): 309.

footnote twenty-four for the passage). After the time of Josiah the Israelites “no longer defined themselves in relation to their ancestors but exclusively in relation to their national God.”²⁸

The success of the reforms by Josiah diminished the role played by the ancestral worship. This success allowed for a “demythologising and desacralising of death.”²⁹ The rituals required that the dead be separated from the community and this change brought emotional and theological stress for the survivors. The understanding of the people at this time did not allow for Yahweh to care for the dead. In turn the removal of authority for the netherworld and the ancestors reinforced the worship of Yahweh. The value of this dedication facilitated the theological development that Yahweh ruled *Sheol* as well as the heaven and the earth.

The third layer of tradition allowed for the dead to be renewed in a future life. This future life coincided with the renewal of the nation of Israel. Israel’s suffering endured under foreign occupation (Assyrian, Babylonia, Persian, and Greece) saw the unrighteous oppression over the righteous. After the fall of the city of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, “the belief in a ‘bodily resurrection’ held that the dead must not be deprived of the blessings of a new age.” The Israelites who suffered in the exile turmoil must be vindicated by God. This resurrection concept began to develop in Babylon to provide blessings for the righteous deprived of blessings during their life.³⁰

The first known extra biblical teachings of bodily resurrection were espoused by the prophet “Zoroaster (ca. 1400BCE). Zoroaster’s firm convictions about the soul’s fate after death included the belief that after mortal life the soul would be individually judged and either rewarded in heaven or punished in a less pleasant place, hell.”³¹ The teachings of Zoroaster did not bury the dead but their bodies were placed in the sun to be eaten by the birds and the bones dried. Zoroaster believed the creator of humans could bring all the pieces back together again. The current debate revolves around the question of how much influence did the teachings of Zoroaster have upon the Jewish exiles in Babylon. David Hubbard commented that pagan beliefs did at times have an influence upon biblical writings.³² The influences by Zoroaster are without question according to William R. Alger. His major contention relied upon the premise that the Persian concepts of death and resurrection existed prior to the Hebrew Scripture’s development of this concept. The Hebrew Scriptures developed this concept after the cultural meetings of the Jews and the Persians.³³ The ministry of Zoroaster revealed the god of “Ahura Mazda” to the people. As a prophet he achieved little success until after his martyrdom by a revival religious group.³⁴ Ezekiel 37 seems to reflect some of the teachings of Zoroaster’s followers. His followers recorded his teachings in hymns and the oral traditions.³⁵

Ezekiel did not support an individual resurrection. His theological teachings promoted the resurrection of the nation as a whole. He did not consider universal or cosmological concerns.

²⁸ Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, 10.

²⁹ Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, trans. by D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), 277.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² David Hubbard, Lecture and seminar at the N. O. B. T. S. on April 11, 1996.

³³ William R. Alger, *The Destiny of the Soul* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1880), 174-5.

³⁴ Ruhi M. Afnan, *The Great Prophets: Moses-Zoroaster-Jesus* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960), 114-5.

³⁵ Raphael Greenberg, “Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism.” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1168.

The theological difficulty for his people came from a captivity by which the people endured suffering. The resurrection for Ezekiel resolved the injustices done to his people by the foreign gods and nations. The first teachings did not consider the bodies to be eternal but lived an additional “five hundred years or a long life on earth as their fathers lived.”³⁶ This belief in resurrection resolved the problem of why the people of God suffered in this lifetime without God’s blessing. God in his wisdom would choose the correct day to bring the righteous into his new kingdom which provided the blessings denied in the physical life.

The fourth layer of tradition moved to the individual’s need for justice in the next life due to the injustice survived in the first life. The righteous must receive more from God’s love than the treatment in an unjust world.³⁷ The Book of Job deals with one of the difficult issues of justice in this lifetime. If the righteous received unjust treatment and failed to receive blessings during the physical life, will God correct the injustice in the after life?

The dead in this new order received a new outlook. Job remarked that death made possible an escape from the unfair tribulations of this life.³⁸ This type of thinking encouraged Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel to address the injustices in their time. Unfortunately God was silent to the cries of the people for justice. This silence promoted the need to understand the “why” of the injustice. The leaders and prophets had only one solution. The solution must allow for God to correct the evils of this world in the after life.

In summary, one can see the multiple influences upon the Hebrew traditions. These influences affected the theological considerations through two millenniums. The first understanding allowed for only a dark and comatose existence separated from Yahweh. The final understanding allowed for a renewal of life with Yahweh if one maintained a righteous life. Section one attempted to review the extra-biblical materials and how they influenced the Hebrew traditions. Section two reviews the Hebrew scriptures in more detail.

Sheol in the Old Testament

As previously reference in chapter one the word *Sheol*, שְׁאוֹל, is a term uniquely Hebrew. Philip Johnston noted a fascinating statistical analysis of the use of *Sheol* in the Old Testament.

Sheol . . . has a distinctive pattern of occurrence which is rarely noticed. Only occasionally is it used in general reference, description or personification, while in nearly two-thirds of the relevant texts (41/66 times), it indicates human fate, that to which the ungodly are consigned (25 times) and which the godly wish to avoid (7 times). Seldom do the righteous envisage descent there, and only in circumstances which arguably were interpreted as divine judgment (7 times). Twice שְׁאוֹל is given as the destiny of all, but texts are qualified, Psalm 89:48f by the context of judgment and reference to life’s brevity and evil (שְׁאוֹל) Ecclesiastes 9:10 by hints elsewhere of post mortem judgment.³⁹

³⁶ Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, 13.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁹ Philip Johnston, “The Underworld and the Dead in the Old Testament, *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (Nov. 1994): 415-19.

General characteristics of *Sheol* given by the Old Testament are as following:⁴⁰

1. *Sheol* is deep beneath the earth (Gen. 37:35; Num.16:33; Dt. 32.22; Job 11:8; Ps. 22:29; Pr. 15:14; Is.14:19; Jon: 2.6).
2. *Sheol* is the land of darkness and gloom (Job 10:22).
3. *Sheol*'s inhabitants have a bloodless, listless, and semiconscious life (2 Sam. 22:6; Ps. 6:5; 88:12).
4. *Sheol* is call "death" or "pit" (Is. 14:10).
5. *Sheol* is considered a devouring monster (Pr. 1:12).
6. *Sheol* is thought of as a great city with gates (Pr. 9:18; Is. 38:10; Job 17:16).
7. *Sheol* is the dwelling place of shades (Ps. 30:3; 86:13; 89:49; Is 14:9-11; Ec. 9:10).

These characteristics for *Sheol* developed over a long period. In the early usage in Genesis, the term referred more to the grave and a dark comatose state. This shadowy existence might be explained by the natural occurrences of dreams. After the death of a loved one, a person would have a dream about the person who died. These dreams would confirm the after life of the person in the mind of the living. These dreams and memories would naturally fade with time. The fading process of the memories possibly contributed to the beliefs about death and the after life. Death in the early understanding of Israel's theology was not annihilation but of "lowest intensity."⁴¹

There was no doubt that the dead lived on--especially so if this was assured by means of rites. Thus the dead man was merely changed and represented, to a higher degree than while living in the body, a power which had to be reckoned with in a very real way. In consequence, this was of prime importance to regulate the relation-ship of the living to these dead. The dead could of course do harm. But use could also be made of their higher knowledge.⁴²

This acceptance of a life after death did not comfort the people. The Hebrews realized that for this life, it was "hemmed in by birth and death." Mortal life on earth lasted approximately seventy year and after that he would live with his or her ancestors. The only method of influencing the living was through his or her offspring.⁴³

One of the most significant contrasts between the biblical and non biblical materials concerning the underworld and death was monotheism verses polytheism.⁴⁴ Even in the early stages of the Hebrew tradition the god of the *Sheol* was not a consideration. They acknowledged death and a place of gathering of the dead ancestors; yet, the official worship of "Mot" or other

⁴⁰ Edmund B. Keller, "Hebrew Thoughts on Immortality and Resurrection," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5 (Spring 1974): 21.

⁴¹ Andrew F. Key, "The Concept of Death in Early Israelite Religion," *The Journal of Bible and Religion* 32 (July 1964): 242.

⁴² Gerhard von Rad, 276.

⁴³ Eric C. Rust, "The Destiny of the Individual in the Thought of the Old Testament," *Review and Expositor World Religions* 58 (Jan. 1961): 300.

⁴⁴ Walter L. Michel, "Death in Job," *Dialog* 11 (Summer 1972): 189.

deities never formulated. The issue of ancestral worship does bring forth many questions which need more research. This concept arose from passages which promoted the reverence for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Hebrews did not see *Sheol* as a place of punishment⁴⁵ in the early and middle periods.

The Hebrew mentality did not relate well with the Greek philosophy which dominated the intertestamental period. The Genesis account of the creation of humanity understood the nature of humanity as flesh and breath. If a person no longer has breath, he or she returns to the dust of the Earth. Without either ingredient a person does not exist.⁴⁶ Most of the Hebrew Scriptures accepts death as the natural results of life except for Genesis 2 and following. The leaders of Israel and the prophets considered death to be natural. (Jos. 23.14 and 1 Kg. 2.1-2).⁴⁷ After the death of a loved one or in time of great stress the ritual of sackcloth and ashes may have been a method of protection from the departed spirits. The sackcloth disguised the living from the powerful dead. This power can be seen in the need to keep oneself from becoming impure by touching the dead (Lev 11:31; 11:3; 19:28; 21:1; 21:11; 22:4; and 26:30).⁴⁸ The Hebrews understood that death represented the “utmost degree of uncleanness (Num. 9:6; 19:11,16,18; 31:19 of the dead of men; Lev. 11:24-8, etc. of the dead of animals.)”⁴⁹

At times the Hebrew Scriptures portrays the grave as just below the surface of the earth; whereas, *Sheol* exists much deeper in the belly of the earth. *Sheol* holds the total graves combined into one large region beneath the earth, “but it must not be conceived as the sum of its parts, nor are we to think of the graves as individual compartments in *Sheol*.”⁵⁰ Death in the twentieth-century equals the absence of physical life. The Hebrew Scriptures present death in various degrees. Illness, weakness, imprisonment, oppression from their enemies represents the various stages of the death process.⁵¹

The fact that some Hebrew people consulted with the dead illustrates the belief in the after life. Is. 8:19 and 1 Sam. 28:9 illustrate the usage of spiritualists and mediums to contact the dead.⁵² “All these factors indicate that some thought of life after death was not absent in early Israel, however existence after death might be emptied of meaning.”⁵³ If one did not have a son to carry on the family name, this after life was some how in jeopardy. Absalom did not have a son, so he built a pillar to preserve his name (2 Sam. 18:18).

In general early Hebrew theology considered physical life to be the place where judgment from God took place and the afterlife was equal for all men.⁵⁴ This belief will modify with time

⁴⁵ J. A. Emerton, “*Sheol* and the Sons of Belial,” *Vetus Testamentum* 37 (April 1987): 216.

⁴⁶ S. H. Hooke, “Israel and the After-Life,” *The Expository Times* 76 (May 1965): 236.

⁴⁷ Andrew F. Key, “The Concept of Death in Early Israelite Religion,” *The Journal of Bible and Religion*. 32 (July 1964): 247.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁹ Gerhard von Rad, 275-76.

⁵⁰ Eric C. Rust, 301.

⁵¹ Gerhard von Rad, 387.

⁵² NAS Is. 8.19 And when they say to you, “Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,” should not a people consult their God? *Should they consult* the dead on behalf of the living? NAS 1 Sam. 28:9 But the woman said to him, “Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?”

⁵³ Eric C. Rust, 300.

⁵⁴ Edmund B. Keller, “Hebrew Thoughts on Immortality and Resurrection,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5 (Spring 1974): 23.

and by the end of the post exilic period God's judgment will be given out in the after life. The concept of punishment was illustrated in a variety of passages. God will destroy the enemies of Israel. Their punishment will be death.

NAS Is. 14.9 "*Sheol* from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. NAS Is. 26.14 The dead will not live, the departed spirits will not rise; Therefore Thou hast punished and destroyed them, And Thou hast wiped out all remembrance of them.

Here Isaiah rejoices over the defeat of the enemies of Judah. The punishment for the defeat seems to be the lack of eternal life. This apparent conflict with the rest of the concepts of the after life must be contrasted to the victory of God's people and their reward in Is. 26:19.

NAS Is. 26.19 Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

The "your" in verse nineteen refers to the Lord. This passage is one of two which strongly suggests a bodily resurrection for God's people. The death of the kings and their ungodly people was not annihilation as much as not being brought out of *Sheol*.

The early indications suggest that God used death as the ultimate punishment at the end of one's life. "*Sheol* may be a place of punishment even though it is the goal of all men. For the wicked man goes there prematurely and is brought low before his time, whereas the righteous man goes down to the grave in ripe old age."⁵⁵ If a person lived a long and prosperous life, God blessed him. If a person suffered and died early, God cursed him. This simplistic theology seemed reasonable until the Babylonian exile. The theologians of the Babylonian exile struggled with a theological conflict. This conflict generated cognitive dissonance. How could the servants of Yahweh be defeated by the evil Babylonians? They could not understand why God did not hear their prayers. The solution to their theological dilemma involved a rethinking of God's justice. Their situation resulted from disobedience and failure to maintain the covenant. This theological development conflicted with Blessings and Curses. Why do righteous people suffer at the hands of the unrighteous? Perhaps God would correct this conflict in the after life.

Ecclesiastes caused difficulty for a smooth understanding of life after death. Ec. 9:1-10 decries the futility of life. All will die and the dead have no hope. The author of Ecclesiastes could not distinguish a difference in the penalty of death between the righteous and the unrighteous. The understanding of the Hebrews at this time in history did not allow for them to realize God was also the God of *Sheol*. For them Yahweh was the God of the living and not the dead. *Sheol* was not part of God's control in the mind of the author of Ecclesiastes.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Eric C. Rust, 305.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 304.

The Hebrew Scriptures placed significance on the need for a proper burial.⁵⁷ This emphasis possibly developed out of the cultural expectations which were previously mentioned. Eric C. Rust sighted three examples in the Hebrew Scriptures where a proper burial was significant.⁵⁸

1. Am. 2:1 The King of Edom's bones being burned and desecrated.
2. 2 Ki. 9:33-37 Jezebel's body being eaten by the wild dogs and then the little pieces were buried.
3. 1 Sam. 31:12 David's retrieval of Saul's and Jonathan's bodies.

The indications from these three accounts demonstrated the importance in the minds of the people for a proper burial.

In death all men and women become equal in their positions. The kings and queens became equal with the slaves and the sinners.⁵⁹ This equality eventually conflicts with the philosophical difficulties concerning injustice and justice for God's people. The prophets and the spiritual leaders saw the lack of justice in this life and redirected the justice of God in the after life. The Hebrew Scriptures painted *Sheol* as a dark and gloomy place.⁶⁰ The author of Psalm 55:15 desired for his enemies to be placed alive into *Sheol*, as a punishment for their evil. Death was pictured in the Old Testament as a "voracious monster with a huge gullet and gaping jaws." (Isa. 5:14 and Hab 2:5)⁶¹

In summary, *Sheol*, in early Jewish Theology, included all people. Its primary purpose contained the dead ancestors. The inevitable arrival to *Sheol* for all caused many to cry out to God for an answer "Why?" Once in *Sheol* no one could escape its hold, because Yahweh's dominion was not in the realm of the netherworld. The apparent conflict with the power of *Sheol* over the dominion of Yahweh does not make good theology. Hence, the biblical writer began to correct this conflict.

If Yahweh, the God of the Universe, had all power, he must rule over *Sheol*. This realization enabled the next logical step for the biblical writers. Later developments of the power of Yahweh over *Sheol* can be seen in the following references. Yahweh created the netherworld (Ps. 33:7; 95:4). *Sheol* is naked before him (Job 26:6; Pr. 15:11). Yahweh's wisdom is deeper than *Sheol* (Is. 7:11). Yahweh leads the shadow of death to light (Job 12:22)

NAS Ps. 139:7 Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; If I make my bed in *Sheol*, behold, Thou art there.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ NAS Is. 14:9 *Sheol* from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones. Is. 14:10 "They will all respond and say to you, 'Even you have been made weak as we, You have become like us. Is. 14:11 'Your pomp and the music of your harps Have been brought down to *Sheol*; Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you, And worms are your covering.'

⁶⁰ NAS Job 10:22 The land of utter gloom as darkness *itself*; Of deep shadow without order, And which shines as the darkness.

⁶¹ Naham M. Sarna, "The Mythological Background of Job 18," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82(1962):317.

NAS Ps. 88.10 Wilt Thou perform wonders for the dead? Will the departed spirits rise *and* praise Thee? Selah.

NAS Am. 9.2 “Though they dig into *Sheol*, From there shall My hand take them; And though they ascend to heaven, From there will I bring them down.

The verses listed above demonstrated the power of Yahweh over the power of *Sheol*. This theological development provides the first step in establishing Yahweh’s ability to resurrect a group of people or an individual from the grasp of death and *Sheol*. After this foundation of Yahweh’s power over all kingdoms and realms, the prophets had the foundation to proclaim the next level of understanding. This development occurred during the Babylonian exile. “Hopes and fears about life after death began to develop from the exile onwards. The outstanding document is the Book of Job. Here is the first tentative demand for a real life after death.”⁶²

NAS Job 19.25 “And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. 26 “Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes shall see and not another. My heart faints within me.

The Psalmist asked the question why did you save my life from the *Sheol* to allow my life to eventually go to *Sheol*?

NAS Ps. 30:3 O LORD, Thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol; Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. 30.9 “What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise Thee? Will it declare Thy faithfulness?

In death humanity, who honors and praises Yahweh, can no longer participate. Therefore, if Yahweh allows death to occur, Yahweh’s worshiper disappears.⁶³ The prophets began to realize the unreasonable conclusion that God’s best people would no longer have fellowship with him. David Hubbard suggested that the logical expression of fellowship with God would lead the people to the understanding of immortality with God.⁶⁴

The implications from the taking up of Enoch and Elijah reinforce the concept of fellowship with God in Heaven.⁶⁵ The Kings material in which the dead are resuscitated back to life lends support for the hope of resurrection. Yahweh was shown to have power over the tyranny of death (I Kg. 17.17ff and II Kg. 4.32).⁶⁶ These illustrations help plant the concept into the minds and hearts of God’s people. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). If he will do it for Elijah, it is possible he could do it for others. This mentality would open the door of possibilities. Job asked the question, (Job 14.14) If a man dies, will he live again? Job’s question has the possibility of hope attached to the question.

⁶² Eric C. Rust, 306.

⁶³ Gerhard von Rad, 369-70.

⁶⁴ David Hubbard, Lecture and seminar at the N. O. B. T. S. on April 11, 1996.

⁶⁵ W. A. Criswell and Paige Patterson, *Heaven* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1991), 82.

⁶⁶ Edmund B. Keller, “Hebrew Thoughts on Immortality and Resurrection,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5 (Spring 1974): 22.

Two Psalms contained material that might suggest the possibility of bodily resurrection. The first to be considered is Psalm 49:9-15.⁶⁷ Much debate has centered on this Psalm and whether the concept of resurrection was implied. Peter C. Craigie suggested that the Psalmist did not understand the hope of resurrection as the church understands it. The church looking back upon the passage can read into it the concept of resurrection.⁶⁸ The important message which the Psalmist related in this passage reinforced the notion that man is helpless to obtain immortality apart from God's mercy and grace. Man should live a righteous life and put his trust in God's plan. If God is to redeem his soul from *Sheol*, it will be done.

The second significant Psalm regarding resurrection is Psalm 73:23-27.⁶⁹ The discussion for this Psalm revolves around the word "afterward" in verse twenty-four. If "afterward" in verse twenty-four means after death, the interpretation would lead to an understanding of life after death with God in heaven.⁷⁰ Gunkel does not believe "afterward" refers to life after death. "Gunkel, however, points out that eschatological terms are lacking in this psalm and also that, if the psalmist had believed in life after death, he would not have been so preoccupied with the problem of prosperity of the wicked."⁷¹ H. W. Robinson believed it refers to a disaster on this side of death.⁷² W. Oesterley considered this passage one of a few places in the Old Testament where resurrection and immortality occur. He added that this Psalm seems to have more of a Greek understanding of death and after life than a Hebrew understanding.⁷³

H. H. Rowley believed that this two passages from Is. 25:6-8⁷⁴ and Ezekiel 37:1-14 refer to a corporate resurrection of the nation of Israel.⁷⁵ This corporate resurrection concept reinforced the hope of Israel becoming a mighty nation again. God could accomplish this task even if it required resurrecting his people from the dust of the earth.

The Book of Daniel being one of the last books into the Canon of Hebrew Scripture reflects this new concept of resurrection of the body of the righteous.

⁶⁷ NAS Ps. 49.9 That he should live on eternally; That he should not undergo decay. 10 For he sees *that even* wise men die; The stupid and the senseless alike perish, And leave their wealth to others. 11 Their inner thought is, *that* their houses are forever, *And* their dwelling places to all generations; They have called their lands after their own names. 12 But man in *his* pomp will not endure; He is like the beasts that perish. 13 This is the way of those who are foolish, And of those after them who approve their words. Selah. 14 As sheep they are appointed for *Sheol*; Death shall be their shepherd; And the upright shall rule over them in the morning; And their form shall be for *Sheol* to consume, so that they have no habitation. 15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of *Sheol*; For He will receive me. Selah.

⁶⁸ Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, in Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 361.

⁶⁹ NAS Ps. 73.23 Nevertheless I am continually with Thee; Thou hast taken hold of my right hand. 24 With Thy counsel Thou wilt guide me, And afterward receive me to glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven *but Thee*? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. 27 For, behold, those who are far from Thee will perish; Thou hast destroyed all those who are unfaithful to Thee.

⁷⁰ Eric C. Rust, 306.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 306-07.

⁷³ W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms*, (London: S. P. C. K., 1959), 344-5.

⁷⁴ NAS Is. 25.6 And the LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, *And* refined, aged wine. 7 And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, Even the veil which is stretched over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken.

⁷⁵ Eric C. Rust, 310.

NAS Dan. 12.2 “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace *and* everlasting contempt. 3 “And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

In summary, the development of the concept of resurrection took centuries. By the end of the post exilic period and the beginning of Greek influence, the Hebrew people began to accept the concept of bodily resurrection. Many passages cited above lack conclusive proof of bodily resurrection, but they asked the question “why not?”

Hades in the LXX

The author’s purpose in section three compares the Septuagint to the Masoretic Text in selected passages, which could have a tendency to relate the concept of bodily resurrection. The selection is not inclusive and generally comes from the Books of Job and Psalms. The Greek language and culture understood the nature of the human body and spirit from a different philosophy. The author will attempt to find indications of this philosophical difference.

“The Hebrew (נֶפֶשׁ - *nephesh*), which is translated as (ψυχή - *psuche*) in Greek means in the first place the breath used in breathing. It does not mean a nonmaterial entity, as the soul is in Greek thought.”⁷⁶ This difference in understanding in the Semitic thought compared to the Greek thought can cause translation complications. The first example the LXX⁷⁷ is:

LXX Job 14.14 reads “For if a man dies, **he will live**, having carried out the days of his life; I will abide until I am born again.”

NAS Job 14.14 “If a man dies, will he live *again*? All the days of my struggle I will wait, Until my change comes.

This passage differs from the Hebrew text by making the question “Will he live?” into a statement of fact.⁷⁸ The translators of the LXX either changed their understanding of the passage or their Hebrew text was different from the current Hebrew text. The Greek influence for the immortality of the soul of man might have been the source of textual variance.

LXX Job 3.18-19 With one mind, the **eternal ones** did not hear the voice of the tax-gather. Small and great are there, and the trusted servant is not fearful of his master.

NAS Job 3.18 “The prisoners are at ease together; They do not hear the voice of the taskmaster. 19 “The small and the great are there, And the slave is free from his master.

⁷⁶ Severino Croatto, “The Hope of Immortality in the Main Cosmologies of the East,” in *Immortality and Resurrection*, ed. Pierre Benoit and Roland Murphy (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), 37.

⁷⁷ All LXX translations are by the author.

⁷⁸ Donald H. Gard, “The Concept of the Future life According to the Greek Translator of the Book of Job,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 73 (1954): 138.

In Job 3.18-19 the LXX used language which grants everlasting life to the human spirit.

LXX Job 7.9 Just as a cloud fades from heaven, **for if** a man goes down into Hades no longer he comes up.

NAS Job 7.9 “When a cloud vanishes, it is gone, so he who goes down to *Sheol* does not come up.

In Job 7.9 the LXX is conditional on the man going down. The corollary suggests that the man, who does not go down, does not need to come up.

LXX Job 14.22 “But rather his flesh suffered pain, and his soul grieved.

NAS Job 14.22 “But his body pains him, And he mourns only for himself.”

The Hebrew of Job 14.22 is imperfect and the Greek is aorist. The Greek mind did not see the soul in Hades; therefore, the souls grieving must have been before death.⁷⁹

LXX Job 40.13 And hide (them) in the earth outside with one purpose; but fill their faces with **dishonor**.

NAS Job 40.13 “Hide them in the dust together; Bind them in the hidden *place*.

Sheol for the Hebrew was not a place of punishment in general, but the LXX made it a place of punishment or dishonor.⁸⁰

LXX Job 17.13 For if I stay behind, Hades (is) my home, and in darkness my bed having been spread out.

NAS Job 17.13 “If I look for *Sheol* as my home, I make my bed in the darkness;

The conditions of the after life are described in both the Hebrew text and LXX in a similar understanding.

LXX Job 21.13 And they finished in good (things) their living, and in resting they lay down (to) Hades.

NAS Job 21.13 “They spend their days in prosperity, And suddenly they go down to *Sheol*.

The punishment for the man who ignores God remained the same in both versions.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

LXX Job 24.19 And let it happen the plant of them upon the earth parched, for they have plundered the sheaves of the helpless.

NAS Job 24.19 “Drought and heat consume the snow waters, So does *Sheol* those who have sinned.

Job 24.19 in the LXX does not match the text of the Hebrew in this passage. *Sheol* or *Hades* does not appear in the LXX.

LXX Job 26.6 Naked is *Hades* before him, and the covering to the destruction is not.

NAS Job 26.6 “Naked is *Sheol* before Him And Abaddon has no covering.

Here in Job 26.6 the text seems to agree in the message.

LXX Job 33.18 He will spare the soul of him from death and not to fall in battle.

NAS Job 33.18 He keeps back his soul from the pit, And his life from passing over into *Sheol*.

In Job 33:18 the context of the message seems to be different in the LXX. The Masoretic text does not picture a battle, but the message seems to be relatively the same.

LXX Ps. 6.5 Because (there) is not in death the mention of you, but in Hades who will give thanks to you?

NAS Ps. 6.5 For there is no mention of Thee in death; In *Sheol* who will give Thee thanks?

Both versions of Ps. 6.5 ask the rhetorical question. Each version begs the question.

LXX Ps. 9.17-18 The sinners having been turned back into Hades, all the nations the ones forgetting God, because not in the end will the destitute be forgotten. The perseverance of the poor man will not perish for ever.

NAS Ps. 9.17-18 The wicked will return to *Sheol*, Even all the nations who forget God. For the needy will not always be forgotten, Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever.

Again both versions held close to the message. The message of injustice in this life will be corrected in the after life. This theme became more significant in the intertestamental period.

LXX Ps. 48.16 But God will deliver the soul of me out of the hand of Hades, when he receives me. pause.

NAS Ps. 49.15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of *Sheol*; For He will receive me. Selah.

The final verse for comparison reflects a message of deliverance in both versions.

In summary, most of the differences between the LXX and the Masoretic text lack a significant impact on the issue of life after death; however, at times when the question of immortality of the soul arises, the LXX on a number of occasions tilted toward the Greek understanding of immortality. This continual drift to the immortality of the soul and body will continue into the intertestamental period and flourish in some Apocrypha literature.

The Intertestamental Period

The Persians influenced the Jewish thoughts during the post exilic period of Hebrew history. During the intertestamental period, the Greek influences began to alter the Hebrew mentality. The Greeks believed that humanity by nature is immortal. Humanity's intellectual capacity was part of humanity's very being. The Hebrews were not concerned with the intellectual aspects of immortality. They were concerned about a resurrection for fellowship with God.⁸¹ The Greek's philosophy of an immortal soul combined with the need for justice after this life soon infiltrated the Jewish teachings. An example of this infiltration into the Hebrew thinking can be seen in the Wisdom of Solomon.

RSV Wis 9.15 for a perishable body weighs down the soul, and this earthy tent burdens the thoughtful mind.⁸²

Philo developed a framework by which others used to build the doctrines of the immortal soul. A brief sample from Philo writings demonstrated the influences of the Greek philosophies:

As many, therefore, as through instruction and learning have improved and at last arrived at **perfection**, are classed among the larger number. Nor is number insignificant of those who have learnt from oral instruction and demonstration, and whom Moses calls the people. but those men who have forsaken human instruction, and having become well-disposed disciples of God, and having arrived at a comprehension of knowledge acquired without labor, have passed over to the **immortal** and most perfect race of beings, and have so received an inheritance better than the former generations of created men." Philo On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices offered by him and by his brother Cain,⁸³

Of the three major sects of this period, the Sadducees remained the least influenced by the cultural impacts. The Sadducees did not waver in their position on the Pentateuch. One needed

⁸¹ Eric C. Rust, 297.

⁸² Revised Standard Version of the Bible, 1952.

⁸³ Philo, *On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices offered by him and by his Brother*, trans. by C. D. Yonge, *The Works of Philo* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993): 94.

to serve God in this life, because in the next one could not serve God. Their life styles were good and therefore had no need to devise a future correction for the injustices committed upon them.⁸⁴ What is known of the Sadducees came from the groups which opposed them in the religious affairs of Israel. The information has bias which must be taken into consideration. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection as noted in Mat. 22.23 “On that day Sadducees came to him, Saying there is no resurrection, and they questioned him.”⁸⁵

Pharisees believed in the resurrection and the teachings of Paul support this understanding of the Pharisees.

The Essenes believed that the body was corrupt and the soul was immortal. “The doctrine of the Essenes is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of the Souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for;”⁸⁶ The Qumran Scrolls support the need to maintain a righteous life in the community of faith. The consequences for sin were the removal of God’s grace and eternal separation. Scroll 1QH chapter 3:16-17

And the gates [of hell] shall open [on all] the works of Vanity; and the doors of the Pit shall close on the conceivers of wickedness; and the everlasting bars shall be bolted on all the spirits of Naught.”⁸⁷

Sheol and *Hades* are no longer a place for the dead to reside. They became a place of punishment for the unrighteous people who refuse to serve God. The corollary to Hell would be Heaven for those who are righteous and do the will of God.

Jewish tradition (in the Talmud, *Pesachim*, 118a) used Psalms 116 in the *Hallel*. The tradition considered verses eight and nine⁸⁸ to refer to the resurrection of the body. The original context would suggest the Psalmist was praising God for saving his life from a tragic death. The Pharisees incorporated this belief of resurrection from these verses to support their understanding of the Resurrection. They insisted on understanding the walking before the Lord in the land of the living as a reference to Heaven.⁸⁹

The rise of apocalyptic materials developed out of the frustrations of no restoration for Israel.⁹⁰ Yahweh no longer protected his people in a unique relationship. Their understanding of how God dealt with the people ultimately changed with time. The change in their status needed updating to accommodate the theological challenges to their faith. The new teachings extended the future hope to those who measured up to God’s standards. This remnant would enjoy a new life with God after he brought a great victory and restored their fellowship to him through the resurrection. The new trend does an injustice to the prophets of the Old Testament. G. Tom Milazzo made a fascinating comparison between the two forms of Biblical writings.

⁸⁴ Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, 19-20.

⁸⁵ Passage is the author’s translation.

⁸⁶ Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston, The Works of Josephus (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, Publishers, 1987): 477.

⁸⁷ Veza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 4th ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 197.

⁸⁸ NAS Psa 116:8 For Thou hast rescued my soul from death, My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling. 9 I shall walk before the LORD In the land of the living.

⁸⁹ Arnold Toynbee, Arthur Koestler, and others, 106.

⁹⁰ G. Tom Milazzo, *The Protest and the Silence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1992), 60.

Prophetic eschatology offers a monistic view of the world, apocalyptic offers a dualistic view of God and the world; the prophetic speaks in terms of fulfillment, apocalyptic in terms of dissolution and replacement; in prophecy judgment is imminent and repeatable, in apocalyptic, judgment is unique and unrepeatable for all time.⁹¹

The results of the finality of the apocalyptic material heighten the need for God to bring back the righteous believers. Death cannot be the end of fellowship with God. The dead cry out to God from *Sheol* in anticipation of the end of history. Death became a necessary divider between God and man. Without death there can be no life after death no hope of restoration to God's fellowship. "In resurrection the *nephesh* would return to the world of the living and to the presence of God."⁹²

In the Apocrypha material the books of Baruch, Sirach and Tobit are more concerned about the present life rather than the afterlife.⁹³ For example in Tobit 12:8 it reads:

RSV Tob 12:8 Prayer is good when accompanied by fasting, almsgiving, and righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than much with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to treasure up gold. 9 For almsgiving delivers from death, and it will purge away every sin. Those who perform deeds of charity and of righteousness will have fullness of life;

The idea of Purgatory, a place to pay all final sin debts, originated in the apocrypha literature.⁹⁴ The rationale for such a doctrine derived from the Greek concept of flesh is corrupt and a final cleansing from the flesh must take place before one could meet God.

The Targum reads in Job 14.14 "If a wicked man dies, is it possible that he can live (again)? If this were the case all the days of my service I would wait until the transformations of my life would come."⁹⁵ The Targum of Job illustrated how far the mentality of the Hebrew people has come since Job wrote these words. For Job the question was is life after death possible. For the writer of the Targum life for the sinner now only remained as possibility.

II Maccabees is concerned with the retribution of the afterlife. Wisdom of Solomon is concerned about the resurrection of God's people. IV Maccabees is concerned about the immortality of the spirit and neglects the bodily resurrection of the person.⁹⁶

RSV Wis 3:1 But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. 2 In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction, 3 and their going from us to be their

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 141.

⁹³ Edmund B. Keller, "Hebrew Thoughts on Immortality and Resurrection," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5 (Spring 1974): 31.

⁹⁴ John Gilmore, *Probing Heaven: Key Questions on the Hereafter* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 137-45.

⁹⁵ Aramaic Bible, Vol. 15, "The Targum of Job," trans. by Cèline Mangan, O.P. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991).

⁹⁶ Edmund B. Keller, 34-8.

destruction; but they are at peace. 4 For though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. 5 Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;

In summary, the intertestamental period saw the influences of the Greek philosophies upon the Jewish community. This influence brought the immortal soul concept to the Jewish writings. The belief that God would correct the injustices of this life in the after life was also heightened.

Hebrew Understanding and the Church

The New Testaments understanding of death and resurrection came out of the traditions and historical developments given above. The story of Lazarus for some illustrated the Hebrew thinking during the time of Jesus. J. Paterson Smyth believed that Jesus was referring to real men of history.⁹⁷ If this statement is true, Jesus' description of the after life before the cross revealed the understanding of the people in his time.⁹⁸ Torment awaited unrighteous and the reward for the righteous. This theme corresponded to the themes of injustice and justice in the after life which developed in the intertestamental period.

Peter's understanding of Psalm 16 was recorded in Acts 2.30.

NAS Ps. 16.10 For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to *Sheol*; Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.

NAS Acts 2.30 "and so, because he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat *one* of his descendants upon his throne, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was neither abandoned to hades, nor did his flesh suffer decay. 32 "this Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

Peter did not hesitate to update his understanding of the Davidic Psalm to help him interpret the events of Christ.

The final realization in the New Testament from the Apostle Paul's understanding allowed for resurrection because of God's grace and not injustice.⁹⁹ The natural results of worshipping an eternal living God theologically necessitates the need of resurrection and eternal life with God.¹⁰⁰

In summary, the New Testament's understanding of the issues of death and resurrection were heavily influenced by the teachings of the day. Jesus utilized the information in a way the people of his day understood the material. He expanded and reinforced the concepts of bodily

⁹⁷ J. Paterson Smyth, D.D. *The Gospel of the Hereafter* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, unknown), 61.

⁹⁸ NAS Luk 16:22 "Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 "And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.' 25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.'

⁹⁹ Norman Snaith, 323.

¹⁰⁰ David Hubbard, Seminar at the N. O. B. T. S., April 12, 1996.

resurrection by his own example. Jesus' teachings enable the full revelation of God's plan for his believers and the bodily resurrection of the saints.

Conclusion

Humanity's complete understanding of death remains a mystery. Ultimately one must rely upon God's grace to secure immortality and resurrection of the body. The historical and theological development of death and resurrection took place over two millennia. The canonical understanding changed as the prophets developed a more systematic approach to the difficulties of death and resurrection theology. Foreign cultures influenced the theological understanding by adding theological and philosophical insights. These influences do not negate God's hand in the revelation of himself to humanity. God can and does use whomever he chooses. Today's understanding of death and resurrection culminated with the teachings of Christ and his resurrection. These teachings resulted from many years of tradition culminating with the revelation from God's son.

THE “RESULT OF” VIEW OF GENESIS 1

David Craun, Ed.S.

Introduction

Genesis 1 conveys the biblical account of beginnings: the when, who, how, and what answers to humanity’s existence. For millennia scholars have been amazed by these words and also confused by them. Many different attempts have been made to give commentary and answer questions about the implications and meaning of this first chapter in God’s revelation of Himself and His plan of fellowship with us. These attempts have continued to this day with many different views held strongly by very qualified and learned individuals. The popularity of one view or another rises and falls from time to time.

Also, scientists have attempted to answer questions about humanity and the universe’s origins. Their answers change from time to time and the evidence of “support” for their theories becomes more sophisticated as technology advances. However, at best they are still “theories” that cannot be proven.

I am neither a Hebrew scholar nor a physicist, geologist, or cosmologist attempting to answer the questions of beginnings. However, I am a Spirit filled believer who sees the Bible as God’s revealed Word to show us His will and His purposes for us. I too have pondered the meaning of the first chapter of Genesis with the hope of finding answers to the multitude of views that both biblical scholars and scientist have proposed.

In reality, I am more of a synthesizer of ideas. I attempted to look at various thoughts, expressions of ideas, and try to find the common concepts that run through them. Both the scholars and the scientist are neither fully right nor fully wrong in their assumptions, analysis, and conclusions. The avowed atheist or fanatical evolutionist may be an exception to not being fully wrong, especially their conclusions. If a theory demonstrated absolute truth, the other views would soon fade away. For me, most of these attempts to explain Genesis miss the point. One should see the end results of the creation account. I want to explore this “end result” concept. Let us look at the big picture and not get bogged down in minute details.

As I have said, I am not a Hebrew scholar nor a scientist. Yet, I must assess both approaches to grasp God’s message in Genesis 1. All true knowledge has its source in God who is all wise and knowing – omniscient. Thus, all knowledge comes from Him. The word “science” comes from the Latin “scire” meaning “know.” Science that negates the “God factor” is not true science, but a man-made attempt to presume to know. This factor manifests itself with the ever-changing theories proposed by the scientific community that fail to be proven over time. At best humanity can only “know” a truth as one discovers what has been a reality from the beginning – Genesis.

Many explanations from biblical scholarship and scientific theories often have conflicting outcomes. Currently, one of the major issues in the Christian theater concerns the differences between “young earth” and “old earth” interpretations of creation. One holds to a literal 24 hour

meaning of the Hebrew word (יָוֵם) translated “day” and the other sees this word as meaning an epoch, a period, or event in time.

Strong’s Concordance reads: “יָוֵם *yom*’ ...day (24 hours) daytime (in contrast to night); by extension: an indefinite period of time, an era with a certain characteristics such as “the day of the Lord” and the prophetic, “on that day” ...”¹

Bible Hub quotes Strong’s saying:

age, always, continually, daily, birth, each, today. From an unused root meaning to be hot; a day (as the warm hours), whether literal (from sunrise to sunset, or from one sunset to the next), or figurative (a space of time defined by an associated term), (often used adverb) -- age, + always, + chronicals, continually(-ance), daily, ((birth-), each, to) day, (now a, two) days (agone), + elder, X end, + evening, + (for) ever(-lasting, -more), X full, life, as (so) long as (... Live), (even) now, + old, + outlived, + perpetually, presently, + remaineth, X required, season, X since, space, then, (process of) time, + as at other times, + in trouble, weather, (as) when, (a, the, within a) while (that), X whole (+ age), (full) year(-ly), + younger.²

Scholars argue back and forth over which meaning is being used in Genesis 1 and state that the context determines the meaning. Yet, who determines the context? Is the context for one verse the same as it is for another verse later in the chapter? We are left with little resolution from a researcher’s view as to which view is correct. In the end we must come to the conclusion that we are left up to which view we choose to believe – not on one argument winning over another, but rather what we choose to believe. Great men and women of true faith choose to believe different views. Should I doubt the faith of an individual that does not hold the same view that I have come to accept as correct? Does this choice of viewpoint about the meaning of the creation account mean that I am or am not a true believer in God the Father, Jesus Christ his Son who was born as a man, lived a righteous, sinless life, died on the cross for my salvation and reconciliation to God, was resurrected the third day with a glorified body, imparted the Holy Spirit to his disciples, ascended into heaven with the promise that He would come again, and commissioned his disciples to go into all the world and make disciples after they received power from His Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost? I think not! Great men and women of God at different times had differing views but were still mighty men and women of God.

Therefore, my intent is not to prove or disprove which interpretation is right or wrong, nor argue the truth of any particular scientific theory – which are numerous. I intend not to be ignorant of these interpretations or theories either. One should consider what others have concluded or at least what they believe they have discovered. To arbitrarily dismiss the honest efforts of others to explain the meaning of our existence and the beginning of the universe will not bring any validity to our own conclusions. It will only validate a sense of prejudice on our

¹ *Zondervan NIV Exhaustive Concordance*, 2nd ed., Edward W. Goodrick, John R. Kohlenberger III, James A. Swanson, associate editor (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), ref. no. 3427.

² Bible Hub, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/3117.htm>, accessed October 20, 2020.

part. Rather, as true Christians who recognize that all truth has its source with God, we should embrace the discoveries of others as what they are: attempts to make meaning out of our existence. We all see the world around us through different filters and those filters determine what we will allow or disallow as being truth. Exposure to the ideas of others should not threaten our own sense of security in our faith but rather broaden our own scope and field of view to reinforce that faith.

Biblical Scholars' Interpretations

Biblical scholars come from two major schools of thought: Jewish rabbis going back to before the time of Christ and Christian theologians who have commented on both Old and New Testament thought and writings. Prior to and during the time of Jesus, two competing sects of scholarship emerged: Sadducees and Pharisees who made up the Sanhedrin. Lesser known groups included the Essenes of the Qumran community who many scholars associate with the Qumran Scrolls, and Zealots³ such as (possibly) the one known as Barabbas⁴ who Pilate freed instead of Jesus. A study of each group's beliefs is a topic for another time. Let it suffice to say that each group interpreted the Holy Scriptures differently.

After the time of Christ and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E., the Sadducees ceased to exist primarily because they were directly associated with temple worship in Jerusalem. The main Jewish scholarship fell into the hands of the Pharisees.⁵ The teachings of these scholars were codified into collections known as the *Tanakh* comprised of the *Torah* (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible), the *Nevi'im* (the prophets), and the *Ketuvim* (the writings including "a mixture of liturgical and secular poetry, wisdom literature and historical writings.") The Jewish sages have written extensive commentaries on their Scriptures which offer explanations for the creation account in Genesis. These commentaries include the oral law collected as the *Talmud* and the *Mishna*.⁶

Daniel Friedmann in his book *The Genesis One Code* has presented an interesting premise using the Jewish commentaries of the *Talmud* and *Mishna*.⁷

The scientific recognition of an expanding universe is recent. Even though the expanding universe fact can be derived from Einstein's general relativity theory, Einstein himself initially thought the universe was static, neither expanding nor contracting. In *Torah* commentaries though, the notion of an expanding universe is at least 800 years old, as the

³ Thomas V. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2014), 212-5, 239-41.

⁴ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 774.

⁵ Holman, 262.

⁶ Mission of Israel to the UN in Geneva, Jewish Sacred Text, accessed October 22, 2020, <https://embassies.gov.il/UnGeneva/AboutIsrael/People/Pages/Jewish-Sacred-Texts.aspx>

⁷ Daniel Friedmann, *The Genesis One Code: Harmonizing the biblical Genesis creation account with scientific theory and observation showing convergence between modern science and religion* (Inspired Studies Book 1), Inspired Books. Kindle Edition.

renowned *Torah* scholar Ramban clearly described the universe's expansion in his commentary on Genesis.⁸

Much of his book makes an attempt to correlate the Jewish commentaries with modern science making a case for the “day” of Genesis 1 being expansive periods of time. Much detail is used to correlate the hours of each creation day as described in the Jewish commentaries with specific geological layers noted by scientist. Friedmann further stated:

When it comes to the universe, we have two distinct periods of counting time. While God was keeping time, the counting was done in Creation Time. When humankind took over, the counting switched to Human Time... (We will look at this concept further in the section on scientific views). ... we determined that one Creation Day represents 2.56 billion years in Human Time. Hence, the age of the universe according to Genesis is: $(5.375 \times 2.56 \text{ billion years}) + 5,777 \text{ years} = 13.743 \text{ billion years}$.⁹

He further postulated: “The HST [Hubble Space Telescope] is also a NASA satellite. It carries a large, optically superb telescope above the Earth's atmosphere to provide deep, clear views of the cosmos. Launched in 1990, the device has produced countless images ranging from our own solar system to the edge of the observable universe. It has also been used to determine certain cosmological parameters.” And also, “With these and other measurement methods, scientists have determined that the universe is 13.799 ± 0.021 billion years old. [1] In scientific notation, 13.799 ± 0.021 means there is a 99% chance that the age of the universe is between 13.736 and 13.862 billion years.”¹⁰ He summarized this conclusion:

Thus, the cosmology of Genesis and science seem to be in agreement: 1. An expanding universe started from a dense mass just a few millimeters across. 2. There was a sequence of well-defined developmental events describable in very similar words (e.g., the first stars lit up the whole universe and there was light). 3. The times of all events closely correspond except for the formation of the Earth, but this discrepancy can perhaps be explained.¹¹

Friedman made a distinction between creation and formation in Genesis one. “The Genesis text uses two distinct words to describe God's actions: creation and formation. ... creation is the divine act of making something out of nothing. Formation refers to taking something that already exists and making it into something else. The majority of the Genesis creation account describes formation events.”¹² Friedmann made this distinction to note that science is not about the

⁸ *Ibid*, 65.

⁹ *Ibid*, 62.

⁹ *Ibid*, 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 72.

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¹² *Ibid.*, 109.

supernatural but the natural. Thus, the creation acts of God cannot be scientifically determined. He stated it thus:

Any act of creation—making something from nothing—wherein the cause is supernatural, should not be explainable by applying the scientific method, which by definition does not deal with events based on supernatural forces. Thus, when Elokim uses a non-natural cause to create something from nothing, He reveals himself instead of remaining hidden within the law and order of nature, and what He creates cannot be fully explained by applying the scientific method.¹³

Though this makes interesting reading to “justify” the long age meaning of the word “day” in Genesis, it is only one explanation based in Jewish scholarship and commentaries. Today’s serious Bible scholars differ in their views concerning the account recorded in the first chapter of Genesis. The various interpretations make convincing arguments to support these theories.

To add to the confusion many serious Bible believing Christians encounter difficult questions when confronted in college or a high school biology class that emphasizes the “Theory of Evolution” and discount any of the biblical interpretations. This conflict forces these Christians to choose between their faith beliefs and scientific theories that diminish God’s creative acts.

To help address these conflicts www.emergingscholars.org posts the work of the Emerging Scholars group associated with Fuller Theological Seminary that is writing a Faith/Science curriculum that deals with these opposing views. Gerald Rau has posted a blog titled “How did God Create? Different Views Christians Hold” that gives a brief but solid description of the various Christian views of creation. He quotes Solomon in Proverbs 18:17 NRSV “The one who first states a case seems right, until the other comes and cross-examines.”¹⁴ Rau gives a very concise description of three major views Christians hold concerning the creation account in Genesis. He stated:

A majority of evangelical Christians in the US believe God created humans directly, within the past 10,000 years, a view commonly known as young earth creation (YEC). For much of the twentieth century, the study Bible of choice for many Baptist, Pentecostal and non-denominational churches was the Scofield Bible. Margin notes pegged the date of creation at 4004 BC, following the genealogical calculations of Archbishop James Ussher. Based on dispensational theology, with four of the seven dispensations being pre-Mosaic, the historicity of Genesis was taken for granted. Although dispensational theology fell out of favor in the late 20th century, the emphasis on literal interpretation remained. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the YEC model still dominates in these churches, and thus is more prevalent in the US, where these churches are strong, than in Europe.¹⁵

¹³ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁴ Emerging Scholars Group, Fuller Theological Seminary, <https://blog.emergingscholars.org/2918/05how-did-god-create-different-views-christians-hold> accessed 11/12/2020.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

Rau continued by describing Old Earth (OEC) as the currently popular view as progressive creation which hold to long periods of time that correlates with scientific evidence. The philosophical base is that the Bible and science when correctly interpreted will never be in conflict.

Then he described the view of intelligent design (ID) claiming that design is detectable and that Darwinism is inadequate to account for the diversity of life on earth. He related that a growing number of scientists see that natural selection (the core of Darwinism) as insufficient to account for the evolutionary patterns observed. However, most of these scientist accept “common descent” but few would hold to a claim that intelligent design is detectable.

Rau concluded with a description of theistic evolution (TE). Scientifically it is the same as naturalistic evolution but theologically it has a broad range of thought which he divides into three categories: Directed evolution (DE) based in reformed theology, planned evolution (PE) holds that the process of creation does not need further direction. PE is the prominent view held by Methodist, Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Non-theological evolution (NTE) holds that God did not know the outcome of creation. This view is rooted in process theology. TE is the theology held by most mainline denominations. It is the dominant model of origins for Europeans¹⁶.

A useful chart to help place these various views in some type of relationship has been created by www.emergingscholars.org. It helps one to compare the major tenants of each view:

		Christian Views			
	Scientific View	Young Earth Creationism	Old Earth Creationism	Theistic Evolution	Philosophical Naturalism
Creator	No	God	God	God	None
View of Man	No Competence	Pinnacle of Creation	Pinnacle of Creation	Pinnacle of Creation	Just another animal
Timing	Billions of Years	6 Days	Billions of Years	Billions of Years	Billions of Years
Mechanism	Evolution Automatic Process	Special Creation	Special Creation	God Initiated or Directed Evolution	Unguided Evolution

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¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷ <http://blog.emergingscholars.org/2014/03/christian-views-o/f-creation>, accessed 11/12/2020.

www.emergingscholars.org concluded their post with this statement:

I conclude that (the) main message of Genesis 1 is that God is the creator and that man is the pinnacle of his creation. These two themes are seen over and over again in other creation passages in both the Old and New Testaments. While the three views of creation discussed in this post differ in their interpretations of the timing and mechanism of creation events they all agree that God is the creator and that man is the pinnacle of his creation. This is in marked contrast to the view of philosophical naturalism that believes that there is no Creator God and that man is simply another animal that arose through the process of evolution as a matter of chance. In my opinion, conflict between the Christian world-view and the philosophical naturalism world-view is without a doubt much more important than Christian arguments among themselves over the interpretation of Genesis 1.¹⁸

These views or arguments are strongly held by their proponents with many people following their views. The evangelical branches favor the Young Earth teachings, while more mainline denominations lean either to Old Earth creation or even Theistic Evolution. Some go as far as favoring philosophical naturalism. For those who hold to the biblical view, we can all agree that “In the beginning God created....”

Scientific Views of Origins

Just as there are various Biblical Interpretations of the creation account in Genesis 1, so there are a variety of scientific views that conflict with one another from time to time. Einstein held at one time that the universe was static, but later he changed his thinking after further evidence was presented by others. The Encyclopedia Britannica post an article describing this under their description of “Cosmological solutions”:

Einstein immediately understood that the field equations could describe the entire cosmos. In 1917 he modified the original version of his equations by adding what he called the “cosmological term.” This represented a force that acted to make the universe expand, thus counteracting gravity, which tends to make the universe contract. The result was a static universe, in accordance with the best knowledge of the time. In 1922, however, the Soviet mathematician Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Friedmann showed that the field equations predict a dynamic universe, which can either expand forever or go through cycles of alternating expansion and contraction. Einstein came to agree with this result and abandoned his cosmological term. Later work, notably pioneering

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

measurements by the American astronomer Edwin Hubble and the development of the big-bang model, has confirmed and amplified the concept of an expanding universe.¹⁹

One can quickly get lost in all the “scientific” fields of study that weigh in on the concepts of beginnings if you are not schooled in these fields. As I have stated already, I do not claim to be a scientist in the academic realm, but rather a searcher for truth knowing that Jesus Christ is that truth. As soon as one scientist claims to prove a theory, another one comes along and shows the errors in the hypothesis that supported the theory.

Just some of the prevailing thought from the sciences stems from the world of physicists. Much of their thought comes from the nature of light and how it relates to matter. Interestingly, Genesis also places the first action of God after the creation of matter (heaven and earth) to be the creation of Light: “Let there be light.” (Genesis 1:3) We will touch more on this in the section on “result of” view later. The Encyclopedia Britannica contains the following paragraphs:

However, this success at explaining natural phenomena came to be tested from an unexpected direction—the behaviour of light, whose intangible nature had puzzled philosophers and scientists for centuries. In 1865 the Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell showed that light is an electromagnetic wave with oscillating electrical and magnetic components. Maxwell’s equations predicted that electromagnetic waves would travel through empty space at a speed of almost exactly 3×10^8 metres per second (186,000 miles per second)—i.e., according with the measured speed of light. Experiments soon confirmed the electromagnetic nature of light and established its speed as a fundamental parameter of the universe.

Maxwell’s remarkable result answered long-standing questions about light, but it raised another fundamental issue: if light is a moving wave, what medium supports it? Ocean waves and sound waves consist of the progressive oscillatory motion of molecules of water and of atmospheric gases, respectively. But what is it that vibrates to make a moving light wave? Or to put it another way, how does the energy embodied in light travel from point to point?

For Maxwell and other scientists of the time, the answer was that light traveled in a hypothetical medium called the ether (aether). Supposedly, this medium permeated all space without impeding the motion of planets and stars; yet it had to be more rigid than steel so that light waves could move through it at high speed, in the same way that a taut guitar string supports fast mechanical vibrations. Despite this contradiction, the idea of the ether seemed essential—until a definitive experiment disproved it.

In 1887 the German-born American physicist A.A. Michelson and the American chemist Edward Morley made exquisitely precise measurements to determine how Earth’s motion through the ether affected the measured speed of light. In classical

¹⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/science/relativity/Relativistic-mass>, accessed October 2020.

mechanics, Earth's movement would add to or subtract from the measured speed of light waves, just as the speed of a ship would add to or subtract from the speed of ocean waves as measured from the ship. But the Michelson-Morley experiment had an unexpected outcome, for the measured speed of light remained the same regardless of Earth's motion. This could only mean that the ether had no meaning and that the behaviour of light could not be explained by classical physics. The explanation emerged, instead, from Einstein's theory of special relativity.²⁰

Much scientific progress has developed to help us understand the relationship between light and matter over the years. At one time the speed of light was considered the only thing that did not change – thus all measurements could be calculated against its speed. Some think that the speed of light is slowing down – that the whole universe is slowing down, others say it is increasing. However, if everything around an observer is moving at the same speed as the observer, it is not possible to observe any speed at all. It will appear that the observer is not moving at all. Motion and speed of moving objects can only be determined in relationship to other objects. Thus, theories of relativity have been postulated by the scientific world. This has been called “time dilation” and “special relativity.” Once again I refer the reader to information in the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Time dilation, in the theory of special relativity, the “slowing down” of a clock as determined by an observer who is in relative motion with respect to that clock. In special relativity, an observer in inertial (i.e., nonaccelerating) motion has a well-defined means of determining which events occur simultaneously with a given event. A second inertial observer, who is in relative motion with respect to the first, however, will disagree with the first observer regarding which events are simultaneous with that given event. (Neither observer is wrong in this determination; rather, their disagreement merely reflects the fact that simultaneity is an observer-dependent notion in special relativity.) A notion of simultaneity is required in order to make a comparison of the rates of clocks carried by the two observers. If the first observer's notion of simultaneity is used, it is found that the second observer's clock runs slower than the first observer's by a factor of Square root of $\sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2}$, where v is the relative velocity of the observers and c equals 299,792 km (186,282 miles) per second—i.e., the speed of light. Similarly, using the second observer's notion of simultaneity, it is found that the first observer's clock runs slower by the same factor. Thus, each inertial observer determines that all clocks in motion relative to that observer run slower than that observer's own clock.

A closely related phenomenon predicted by special relativity is the so-called twin paradox. Suppose one of two twins carrying a clock departs on a rocket ship from the other twin, an inertial observer, at a certain time, and they rejoin at a later time. In accordance with the time-dilation effect, the elapsed time on the clock of the twin on the

²⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/science/relativity#ref252877>, Accessed November 12, 2020.

rocket ship will be smaller than that of the inertial observer twin—i.e., the non-inertial twin will have aged less than the inertial observer twin when they rejoin.

The time-dilation effect predicted by special relativity has been accurately confirmed by observations of the increased lifetime of unstable elementary particles traveling at nearly the speed of light. The clock paradox effect also has been substantiated by experiments comparing the elapsed time of an atomic clock on Earth with that of an atomic clock flown in an airplane. The latter experiments, furthermore, have confirmed a gravitational contribution to time dilation, as predicted by the theory of general relativity.²¹

Not only has science explored the relationship of light (its speed and characteristics) and physical matter, but other concepts have been added to the mix. The ideas of space and time have also been explored and ideas of how they affect light and matter have been presented. This idea has been named “space–time continuum.” The dictionary defines this as: “noun. Also called **space-time continuum**. The **four-dimensional continuum**, having three spatial coordinates and one temporal coordinate, in which all physical quantities may be located. The physical reality that exists within this **four-dimensional continuum**.”²² The concept of four-dimensional space-time is described in this manner:

Four-dimensional space-time

Special relativity is less definite than classical physics in that both the distance D and time interval T between two events depend on the observer. Einstein noted, however, that a particular combination of D and T , the quantity $D^2 - c^2T^2$, has the same value for all observers. The term cT in this invariant quantity elevates time to a kind of mathematical parity with space. Noting this, the German mathematical physicist Hermann Minkowski showed that the universe resembles a four-dimensional structure with coordinates x , y , z , and ct representing length, width, height, and time, respectively. Hence, the universe can be described as a four-dimensional space-time continuum, a central concept in general relativity.²³

We have come back to this concept of general relativity which governs much of the world of physicist and is their attempt to understand how this universe operates. Many go back to the work of Albert Einstein as a basis for their work. Others have connected to later scientists who diverge from Einstein. However, Einstein’s work has transformed the thought process of most who have come after him. Einstein’s theory of relativity has been discussed in science classes for

²¹ <https://www.britannica.com/science/time-dilation>, accessed November 12, 2020.

²¹<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/space-time>,
continuum#:~:text=noun,within%20this%20four%2Ddimensional%20continuum, accessed November 14, 2020.
<https://www.britannica.com/science/relativity/Relativistic-mass>, accessed November 13, 2020.

²²

²³ *Ibid.*

almost a century. The Encyclopedia Britannica describes this theory under the heading of “Relativistic mass” under the subheading of “cosmic speed limit.”

Cosmic speed limit

To derive further results, Einstein combined his redefinitions of time and space with two powerful physical principles: conservation of energy and conservation of mass, which state that the total amount of each remains constant in a closed system. Einstein’s second postulate ensured that these laws remained valid for all observers in the new theory, and he used them to derive the relativistic meanings of mass and energy.

One result is that the mass of a body increases with its speed. An observer on a moving body, such as a spacecraft, measures its so-called rest mass m_0 , while a fixed observer

$$m = \frac{m_0}{\sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}},$$

measures its mass m as which is greater than m_0 . In fact, as the spacecraft’s speed approaches that of light, the mass m approaches infinity. However, as the object’s mass increases, so does the energy required to keep accelerating it; thus, it would take infinite energy to accelerate a material body to the speed of light. For this reason, no material object can reach the speed of light, which is the speed limit for the universe (Light itself can attain this speed because the rest mass of a photon, the quantum particle of light, is zero).

$E = mc^2$

Einstein’s treatment of mass showed that the increased relativistic mass comes from the energy of motion of the body—that is, its kinetic energy E —divided by c^2 . This is the origin of the famous equation $E = mc^2$, which expresses the fact that mass and energy are the same physical entity and can be changed into each other.²⁴

Some of the later explanations of where it all started have been put forth by Edwin Hubble and those expounding the idea of the “big bang” theory and the idea of “black holes.” Our ability to look deep into space and probe the outer known regions of the universe have opened up even more postulations of its meaning and where the universe came from to begin with. Some of the current views of the origins of the universe are based in more recent abilities to explore deep space with huge telescopes based in strategic locations on the surface of the earth and also outside our atmosphere where satellites circle our planet. The “Big Bang” concept is described thus:

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴<https://www.britannica.com/science/big-bang-model>.

The big-bang model is based on two assumptions. The first is that Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity correctly describes the gravitational interaction of all matter. The second assumption, called the cosmological principle, states that an observer's view of the universe depends neither on the direction in which he looks nor on his location. This principle applies only to the large-scale properties of the universe, but it does imply that the universe has no edge, so that the big-bang origin occurred not at a particular point in space but rather throughout space at the same time. These two assumptions make it possible to calculate the history of the cosmos after a certain epoch called the Planck time. Scientists have yet to determine what prevailed before Planck time.

According to the big-bang model, the universe expanded rapidly from a highly compressed primordial state, which resulted in a significant decrease in density and temperature. Soon afterward, the dominance of matter over antimatter (as observed today) may have been established by processes that also predict proton decay. During this stage many types of elementary particles may have been present. After a few seconds, the universe cooled enough to allow the formation of certain nuclei. The theory predicts that definite amounts of hydrogen, helium, and lithium were produced. Their abundances agree with what is observed today. About one million years later the universe was sufficiently cool for atoms to form. The radiation that also filled the universe was then free to travel through space. This remnant of the early universe is the cosmic microwave background radiation—the “three degree” (actually 2.728 K) background radiation—discovered in 1965 by American physicists Arno A. Penzias and Robert W. Wilson.

In addition to accounting for the presence of ordinary matter and radiation, the model predicts that the present universe should also be filled with neutrinos, fundamental particles with no mass or electric charge. The possibility exists that other relics from the early universe may eventually be discovered.²⁵

Most of these theories were developed in the early years of the last century and scientist have been using them to discover additional information to either prove them or disprove them. Notice how the description of the Big Bang started: “The big-bang model is based on two assumptions.” This article in Britannica.com rightly accounts for what science is doing: making assumptions. Scientists make assumptions all the time when they put forth ideas as facts. We all do that. They build on the ideas of those who have gone before them and accept those ideas as being truth. A person (scientist) will only see truth through the world view that he has come to accept as true. If that world view does not account for a creator God, then all his assumptions will by necessity to him discount the “God factor.”

Some of the latest ideas about the universe and its beginnings center with the concept of “Black Holes.” Generally speaking, black holes are described as possibly imploded stars that become so dense that their gravity pulls everything into them – nothing can escape, not even light. They are described thus:

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A black hole is a place in space where gravity pulls so much that even light can not get out. The gravity is so strong because matter has been squeezed into a tiny space. This can happen when a star is dying. Because no light can get out, people can't see black holes. They are invisible. Space telescopes with special tools can help find black holes. The special tools can see how stars that are very close to black holes act differently than other stars.²⁶

If one has some understanding of any of these concepts, they will recognize the enormity and complexity of the thought process that goes into these ideas. All these ideas come from great minds that are seeking to find understanding of this great creation that God has put into place. Many may discount even the idea of a God, however, not all scientists discount the “God factor.” Interestingly, the more scientist come to understand the nature of Nature and the physical world around us the more they come to the same conclusion as the Psalmist did thousands of years ago before there was any “scientist” to put forth their postulations when he wrote: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1) For eons people have been amazed at the wonder of the world around us and the universe as we come to find more and more about its vastness and complexity yet commonality. As we are able to explore not only the cosmos but the micro world of the cell, atom, DNA and other discoveries, we have to stand in awe and wonder.

Only time will tell what the next scientific “discovery” will bring forth to amaze our thinking and our curiosity. Let it suffice to say that we as humans are ever seeking innovative ideas and concepts to add to the “truth” we already think we know.

Science and scientism are two different things. Science basically means knowledge. Scientism is the belief that the interpretations of science is all we can know. It is “excessive belief in the power of scientific knowledge and techniques.”²⁷ Notice the use of the word “belief” in the definition. Scientism has invaded many areas of our modern lives with an intolerance for anything else. True science will ultimately fortify faith. However, faith in science or science as your faith leads to a false security in a system that is supported by itself instead of a power higher than one’s self.

Science deals with the physical realm, faith operates in the spirit realm. What the facts of science reveal is one thing, but what scientist conclude those facts mean is another. It is the interpretation of those facts that actually deal in the realm of faith – belief. The presuppositions held by those who interpret the facts many times will determine the outcome of what the claim is

²⁶ <https://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/k-4/stories/nasa-knows/what-is-a-black-hole-k4.html>, accessed November 24, 2020. ²⁷https://www.google.com/search?q=scientism+definition&rlz=1C1BOHB_enUS683US683&oq=scientism&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0j46j0l4j46.16607j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8, accessed November 29, 2020.

to the meaning of the facts. In reality, science is the interpretation of the observable world. One's worldview – how the sum total of all we know is perceived – will influence the outcome of the interpretation scientist give to the facts they observe. For instance, it takes much more faith to believe in Darwin's theory of evolution than it does to believe in the account described in Genesis. True science will tell one that the facts just do not support evolution as Darwin and the modern followers of Darwinism describe it. In an article written by Dr. Willem J. Ouweneel, Research Associate in Developmental Genetics, Utrecht, Netherlands, with the Faculty of Mathematics, and Natural Sciences, points out in his article "The Scientific Character of the Evolution Doctrine," "It is becoming increasingly apparent that evolutionism is not even a good scientific theory."²⁸ Ouweneel further stated:

...evolutionary theory is not properly designated a *scientific* postulate because this must: (a) be in accordance with the principal laws of mathematics and natural science; (b) not be more complicated than necessary for the explanation of observed phenomena; (c) give rise to conclusions which can be controlled by further experimental observations and testing; (d) conform to the general data of science; (e) alternate hypothesis must be shown to be wrong or less acceptable, and (f) finally, the reliability of a scientific conception is inversely proportional to the number of unproven postulates on which it is founded. Evolution fails all three criteria for categorization as a scientific postulate.²⁹

Yet, many scientist strongly hold to that view, because they choose to ignore the facts and "believe" evolution is true. Thus, shared worldviews connect groups of people more than other forms of classification. Scientist with a biblical worldview will demonstrate facts that support the account of Genesis 1. Those with a secular worldview will lean upon a non-religious explanation of the facts. One's faith (or lack of religious leanings) ultimately will determine the meaning of science.

The "Result Of" View

Once the basic religious views of Genesis 1 are understood and the scientific theories presented, one can have a better grasp of the complexities that surround the meaning of Genesis 1. But is this really the purpose God revealed to Moses the creation account? My personal understanding is that God wants His Word to be a revelation of who He is, what He wants for our lives, and what His purpose is for us. God demonstrates His nature, character, and will for His creation. The pages unveil how God loves us, forgives us when we disobey Him, and has made a way for us to have fellowship with Him both now and for eternity. Also, the text describes what does and can happen to us when we disobey Him. We see in the pages of the Bible His plan for redemption.

²⁸ Willem J. Ouweneel, "The Scientific Character of the Evolution Doctrine," *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, September 1971, 109.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

When we have a basic understanding of the purpose of the Word of God it helps us to know how to approach its pages. The first few chapters of Genesis reveal to us an understanding of how God relates to His creation, especially humanity. The ideal life for us was described as a garden in Eden. In Eden God himself would walk in close and fellowship with Adam – man. (Genesis chapter 3). This theme is echoed again in the book of Revelation in the New Jerusalem where Jesus will rule and reign over His creation. John writes: “And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.... there shall be no more death...for the former things have passed away.’ Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’” (Revelations 21: 3-5 NKJV) Was it God’s plan all along to have a place where He could come to fellowship with humanity – an Eden existence? It seems that this is the case – except for one thing – disobedience. This action of disobedience has become known as “original sin” or the first time God’s creation exercised their free will to disobey what He had commanded. Sin separated humanity from fellowship with God and destroyed the ideal that God had created for humanity. Yet in God’s omniscience, He had already made a provision for humanity to return to fellowship: God would, in time, offer Himself in physical form as the man Jesus as a substitution for the sin of disobedience. “Through one man’s obedience...” (See Rom 5:19) The Bible reveals to humanity God’s plan of redemption.

When we understand the purpose of the Bible, this knowledge enables us to recognize its special purpose. God’s purposes may or may not correlate with the purposes of other disciplines or writings. Though most Pentecostals would agree with the inerrancy of the Scripture, they do not all agree on the details of the meaning of Genesis 1. However, if we can agree that it is not the purpose of the Bible to be a detailed account of everything “scientific” then we can give room to see various interpretations to the meaning of the words penned thousands of years ago. Therefore, I am offering a view that I have not come across in any other writings so far. If some other individual has presented the view I am about to present, I am not aware of it. So, let me begin at the beginning.

In this section, we will investigate the result of God’s activity that was designated for that day. In this view or way of looking at the creation account the importance of whether a day is literally 24 hours or a long period is not significant. How long it took God to accomplish what He did on each day, or how many hours make up a day is not the issue. The timing is not necessarily the point of what was recorded in the creation account. Let us look at what was accomplished by God during these segments called “days.”

The Scriptures provided in this article were translated by Richard Miller, Ph.D. with the intent to be as literal as possible to show the Hebrew context and syntax. The red highlighted text allows the reader to see the commentary references to the passage.

Day 1: Genesis 1:1-5

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: Gen. 1:1

In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.

וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹם וְרֵבָבוֹ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: Gen. 1:2

And the Earth was formless and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹרֶךְ וַיְהִי־אֹרֶךְ: Gen. 1:3

And God said, "Let there be light and there was light.

וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹרֶךְ כִּי־טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹרֶךְ וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ: Gen 1:4

God saw the light that it was good, and God separated between the light and between the darkness.

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֹרֶךְ יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ לַיְלָה וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד: Gen 1:5

And God called to the light day and to the darkness he called night and it was evening and it was morning, day one.

Let's look at everything that took place in this first segment that God called "day." First, an all-inclusive verse (Gen. 1:1) that states the who, the what, and the when: God created it all – everything that we call earth, and everything we call the heavens has its source in God. Personally, I see this opening statement of Genesis as a cap stone verse – a way for Moses to describe from where it all came and who made it. Notice the word "beginning, (בְּרֵאשִׁית)" of what was this the beginning? Since God Himself is eternal and has no beginning or ending, we know Moses was not talking about God but about the creation. But how does the eternal God design and create the non-eternal? What has to happen for the natural to come from the supernatural? God has to design a mechanism for the natural to operate within. A major difference between eternal and non-eternal is time.

Let's explore this idea further. The next description is the state of existence of this non-eternal matter. First, the earth was shapeless, liquid, molten, and without form. This description agrees somewhat with what some scientists say about the first state of matter. They call it the "primordial soup": "the seas and atmosphere as they existed on earth before the existence of life, consisting primarily of an oxygen-free gaseous mixture containing chiefly water, hydrogen, methane, ammonia, and carbon dioxide."³⁰ The Bible's purpose does not try to describe what type of elements this matter consisted, since it would be thousands of years before any human would begin to understand what was being described. However, the Bible's purpose is to describe from where it came: God's creation.

The Hebrew phrase (וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְהוֹם וְרֵבָבוֹ) – The Earth was formless and empty.) provides the basis for a branch of scholarship that attempts to reconcile scientific statements about the age and the original state of Earth's existence. What has been translated as "the Earth was without

³⁰ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/primordial-soup>, accessed November 27, 2020.

form and void” in Hebrew literally can be translated as “the Earth, she became chaos.” Once again it is not my purpose to discuss the various schools of creation that have presented their arguments over the years, but rather to look at the account in a fresh way. I am just noting the basis for one of the views about Genesis which is generally known as the “Re-creation View.”

If this was a re-creation from a previous state of existence, I cannot say. What I can say is that Genesis describes this initial creation in a state of shapelessness and emptiness. But now we are introduced to another part of the Godhead – the Spirit moved upon the surface (face) of this shapeless liquid mass (waters). God’s direct action initiated His creation. He did not leave His creation to chance or accident. The Spirit of the Lord moved upon this creation that brought forth order from chaos.

Next God spoke, “Let there be light.” And then God divided this light from the darkness and given a name: Day. God pronounced a qualitative description, “the light was good. Also, the term “first” is added to “day.” What did the addition of light add to this creation? It brought **time** into existence. Einstein’s basic equations such as $E=MC^2$ incorporate the speed of light. The relationship between energy, matter and light have been the basis for scientific discussions for centuries. Einstein postulated, if one could travel at the speed of light, time would stand still. Interestingly, the Bible describes God as “light”, (1 John 1:5b) the “light of the world,” (John 18:12) the “bright and morning star,” (Revelations 22:16b) the “day star.” (II Peter 1:19 KJV) The description of “no shadow of turning” infers that time stands still. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” (James 1:17 NKJV) Regardless, the **end result of this first day is that God created time**. When He spoke light into existence, time began. If this is not the case, when did time start? I propose that it started “in the beginning.” With a way to record events in time God now moves to the next order of business.

Day 2: Genesis 1: 6-8

Gen. 1:6 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי רָקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהִי מַבְדִּיל בֵּין מַיִם לְמַיִם:

Then God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters and let it separate between the waters from waters.

Gen. 1:7 וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָרָקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לְרָקִיעַ וַיְהִי־כֵן:

And God made the expanse and he caused to separate between the waters that from below the expanse and between the waters that from above the expanse and it was so.

Gen. 1:8 וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְרָקִיעַ שָׁמַיִם וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם שֵׁנִי:

And God called the expanse Heaven. And it was evening, and it was morning, the second day.

After God created matter and light, He now arranged this shapeless mass that was empty into some type of order. He began separating this mass into the heavens above and area below the heavens. This process infers that **God was now designing space** – a place to put the various

things he will create. We do not get a specific indication that the heaven was shapeless and void only the part of creation He called Earth. Now we see an indication of more than one heaven is designed: heavens above, and heavens below. The apostle Paul mentions a third heaven where God rules. (II Corinthians 12:2) Today we call one of these heavens “space” or “outer space.” The firmament below is called our atmosphere. The term “fourth dimension” or “fifth dimension” has been coined to also talk about a space that is not physical. It is the relationship that time plays on space. Much has been written by the scientific world to try to explain this relationship.

Philosophers have debated the nature of time long before Einstein and modern physics. But in the 106 years since Einstein, the prevailing view in physics has been that time serves as the fourth dimension of space, an arena represented mathematically as 4D Minkowski spacetime. However, some scientists, including Amrit Sorli and Davide Fisaletti, founders of the Space Life Institute in Slovenia, argue that time exists completely independent from space. In a new study, Sorli and Fisaletti have shown that two phenomena of special relativity - time dilation and length contraction - can be better described within the framework of a 3D space with time as the quantity used to measure change (i.e., photon motion) in this space.³¹

Whereas the fourth dimension is a scientific term to describe the relationship between space and time as it has been suggested for years as a time/space continuum, another concept has questioned this idea. It is the fifth dimension.

The fifth dimension is a micro-dimension which is accepted in physics and mathematics. It's here to have a nice and seamless tie between gravity and electromagnetism, or the main fundamental forces, which seem unrelated in the regular four-dimensional spacetime.

As of now, we can't see the fifth dimension, but rather, it interacts on a higher plane than we do. It's because of this that we can't really study nor fully prove its existence.³²

“...it interacts on a higher plane than we do...” Science recognizes that there are forces which they have not been able to “test” because they are on a higher plane than we are. Faith understands that force to be God and the realm in which God exists. It is God who created the means for time and space to exist. Scripture indicates that it is through him and by him all things exist, (See Colossians 1:16-20) not just in the physical realm, but also in the realm of authority – thrones, dominions, principalities, powers.

³¹ [https://phys.org/news/2012-04-physicists-abolish-fourth-dimension-space.html#:~:text=\(Phys.org\)%20%2D%2D%20Philosophers,mathematically%20as%204D%20Minkowski%20spacetime](https://phys.org/news/2012-04-physicists-abolish-fourth-dimension-space.html#:~:text=(Phys.org)%20%2D%2D%20Philosophers,mathematically%20as%204D%20Minkowski%20spacetime), accessed November 26, 2020.

³² <https://medium.com/swlh/what-is-the-fifth-dimension-and-where-did-it-come-from-1296487fafcf#:~:text=The%20fifth%20dimension%20is%20a,the%20regular%20four%2Ddimensional%20spacetime>.

So thus far in two segments of time – day one and day two – God has set in order time and space.

Day 3: Genesis 1:9-13

Gen. 1:9 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקְוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־מָקוֹם אֶחָד וַתִּרְאֶה הַיַּבְשָׁה וַיְהִי־כֵן:
And God said, “Let the waters be collected from beneath the heavens into one place, and let the dry ground be seen; and it was so.

Gen. 1:10 וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לַיַּבְשָׁה אֶרֶץ וְלַמְקוֹה הַמַּיִם קָרָא יַמִּים וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב:
And God called the dry ground earth, and the collected waters he called the seas. And God saw that it was good.

Gen 1:11 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תִּדְשָׂא הָאָרֶץ דְּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מְזֵרִיעַ זֶרַע עֵץ פֶּרִי עֹשֶׂה פְּרִי לְמִינֹו אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוֹ־בּוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי־כֵן:
And God Said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation: Herb bearing seed, the fruit tree making fruit according to its kind, whose seed is itself upon the Earth and it was so.

Gen 1:12 וַתּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ דְּשָׂא עֵשֶׂב מְזֵרִיעַ זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה־פְּרִי אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוֹ־בּוֹ לְמִינֵהוּ וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב:
And the Earth brought forth vegetation: herb producing seed according to its kind, tree producing fruit whose seed was itself according to its kind. And God saw that is was good.

Gen 1:13 וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי:
And it was evening, and it was morning the third day.

Now that a system and structure have been established, God takes the next step of creation: division of matter into dry and liquid – land and water. This act enabled life to exist on Earth. Once again, God created space for his creative plans that ultimately lead to the creation of humanity. Notice how God formed various plants out of the ingredients that are in the land. “... the Earth brought forth...” Just as man was made from the dust of the ground, so the plants and animals are being formed from the ingredients (elements) that are contained in the land and the water. The interesting part of this day is how vegetation reproduces itself. God set into order a way for **procreation of the species**. The seed is designed to be in plants – grasses, herbs, fruit, trees, etc. So the result of this third aspect of creation is establishing a way for that creation to propagate.

Day 4: Genesis 1: 14-19

Gen 1:14 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֹרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְתִבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה וְהָיוּ לְאֹתֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וּשְׁנָיִם:
And God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years: and it was so.”

And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to divide between the day and between the night; and let them be for a sign, and for (sacred) appointed times, and for days and years.

וְהָיוּ לְמֹאזְרוֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי-כֵן: Gen 1:15

And let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to shine upon the Earth and it was so.

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-שְׁנֵי הַגְּדָלִים לְמִמְשַׁלַּת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת-הַמְּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמִמְשַׁלַּת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים: Gen 1:16

And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the smaller light to rule the night and (he made) the stars

וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ: Gen 1:17

And God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to shine upon the Earth.

וּלְמִשְׁלַל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וּלְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב: Gen 1:18

And to rule in the day and in the night between the light and between the darkness; and God saw that it was good.

וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם רְבִיעִי: Gen 1:19

And it was evening, and it was morning the fourth day.

Now an interesting problem arises for those who insist on a chronological understanding of “day” as used in Genesis 1. Up to this time it is somewhat easier to see a sequence of order in the creation account, but with day 4, a problem arises: Which came first? If God created the sun, moon, and stars on day 4, then what was the source of light on day 1? If plants precede the sun, then how did they reproduce without light? This problem has been addressed by those who promote the “Framework View” of creation:

The framework view says that the structure of days in Genesis 1 is a literary framework, and does not imply any particular chronology. This view usually appeals to the fact that there is a literary structure, according to which the first three days and the last three run parallel to each other, in an overall bipartite literary structure. During the first three days, God creates the major structured “spaces” or regions of the world: the heaven, the sea, and the dry land. During the last three days, God fills these regions with creatures: heavenly lights; sea creatures and birds, and land animals and man.³³

³³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/evangelical-interpretations-genesis-1-2/>, accessed November 28, 2020.

For me, this issue does not create a problem. God's primary creative actions on day four provides for us a means to **calculate time** not light for photosynthesis. If the purpose of day four is to describe how God created a means for time to be calculated, then which day this happened is irrelevant. The emphasis should not be on what God created on day four but why He created them – calculation of time: “for signs, and for sacred appointments, and for days, and years.” The explanation also includes the reason for creating these structures: to light on the earth. When we look at Genesis 1 from the “Result Of” viewpoint, many of the problems that occur from traditional explanations fade away and become insignificant.

Day 5: Genesis 1:20-23

Gen 1:20 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם שְׂרָץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה וְעוֹף יְעוֹפֵף עַל-הָאָרֶץ עַל-פְּנֵי רְקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם:
And God said, “Let the waters swarm with living creatures and let the birds fly above the Earth and across the expanse of the heavens.”

Gen 1:21 וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַתַּנִּינִים הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֶת כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה לְמִינֵהֶם וְאֶת כָּל-עוֹף כָּנָף לְמִינֵהוּ וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב:
And God created the great sea monsters, and every living creature that moves that swarms the waters according to its species and all the winged birds according to its species. And God saw that it was good.

Gen 1:22 וַיְבָרֵךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הַמַּיִם בַּיַּמִּים וְהָעוֹף יִרְבַּ בָּאָרֶץ:
And God Blessed them saying, “Be fruitful and multiple and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the Earth.”

Gen 1:23 וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם חַמִּישִׁי:
And it was evening, and it was morning the fifth day.

Life as we have become to know it is now almost complete. Fish and water mammals in the sea and birds in the air are brought forth. Interestingly it is water that brings forth fish and birds not the dust of the earth. How God did this we are not told, primarily because that is not the purpose of this account of creation in Genesis 1. That God is the instigator of life from the waters is what is important. What we are told is that God blessed His creation and established a principle that is the fifth “result of” we encounter: the **principle of multiplication** (Not mathematics, but reproduction of life). We are told earlier that God's creation is to be reproduced “after his kind.” Now we are instructed that they are to be fruitful and multiply. Thus, the result of what God did on day five was to start the principle of multiplication for what He had created.

Day 6: Genesis 24-31

Gen 1:24 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ בְּהֵמָה וְרֶמֶשׂ וְחַיֵּי-הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וַיְהִי-כֵן:
And God said, “Let the earth produce living creatures according to its species: cattle, and creeping things, and animals of the earth according to its species.” And it was so.

Gen 1:25 וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-חַיֵּי הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת-הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ וְאֶת כָּל-רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינָהּ וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב:

And God made the living animals of the Earth according to its species: cattle according to its species, and all the creeping things of the ground according to its species. And God saw that it was good.

Gen 1:26 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדֹמוֹתֵנוּ וַיְרַדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-רֶמֶשׂ הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

And God said, “Let us make man (Adam) in our image according to our likeness; let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens and over the cattle and over all the Earth and all creeping things that creep upon the Earth.

Gen 1:27 וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:
And God created the man in his image, in the image God created him; male and female He created them.

Gen 1:28 וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹּשׁוּ וַיְרַדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-חַיַּי הָרֶמֶשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

And God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiple and fill the Earth and subdue it and rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over all the living that creeps upon the Earth.

Gen 1:29 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב וְזֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פְּרִיעֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ:

And God said, “Behold! I gave to you all herb producing seed, that upon the face of all the Earth and all the trees that with it producing seed. For you it will be for food.

Gen 1:30 וְלִכְלַחַיִּת הָאָרֶץ וְלִכְלַעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלִכְלֹ רֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת-כָּל-יֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ וַיְהִי-כֵן:

And for all living animal of the Earth, for all birds of the heavens, and for all creeping things on the earth that it has life, all green herbs for food. And it was so.

Gen 1:31 וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה-טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי:
And God saw all that he made and behold it was exceeding good. And it was evening, and it was morning the sixth day.

The culmination of creation takes place on the sixth day. Now the earth is to bring forth all the land animals after their kind. The basic classifications were divided into “cattle, and [the]

creeping thing, and beast of the earth. Once again it is not the purpose of Genesis to give a scientific detailed listing of the types of animals that God created, but rather a general description: animals that could be domesticated, animals that crawled such as the insect world, and beast that would roam wild. Nor was it the purpose of Genesis to describe how God made animal life from the elements in the ground. Rather, it points us to God's involvement in forming all living creatures, animals that would be domesticated, and the wild beast.

Now we come to the very last, but for sure not least, of God's creation: humans. Notice that human beings were not grouped with the rest of creation. The biblical narrative separated the description of humanity's creation from all other living creatures. Only humanity was created in the likeness of God. More details in chapter two reveal the nature of what being in the likeness of God means. A full discussion of the meaning of this phrase is a subject for another time. Let it suffice to say that human beings were set apart as being special in the creation account. God entrusted his creation to humanity's rule or dominion. Thus, on the sixth day God created the pinnacle of His creation. No other part of creation has direct connection to God's likeness except humanity. This image and likeness enable humanity to provide stewardship over God's creation. The "result of" day six established the **principle of stewardship**. God placed humanity as stewards of all that He created.

Another concept was presented on the sixth day: the means to sustain life. God's original design provided nourishment for land creatures through vegetation, fruits, and seeds of the plants. Humans also could be sustained by eating vegetables, fruits, and nuts. After the Garden of Eden expulsion, humanity added animal flesh to their diet.

The "Result Of" view of the first chapter of Genesis can be summarized in this listing:

Day 1: God created "Time" with the introduction of light

Day 2: God created "Space" with the divisions of the heavens and waters.

Day 3: God established the means for procreation.

Day 4: God provided the means to calculate time: sacred appointments, years, days.

Day 5: God set forth the principle of multiplication.

Day 6: God assigned humanity as stewards of His creation.

It is not my desire to discount other views of the first chapter of Genesis, but to bring a fresh approach to this most interesting, yet puzzling account of the beginnings. Those who accept the Genesis 1 creation account may vary on the how, when, why, etc., but all would agree that GOD was the architect of the beginning. "In the beginning GOD..."

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN FORGIVENESS

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If a born again, Spirit-filled Christian refuses to forgive a person and dies in an unforgiving state, will that person lose their eternal salvation?

The second essay in this series was “Forgiveness in the Teachings of Jesus.” The essay focused on the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:12,14, Luke 11:2-4, the Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18, Sirach 28:1-4, and the Beatitudes of mercy for mercy in Matthew 5:7. In the Lord's prayer, Jesus said, “If you forgive others, your heavenly Father will forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, you will not be forgiven by your heavenly Father” (Matthew 6:14).

Scholars give several possibilities to this issue. The first is if one does not forgive others who sin against him or her, the he or she will not be forgiven by God, resulting in loss of his or her salvation. In the second essay, “Forgiveness in the Teachings of Jesus,” the believer who has been born again by faith will not lose his or her eternal salvation if they refuse to forgive a person.

Forgiveness is a gift from God provided by Christ's substitutionary death on Calvary's Cross. One would not have to forgive others first to receive this gift, which would be unconditional forgiveness. Some scholars would say this unconditional aspect would be the meaning of forgiveness in the Lord's prayer.

The second possibility would be that this failure to forgive is not an eternal sin causing one to lose their salvation. Failure to forgive would not result in eschatological loss of salvation but the possible loss of the close relationship with God, the anointing, and possibly their reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:14,15).¹

Scholars maintain in the Lord's prayer, when Jesus said, “If you forgive, I will forgive,” is not hyperbole or an exaggerated statement, but the truth. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant is a parable. However, this parable backed up Jesus' words on forgiveness by the seriousness of the result; the debtor would be handed over to the torturers forever.

There are many different interpretations of what Jesus said. Will one lose their eternal salvation if he/she does not forgive, or only lose their rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ? In light of the seriousness of not forgiving a person, a Christian has no option but to forgive everyone who has wronged them.

It is one thing to forgive a person for a small offense, but what about an enormous offense? The Covid-19 Pandemic of 2020 has destroyed many people world-wide. Many are angry at God for letting such a terrible plague lose on humankind. Covid-19 is just one of the many problems facing our world and specifically the United States. Rioting, shooting innocent adults,

¹ R.T. Kendall. *Total Forgiveness* (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2007), 93.

children, and police officers, have increased the anger in America. How does a family forgive a person who has killed an innocent adult, child or police officer?

Several years ago, a man entered Nickle Mines Amish School, killing five girls.² The man was a sick individual. How could the families forgive such a horrendous crime? The Amish believe that forgiveness is not an option but a commandment. The people not only forgave the killer, but they invited his wife to the funeral of the girls.

There are times when the victim's families are in attendance at executing a murderer and cheer when the guilty one dies? There are other instances when the family members of the deceased victim forgive the murderer. These family members are allowed to address the killer and forgive him or her. How could a family do that?

One of the greatest sins against humanity is kidnapping children, teens, and adults, drugging them, and selling them into sex slavery, and sometimes death. A former student of this author was raped at a young age. God told her she must forgive! Later her only son was kidnapped outside a ministry for children being only ten years old. The last words she heard from her son was, "Mama, Mama, save me!" She never heard her child's voice again. Later a video was sent to her with her son tied to a chair, having been sodomized. His mother said, "I was angry. I was destroyed, shattered, despondent. I was screaming and crying out to the Lord." The Lord said, "You are to pray and forgive." The mother said, "I cannot forgive."³

How could anyone forgive such crimes? The disciples did not understand how they would carry out the world-wide mission that Jesus assigned them, in which forgiveness would be the central ministry. Where would the power to carry out such a task come?

Therefore, this essay will investigate the role of the Holy Spirit in forgiveness.

At creation, God breathed into man the breath of life, creating man in his image (Gen 1:26; 2:7). This image was tarnished by humankind's sin (Gen 3). God had a plan; his only Son would be born of a virgin and being sinless, would be crucified for the sin of the whole world. Whoever would trust in the Son, Jesus Christ, would never die, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

The disciples did not understand why Jesus had to be sacrificed and were weak, undisciplined, and unbelieving. The accounts of the weakness of the disciples are recorded in (Matthew 28:17), in which they doubted (Mark 16:14), they had a lack of faith (Luke 24:11,2) and instead of following Jesus, went back to what they had known, fishing (John 21)! Jesus had told the disciples that he had to go away so that the helper or comforter, the Holy Spirit, would come (John 16:7).

The disciples could not comprehend what he meant! However, they knew that they must forgive, or they would not be forgiven. This teaching was prophetic as they had seen John the Baptist martyred, would also see their Lord crucified and Stephen, one of their deacons, stoned to death, as well as many persecutions and even their deaths in the future. Forgiveness was going to be at the center of their ministry. Jesus said that forgiveness was not an option but a command. Nevertheless, how could one forgive such atrocities?

² Jamie Wilson, *The People Who Forgave a Killer: Amish Culture Says, Forgive or You'll Not be Forgiven*, *Science & Spirit*, Vol. 19, Issue 1 (Heldref Publications, Washington, D.C., 2008), 1.

³ Student of Gary Pickens. Name withheld to protect her identity.

An example of forgiveness by the power of the Holy Spirit would be Stephen, a deacon. The account of Stephen's death is a model of forgiveness: “(55) But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. (60) Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord do not hold this sin against them!’ And having said this, he fell asleep (died)” (Acts 7:55, 60 NASB).

These were close to the same words his Lord had uttered from the cross (Lk 23:34). Jesus had become Stephen’s role model of forgiveness through the full power of the Holy Spirit.

After his resurrection, Jesus met with his disciples:

(19) When therefore it was evening, on the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, said to them, Peace be with you. (20) And when he had said this, he showed them, both His hands and His side. The disciples therefore rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus, therefore, said to them again, 'Peace be with you'; as the Father has sent Me, I also sent you. (22) And when he had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “receive the Holy Spirit.’ (23) If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained (John 20:19-23 NASB).

This essay will investigate three divisions in the text of John 20:19-23 as it relates to forgiving (1) The Reassurance, (2) the Commission, and (3) the Full Holy Spirit Power.

The Reassurance (John 20:19-21)

The disciples were together and were afraid that the Jews would come after them, so they were locked away in hiding. Jesus appeared to them and said, “Peace be with You.” They must have been overwhelmed! Then Jesus knowing they would need proof he was their Messiah, showed them his nail-pierced hands and his speared side. The disciples were full of joy as they knew he was their Lord, risen from the dead. The second time, probably knowing they were still afraid, he said again, “Peace be with you.” (John 20:19-21 NASB).

The Commission (John 20:21; Matt 28:18,19)

Then Jesus told them not to be afraid but concentrate on their mission. He gave them their marching orders: “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20:21). He also stated on the mountain ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:18b-19).’ ” They were to carry out their mission through the power of the Holy Spirit as he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” One article reads, “On the first day of creation, out of chaos came creation. Jesus breathed on them, and "out of their chaos of fear, doubt and confusion came a new creation. The once fearful disciples became joyful and courageous proclaimers of salvation in Jesus name.⁴”

⁴ Questia, a part of Gale, Cengage Learning. www.questia.com. “Appearance to the Disciples,” Article Excerpt, John 20:19-23. Newspaper title: *Manila Bulletin*. Publication Date: May 15, 2005.

“The various records of Jesus' missionary mandate have different words and emphasis because they were spoken on different occasions, the disciple's mission is an extension of Jesus' mission.”⁵ The main focus of their mission was to be forgiveness. One must forgive to be forgiven (Matt 6:12-14). The disciple's mission was to proclaim the good news of eternal life, help people to repent of their sins, and after receiving forgiveness from God, forgive everyone who had sinned against them.

The Full Holy Spirit Power (John 20:22)

The central focus of this essay is to discover the role of the Holy Spirit in forgiveness. Forgiveness of sins can be more comfortable when the sin is smaller, but it is very difficult, if not impossible when it comes to the murder of a relative, loved one or a friend. As the mother said earlier of the devastating capture of her son, “God, I cannot forgive.” How does one forgive such an act against their child?

Traditionally, scholars understand that the Holy Spirit came to reside in believers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). What did Jesus mean when he said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22,23)? Were their two enduements of power, one in John 20 and one in Acts 2?

Jesus’ “breathed on them” – as in Genesis 2:7, Jesus breathes new life into the disciples, and forgiveness is linked to the Gift of the Spirit John 20:23.⁶

Scholars differ in their interpretations of this passage. Robert Lyon states, “G.E. Ladd has asserted that there was only one gift, the one recounted in Acts 2, and that John 20 is ‘acted parable promissory and anticipatory to the actual coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.’”⁷ D. A. Carson explains, “For Calvin (2.205), the disciples are here sprinkled with the grace of the Spirit, but not saturated with his full enduement of power until Acts 2.”⁸

Some link the Holy Spirit's bestowal into two occasions, one in John 20 and the other at Pentecost at Acts 2. The John 20 bestowal of the Spirit did not change the disciples as they were behind locked doors, afraid of the Jews. Most scholars agree that the Spirit's bestowal in John 20 was symbolic of the Holy Spirit enduement of power that was yet to come at Pentecost.⁹ Reception of the Spirit is linked to forgiveness, retention of sins through preaching the Gospel where a person would repent. The forgiveness the disciples were to carry out was a continuation of Christ's ministry.

“Receive the Holy Spirit” was the Spirit that Jewish people associated with spiritual cleansing and often prophetic empowerment. Jesus had promised the Spirit would continue his presence among them (Jn 14:26; 16:13-15). The Spirit was Jesus' agent as

⁵ Ansley Orfila, *Matthew – Acts* Vol 1. Charisma Commentary on the New Testament, (2018), Matt 6:12-14.

⁶ James D.G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson eds. *John 20:19-31* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2003).

⁷ Robert W. Lyon, “John 20:22, Once More.” *The Asbury Theological Journal* Vol. 43., no. 1 (1988): 75.

⁸ D.A. Carson, *Jesus Appears to His Disciples (20:19-23)* Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 649.

⁹ *Ibid*, 652.

Jesus was the Father's agent (16:14). How can we dare to attempt to fulfill God's mission? We must trust him and the power with which he has equipped us.¹⁰

Petrus Hendrik Dercksen states, “This, by implication, stresses the point that Jesus fulfilled his earthly ministry under the full guidance of the Holy Spirit...Jesus imparts to the disciples the Holy Spirit to equip them for ministry.”¹¹

Conclusion

The story of PTL, a famous ministry in Fort Mill, South Carolina, has been well chronicled. Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, the pastoral leaders, were disgraced. Jim and Tammy divorced, with Jim going to prison. In an interview with Larry King, Jim and Tammy said they had forgiven each other. Jim said, “Only God can help people truly forgive and go on.”¹² Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker struggled in their organizational ethics, but they believed in the Holy Spirit's full power to forgive.

Roger Vermalen Karban explains, “Nothing is more counter to that old creation than forgiveness.”¹³ When one becomes a new creation by trusting in Jesus' finished work on Calvary, the forgiveness of all sins is not an option but a commandment (Matthew 6:12,14; John 20:23).

Scripture does not specify precisely how to forgive...we are not left to our own devices. We have resources by virtue of common grace and special grace: first, we are created in the image of God, second, we have been forgiven by God...we have divine and human resources...the Comforter, the Holy Spirit (2 Cor.1:3, Christ in us the hope of Glory (Colossians 1:27b, we have the mind of Christ (Romans 12:2). We also have the supportive community (the Church) (2 Corinthians 1:3,4).¹⁴

The conclusion of many scholars indicates that when Jesus said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” in John 20:22, he was prophesying of the full power of the Holy Spirit that would enter into the disciples and all Christians on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).¹⁵ The John 20 enduement was symbolic and not the full power, as the disciples were still afraid and were not wholly active in ministry until after Pentecost.

The mother of the son, who was kidnapped, was baptized in the Holy Spirit, and from her past traumas, knew God's power to heal all wounds. She prayed night and day for her son and spoke to the Lord:

¹⁰ Craig Keener, “As the Father sent me, I Send you – John 20:21,” *Bible Background Research and Commentary*, (September 21, 2013).

¹¹ Petrus Hendrik Dercksen, *Understanding John 20:21-23 from the Perspective of the Johannine Literature*. Master's Thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, November 2002., 44.

¹² R.T. Kendall, *Total Forgiveness*, 146

¹³ Roger Vermalen Karban, “Power to Forgive,” *National Catholic Reporter*, vol 48 Issue 12 March 30, 2012: 29.

¹⁴ Everett L. Worthington Jr. and Constance B. Sharp, Andrea Learner, Jeffery R.. Sharp “Interpersonal Forgiveness as an Example of Loving One's Enemies,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* (Spring 2006): 19-20.

¹⁵ D.A. Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 652.

“Forgive!!!!, Forgive!!!, How many times Lord must I forgive? After fighting in my flesh and denying it for 120 days, the Holy Spirit dwelling and reigning over me. That night I said, Lord I cannot go on! Let me go. I cannot breathe anymore. The Holy Spirit said in union with our Lord God, let me once again breathe for you. Give me back my life. I saw angels picking me up off the floor like I was a puppet, and they were puppeteers. Right then, God began to bring me back to Jonah that we are all his children. That morning at three o'clock am, I told our Lord that I forgive all who took my precious child. You see, without the Holy Spirit, this would never be possible. Please let me encourage you. Forgiveness is a process. Trust our Lord God. Surrender your lives to the Holy Spirit...Forgive yourself, forgive others, Love like Jesus.¹⁶

This tragedy happened over eight years ago and this student misses her son every day, as one can only imagine.

Over the past forty years, this author has observed that there is a difference between people who attend church and know about Jesus and those who have a deep personal relationship with him. Salvation is the first step after confessing one's sins and trusting in Jesus alone for eternal life. When the disciples met with Jesus, they knew he was the one who had come to sacrifice himself for their sins and the sins of the whole world. Jesus then told them to wait on the “Promise of the Father” and to wait for the power to fall upon them on the Day of Pentecost (Luke 24:49; Acts 2).

The disciples were weak, undisciplined, and fearful before Pentecost. After Pentecost (Acts 2), they were mighty in word and deed; healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, and raising the dead.

True forgiveness can only come about by the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. From the cross, Jesus said, “Father Forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). This was an example to Stephen; because as he was being stoned to death, and being full of the Holy Spirit, he said, “Lord do not hold this sin against them” (Acts 7:55-60). Jesus could forgive anyone because he had the full measure of the Holy Spirit. Stephen was baptized with the full power of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit’s power gave Stephen the ability to forgive his enemies as they stoned him to death.

The disciples would all be martyred except for the Apostle John, who lived out his life on the Isle of Patmos (Rev 1:9). The other disciples would all face the command to forgive those who would kill them (Matt 6:12,14).

The mission of Jesus’ disciples, that is, of us is not judgment of our fellow sinners or restoring order to society or church by vengeance and retaliation. It is to make effective in the world Jesus’ work of reconciliation through the forgiveness of sins so that the community of the forgiven can gather around the table of the lamb who has taken away

¹⁶ Student of Gary Pickens. Name withheld to protect her identity.

the sin of the world. For this challenging mission we have the gift of Jesus' Spirit;
"Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven."¹⁷

In order to forgive one must "be like God."¹⁸ As he has forgiven us, we are to forgive others of every sin. To forgive a small sin is hard, but to forgive someone of child kidnapping, sodomy, and murder seem impossible. But when one is totally committed to a relationship with Jesus Christ and is baptized with the Holy Spirit, forgiveness is possible for any sin.

¹⁷ Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM, "Whose Sins You Shall Forgive... The Holy Spirit and the Forgiveness of Sin's in the Fourth Gospel," *The Spirit in the New Millennium. The Duquesne University 5th Annual Holy Spirit Lecture and Colloquium*, June 12-13, 2009. 34.

¹⁸ John Gavin SJ, "Becoming an Exemplar for God: Three Early Interpretations of Forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought & Culture*. *Logos* 16:3, Summer 2013: 142