The Journal of Dispensational Theology is published three times per year by the Society of Dispensational Theology in cooperation with Tyndale Theological Seminary as a vehicle for conservative evangelical scholarship from a normative dispensational perspective.

Manuscripts and communications can be emailed to editor@tyndale.edu. Contributors are encouraged to conform their MSS to Chicago Manual of Style. All Greek and Hebrew font must be transliterated.

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Subscription rates:
U.S. Non-Tyndale Student - $25 per year
Foreign Non-Tyndale Student - $35 per year (includes Canada and Mexico)
Single copy rate - $7
All subscriptions payable in United States currency.

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Journal of Dispensational Theology – March 2007

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BIBLICAL PROPHECY: AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN LIVING A GENUINE AND USEFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE

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Some years ago a woman approached this author at the beginning of a prophecy conference where the author was ministering and informed him that she was not a fan of messages on Bible prophecy. This author was, of course, intrigued as to why this was the case. Her reason was that she was tired of the speculation and the sensationalism that seemed to always surround prophetic preaching. What she wanted was a Bible message that helped her to live her Christian life in a more authentic way. She felt that when Jesus returns, then He will return and there is nothing that can be done to hinder or hasten His return. Meanwhile, she had to live her Christian life in the “real” world. Bible prophecy to her lacked substance and was simply not relevant with “real life.” What she failed to recognize was that “real life” can only be lived to its fullest when prophetic truth is known and embraced by the believer.

At another prophecy conference where the author was participating, the pastor of the church said he was very glad that this author was there, since he knew very little about Bible prophecy and felt his people should have some exposure to the subject. It seems that at the seminary he attended, the consensus was that eschatology was so unclear and controversial that time was better spent on matters of greater significance. The pastor did not seem to be convinced of this but nevertheless was a product of that school which helped shape his approach to preaching and teaching. What he failed to appreciate was that prophecy was a key ingredient in bringing his people into a genuine walk with the Lord, the very thing he wanted to witness in his church.

The woman and the pastor seem to represent a significant part of the church today. Unfortunately it is true that prophecy has been abused by too many preachers and, of course, by non-preachers such as those on the History Channel. However, the church must not ignore biblical prophecy or marginalize it to the periphery of the unimportant. Pastors who do not regularly include the truths of the prophetic Word in their preaching and teaching deprive their people of one of the most significant elements in living godly, authentic Christian lives in today’s world. In doing so, they really do a terrible disservice to their people.

Those who fail to inform their flock of things to come do not follow the example of Christ and the Apostles whose teachings were peppered through and through with truths about future things. Even New Testament writings that are not normally considered eschatological are filled with exhortations and instructions based on future events. For example, James made eight such
references in his letter and Peter referred to prophetic events almost thirty times in his two epistles. Jude, Hebrews, and Paul’s writings are simply packed with statements about future events. The Gospels record dozens and dozens of statements about future things in the teachings of the Lord Jesus. Why is there such an emphasis on prophetic events in the ministries of Christ and the Apostles? It is because they knew that these truths about the future are essential in living a life that is wise, holy, and godly. These truths give the believer needed strength to “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God” while at the same time cultivating the much needed “two world view” in the mind and heart of the believer.

THE BIBLICAL “TWO WORLD VIEW”

A “two world view” can be described as living well for Jesus Christ in this world because there is a clear focus on the world to come. When believers do have this clear focus on and understanding of the world to come, their lives will be lived with greater authenticity and with greater consistency. This is the biblical approach to life found in the Scriptures whether it be the Old Testament saint who “died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (Heb 11:13) or the New Testament saint who understood that “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18). Furthermore, it has been the thinking of serious Christians over the centuries. Years ago, C. S. Lewis observed the need for this “two world view.”

Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one of the things that a Christians is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. The Apostles themselves, who set on foot the conversion of the Roman Empire, the great men who built up the Middle Ages, the English Evangelicals who abolished the Slave Trade, all left their mark on Earth precisely because their minds were occupied with Heaven. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this world. Aim at heaven and you will get earth “thrown in”: aim at earth and you will get neither.

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1 Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.
2 C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 118.
One can only wonder what he might write today as he analyzed the North American church in this new millennium.

Over the last few decades, it seems that the vision of the world to come has become badly blurred in the American church. Evidence seems to indicate that many have steadily embraced more of a “one world view” which focuses instead on improving one’s lot in the present world. Much of the emphases of contemporary preaching and writing have been on how one can “succeed” and enjoy life here and now. However, while many have been hard at work trying to recreate Eden now, many have strayed from the path walked by the saints of old. These understood that while God has granted many good things to enjoy in this world (1 Tim 4:4-5), this world must not be the focus since believers are strangers and aliens (Heb 11:9, 13; 1 Pet 2:11).

The one world view that is prevailing in the church has resulted in scandalous behavior that is destroying the vitality and impact of the evangelical church in North America. According to a recent article based on current studies by Gallup and Barna, American Christians “are as likely to embrace lifestyles every bit as hedonistic, materialistic, self-centered, and sexually immoral as the world in general.”

This situation is not the product of a biblical “two world view.”

Understanding and embracing biblical prophecy will have significant, positive results in the believer’s life. The following realities are set forth in the Scriptures and are worthy of thoughtful consideration.

**BIBLICAL PROPHECY UNDERSTOOD AND EMBRACED GIVES NEEDED HELP IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST PERSONAL SIN**

Serious believers are very aware of the “sin which so easily entangles us” (Heb 12:1) and sincerely desire that their flesh was not so powerful. However, these also understand that focusing on the Lord’s return and appearance before Him, which could be at any moment, is a great help in dealing with personal sin. One can say “no” to many sinful and suspect things in this world when looking towards heaven waiting “for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20).

Imagine for a moment that the angel Gabriel appeared at your bedside tonight and provided the knowledge that Jesus was going to return sometime this month. Assuming it truly was Gabriel, does the reader think he would have a serious problem with sin from that moment onward? Would pornography on the Internet be a successful seduction? Would angry, hateful statements flow from the reader’s lips? Would the reader involve himself in power struggles or politicking? Would the reader find himself coveting and envying? It is seriously

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doubted. Would the reader want to be as spotless as possible when the Savior appeared and any sin that wiggled its way into his life would immediately be shunned? This is the Apostle John’s point when he wrote to believers to remain in vital fellowship with Christ so that at His return no one would be embarrassed by ongoing sinful behavior.

And now little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that every one also who practices righteousness is born of Him. . . . Every one who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 2:28-29; 3:3).

It is obvious that John placed active responsibility on the believer himself to keep sin from his life. While it is, of course, the powerful blood of Christ that cleanses the believer from sin, he nevertheless is responsible to deal with sin by keeping it as far from his life as possible. According to John, the coming of Christ will either be a time of “confidence” or “shame” for the believer and this reality is to energize him in his efforts to be pure. The Apostle Peter had the same emphasis.

Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness. . . . Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless (2 Pet 3:11, 14).

Therefore, if Christians are not anticipating the Lord’s return and of their subsequent appearance before Him, are they not deprived of one great spiritual reality in fighting against the flesh and sin? And is that not the very thing that is reflected today? “Scandalous behavior is rapidly destroying American Christianity. By their daily activity, most ‘Christians’ regularly commit treason. With their mouths they claim that Jesus is Lord, but with their actions they demonstrate allegiance to money, sex and self-fulfillment.”

Sider’s article, “The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience,” documented that the rate of divorce, involvement in pornography, attitudes towards money, cohabitation with a member of the opposite sex, racism, and a number of other vital issues reveal almost no difference between believers and the non-Christian. Apparently these believers are giving little serious thought to seeing Christ and living in light of that event. Biblical prophecy understood and embraced can provide needed resolve and empowerment in dealing with sin and the flesh.

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4 Ibid.
BIBLICAL PROPHECY REMINDS THE BELIEVER THAT HE WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE AND WILL GAIN OR LOSE REWARD AS A RESULT OF HOW HE LIVES

Believers, along with all other creatures, must give an account to the Lord God. Salvation does not remove the believer from being accountable to the Lord. Many in the church correctly place emphasis on the believer’s secure position when they place their faith in Christ alone, but then fail to balance this with the truth that our faithful works for Christ are significant in determining the kind of life the Christian will experience in the coming Kingdom.

The Scriptures inform the church that believers will be judged first and then unbelievers (cf. 1 Pet 4:17; Luke 19:15-27). The salvation of the believer is not the issue at this Judgment Seat of Christ, but rather it is the believer’s works that will be evaluated. And this evaluation by the Lord Jesus will result in the receiving of rewards or the losing of them.

. . . it is still possible for them to feel shame in the presence of Christ, and particularly at His Judgment Seat. There is nothing strange about this. Even though eternal salvation is an entirely free gift which can never be lost, the New Testament makes plain that the believer must give an account of his or her Christian life in the presence of Christ . . . this judgment is not merely a review of our good deeds, but a comprehensive review that embraces both “good and bad”. . . .

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10).

If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so through fire (1 Cor 3:14-15).

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize. Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable (9:24).

The idea that all believers will be the same in the future is simply false and contrary to the consistent teachings of the Bible. Such a view does not deal

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adequately with the many warnings given to unfaithful believers about negatives they face when appearing before Christ.

No wise parent treats rebellion and obedience in the same way. Suppose that Dad and Mom left for a weekend retreat and gave careful instructions to their two teenage sons. Each was given three specific tasks that were to be finished by the time their parents returned on Sunday afternoon. Now, the younger son woke at a reasonable time on Saturday morning and finished all his work by early afternoon, doing a very good job. The older son slept late and did not complete any work, choosing instead to go and have fun with his friends. By Sunday afternoon he had completed none of his three tasks. When their parents returned home, Dad correctly appraised the situation. He called for his two boys and congratulated the younger son for a job well done, and then reached into his wallet and unexpectedly gave him a $50 bill. The older son now regretted his disobedience and poor use of time. The father looked unhappily at his older boy, rebuked him for his disobedience but then reached into his wallet and gave his older son $50 also. How unreal! No good father would ever do that, rewarding good behavior and bad behavior in the same way. And yet that seems to be the prevailing opinion in the church regarding the way in which the Heavenly Father will deal with His children.

The Word of God teaches that there are rewards that will be received because of faithful service of Christ and there are rewards that can be lost by unfaithfulness (cf. 1 Cor 3:15; 2 John 8; Col 3:23-25). The faithful believer will be given “crowns” (e.g. 1 Cor 9:24-27; 1 Pet 5:3); receive that desired commendation of “well done” by the Lord (Luke 19:17; Matt 25:21, 23) and, be granted a place of ruling alongside Messiah (e.g. 2 Tim 2:11-13; Luke 19:17, 19). The believer who is unfaithful to the Lord Jesus will not receive crowns, may well be addressed by Christ as a “worthless slave” (cf. Luke 19:22), and will not reign with Him (cf. 2 Tim 2:11-13; Luke 19:24-26). Their salvation is secure, but their rewards are not. Believers have a secure inheritance because they are children of God, but there is another aspect of inheritance that depends on being a faithful child of God. This inheritance (not salvation) can be lost. “Simple faith brings assurance of heaven. Persistent faith brings inheritance.”

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7 Michael Eaton, No Condemnation: A New Theology of Assurance (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 181. In a thought provoking study, Eaton believes that both Calvinism and Arminianism are too rigid in their concept of “inheritance.” He observed that in both the Old and New Testament, inheritance is seen as a reward for obedience and that inheritance does not come by initial faith alone but by persistence in faith. This author would agree with much that Eaton wrote and argue that passages like Galatians 5:21, Ephesians 5:5, and 1 Corinthians 6:9 which speak of the loss of an inheritance in God’s kingdom is written to believers, yet the reference is not the loss of salvation but rather the loss of reward. While many would say this is a warning to the “professed
What believers do in this life will have a very real effect on life in the coming kingdom of God. After exhorting believers to be holy as their Heavenly Father is holy, the Apostle Peter stated, “And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth” (1 Pet 1:17).

One wonders why Peter would exhort the church to “fear” if it really does not actually matter what believers accomplish or do not accomplish in this life. However, according to the New Testament, the works done by believers are important and do have consequences beyond this life. This author doubts that Peter and the other New Testament writers would subscribe to the teaching that all will be the same in the future kingdom of God. The knowledge of a coming time of accountability and rewarding can have a profound impact on the way believers live today. However, without such truth the “one world” view will prevail in the thinking and in the living of Christians.

**BIBLICAL PROPHECY PROVIDES A VALUABLE MINDSET IN TIMES OF TRIAL AND TEMPTATION**

The fact that believers are faced with some burdensome and painful trials in this life is not a new revelation. The church knows that God has not exempted believers from the sudden death of a loved one, or the arrival of a debilitating disease, or the appearance of great financial loss. Moreover, even if such “major tragedies” do not enter the believer’s life, the child of God still experiences scores of “minor” pressure, grief, disappointment, and setback.

James, and others, observed that believers can respond well or they can respond poorly to the painful times in life. In order for trials to be successfully endured, James said that the believer must possess God’s wisdom, which is seeing life from God’s perspective. An integral part of God’s perspective is the future. This is how Jesus faced the trial of His crucifixion. The writer of Hebrews said that Jesus “for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2). Jesus looked beyond those six hours on the cross to that time in His glorious kingdom when He would be with those that He would redeem and restore.

The believer who is focused on this world will likely not do well in trials when things go terribly wrong in this world. Without a working knowledge of things to come, he will have to fall back on the “stiff upper lip” approach or to wishful thinking. However, the believer who anticipates the believer,” the passages themselves were written to believers and there is not a professed believer in sight. See also, Benware, *The Believer’s Payday*, 22-40.
glorious age to come will be better positioned to deal well with the pain and disappointment that accompany trials in this world.

After speaking about the universality of trials and the need for God’s wisdom, James referenced the future (Jas 1:12). The “crown of life,” also mentioned in Revelation 2:10, does seem to focus on the future reward given to the believer who loves the Lord so much that he does not resent what the Lord has allowed into his life. An incentive for enduring in trials is the understanding that there is future reward for the enduring believer. “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (Jas 1:12).

As James’ letter came to a close, the author returned to the matter of the trials of life and the need to patiently endure like Job and the prophets of old. And here, James again appealed to the future to give strength to his friends.

Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. . . . You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door (5:7-9).

Peter gave the same kind of encouragement.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:6-7).

What believers need in times of trial is not positive thinking, but prophetic thinking.

BIBLICAL PROPHECY GIVES PROTECTION TO BELIEVERS FROM FALSE TEACHERS AND THEIR FALSE TEACHING

Sometimes when believers view certain religious teachers on television, they wonder what attracts people to them and their teachings. Their messages are devoid of any real biblical substance and yet their followers seem to hang on every superficial word uttered. This religious “happy hour” seems to draw many sane and sensible people, but nevertheless they appear mesmerized by such nonsense. What is the magnet that draws people to these teachers?

False teaching characteristically has a “one world” focus and a person who is not indoctrinated with a “two world” perspective will easily fall prey to this kind of false teaching. The Apostles warned the church that the basic element in much of false teaching is “lust.” Lust (ἐπιθυμία) does not, as some
think, simply refer to immorality. While immorality is included, the word rather refers to wrong desires of any kind.\(^8\) God, of course, has given mankind many desires that are legitimate and normal. However, these desires are elevated by false teachers to a place of lordship in peoples’ lives. Subsequently, health, personal comfort, wealth, enjoyment in life, good kids and a good marriage, positions of prominence, material possessions, and a host of other desires become the focus of life. These all can have legitimacy in their rightful place (cf. 1 Tim 4:4-5) but in false teaching they become the “lords of life.”

This focus on the “good life” in this present world is the reason for the immense popularity of false teachers. They appeal to the natural desires that people have and inform their followers that God is quite happy when they pursue these things in this world. This “one world view” teaches that the most important life is right now. According to the Apostles, “lust” is the common element in the teachings of these teachers who themselves love money, pleasure, and personal comfort (2 Tim 3:2-4).

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires (“lust,” ἐπιθυμία; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths (4:3-4).

And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned. . . . For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires (“lust,” ἐπιθυμία), by sensuality. . . . Knowing this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts (2 Pet 2:2, 18; 3:3)

These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage (Jude 1:18).

When the Apostles spoke against these teachings that promote and encourage “lust” (wrong desire), they at the same time looked ahead to future events. Peter spoke of the coming day of the Lord, of the certainty of future judgment, and of the wonderful world to come (2 Pet 2:9, 17; 3:7, 10-13). Jude also spoke of the sure judgment to come, using examples of past judgments (Jude 1:4-7, 15). Paul reminded Timothy that God will judge these false teachers at Christ’s return and will also reward those who have been faithful to the Word and stayed away from false teaching (2 Tim 4:1, 8).

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It seems clear that if a believer consciously lives day by day reflecting on the Lord’s return, the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the glorious coming Kingdom that this believer will not be drawn into the one world view and the “lusts” of false teaching. However, if the believer is not informed by these truths of the future, then he will be far more susceptible to such things. It is much easier to say “no” to self when looking for something that is far superior. Is that not what Hebrews 11 is promoting?

**BIBLICAL PROPHECY PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR A BELIEVER TO PRIORITIZE LIFE BETTER AND MAKE BETTER DECISIONS**

Everyone knows that if a person had knowledge of future events, then better decisions would be made. For example, would Fred take a job next week with the ABC Company if he knew that in four months the ABC Company would be going bankrupt? Would the Jones family buy that house down by the river if they knew that next spring the “flood of the century” would wash away all dwellings by that river? Or would the remodeling of an old home be the priority in the lives of Bill and Sue if they knew that it would burn to the ground as soon as it was completed? Knowledge of the future would, in these cases, undoubtedly reshape decisions and priorities.

Bible prophecy can play such a life-changing role today. When believers become convinced of the truthfulness of these prophetic portions dealing with accountability and reward, they will prioritize life differently, make better decisions, and order their lives in a much more biblical way. The reality of future things sheds significant light on the important issues of life and provides a framework for evaluating what is most important. Those who live with an awareness of what lies ahead in the plan of God think differently regarding the use of their time, money, and resources. The goals and purposes of life are altered by a conviction about future realities. Again, note the Apostle Peter’s exhortation when he said, “what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness” in view of future events (2 Pet 3:11).

After Jesus gave His powerful prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives (cf. Matt 24—25), He then gave six parables which emphasized three things. He said that in light of these coming events, His followers were to: (1) be watching expectantly for His return, (2) be prepared spiritually for His arrival, and (3) be faithfully serving Him until He returned. What His servants do is of great importance to Him and He advised them to order their lives according to the prophetic truths He had just revealed. And these three attitudes are exactly what biblical prophecy is designed to produce in the day by day living of God’s people.
BIBLICAL PROPHECY REVEALS THE END OF EVIL AND OF THE UNBELIEVER

The problem of the presence and apparent success of evil has been a thorny theological and philosophical problem for all of man’s history. Biblical prophecy does not deal with the origin of evil but it does deal with the end of evil. Wickedness will not prevail and evil people will be punished and will not “get away with murder.” It is clear that evil and evildoers will be removed from life that will be experienced forever in God’s eternal kingdom.

But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet 3:13)

... and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those who names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (Rev 21:27).

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (20:11)

As the Scriptures describe the fate of the unbeliever, it is a terrible fate that they face. As one contemplates the eternal end of the unbeliever, it is not good to become satisfied with wonderful futures, but to be motivated by biblical prophecy to share the good news with those who futures are horrible.

Then He will also say to those on His left, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . and these will go away into eternal punishment. . . . (Matt 25:41, 48).

The Apostle Paul added graphically to this statement by Jesus.

... when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (2 Thess 1:7-9).

Paul’s prophetic word on the fate of unbelievers is terrifying. They not only will be sent into eternal fire, but their lives will be ruined eternally (“eternal destruction”). It is the opposite of that quality of life known commonly as “eternal life.” This eliminates anyone having a good time partying in hell, or any other such nonsense. That which God designed life to be and have by way
of meaning and purpose will be gone. Hiebert wrote, “This banishment from the presence of ‘the Lord’, the glorified Jesus, will be the very essence of eternal punishment. The result will be a negative vacuum for them, depriving them of the Lord’s favor and all which gives meaning and blessedness to life.”

The banishment will be similar to eternal depression, where life has no meaning to it forever. Furthermore, they will be “away from the presence of the Lord.” Today even the wicked are recipients of God’s common grace and are therefore blessed. However, in the Lake of Fire there appears to be a complete separation from any of God’s grace and mercy. Can anything be more terrible than what Paul described in these verses? These forceful statements about the fate of the unbeliever ought to resonate in the hearts of believers causing the church to be more active in proclaiming the good news that there is a powerful Savior who can deliver from the wrath of God to come. Believers who are armed with this prophetic knowledge will be encouraged by the demise of evil even though, according to what is heard daily on the news, evil appears to be winning the day. In the world to come, it is righteousness that reigns supreme.

BIBLICAL PROPHECY PROVIDES HOPE WHICH IS A KEY ELEMENT IN ESTABLISHING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

If there is anyone who ought to live in this world with confidence, it is the child of God (cf. Tit 2:13). If there is anyone who ought not live under the load of defeat, fear, and depression, it is the child of God. While none of the church is exempt from painful situations in life, believers should not live hopeless, negative, defeated lives because they understand where all of life is headed and that they have an amazing future as the children of God. “Let us rejoice and be glad” (Rev 19:7) will be the prevailing sentiment for the redeemed.

This attitude of hope is not wishful thinking because it is grounded in the commitment of God to restore what was lost in the Garden of Eden. Man’s willful disobedience resulted in the loss of paradise, fellowship with God, and the privileged position of ruling the earth. At that moment in time, God could have destroyed everything and started over again (after all, what would He have lost but two people and six days of work). However, He promised instead that there would be restoration and reconciliation through the “seed of the woman.” And, at that time, He embarked on the path that would accomplish the restoration of all things that had been lost. He chose to do this through the nation of Israel with whom He would later enter into a binding covenant agreement.

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When the reader turns to Revelation 20—22, he will discover that those three things that were lost will be fully regained because of the Cross, and the powerful working of the Creator God. Unhindered fellowship with God, a wonderful paradise, and the opportunity of ruling with Messiah will again be the experience of people. Biblical prophecy make believers aware of this marvelous ending and gives them the confident expectation which assists the church in living well for Christ right now. Biblical prophecy provides the church with a clear, comprehensive worldview which in turn generates biblical hope because believers are in fellowship with a God who is faithful to His promises.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

When the church thoughtfully considers the way in which biblical prophecy was used by Jesus Christ and His apostles, it is apparent that this was not a peripheral area of theology to them. They saw that these truths are powerful helps and motivators, which provide needed wisdom and strength to live godly in Christ Jesus. The woman who did not like prophetic messages because they did not help her live her Christian life simply had it all wrong. The pastor who did not preach the prophecies of the Bible because they tended to be obscure and controversial deprived his flock of the very truths needed to run this marathon known as the Christian life.

Does this doctrine of eschatology make any practical difference to believers today? If biblical prophecy is expounded clearly and correctly, and is embraced as true by believers, it will have profound effects on the way believers live their lives. Moreover, it will go a long way in correcting the damaging “one world” view that is entrenched in many churches.
THE HISTORICAL JESUS QUESTS

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It has become fashionable in the past several hundred years to attack the Christian faith in an allegedly scholarly manner. Prominent universities, critics, skeptics, and scholars try to deny what the New Testament record reveals about Jesus Christ. Generally, most people will accept Jesus as a moral teacher, whose followers developed His teachings into a religion, but what they will not accept is the testimony of Christ and Holy Writ.

HISTORY OF THE QUESTS

A prominent movement in Christendom proposes that a historical Jesus was the inspiration for the Jesus of the New Testament. However, this historical Jesus is believed to be a separate person from the Christ of the Gospel accounts.¹ The quest for the historical Jesus is divided into three basic quests. Nearly all of the quests can be traced back to a late 18th century German scholar, Herman Reimarus (1694-1768). Reimarus’ work unofficially started the First Quest, which was almost entirely an exclusive product of German scholarship. The First Quest was deeply entrenched in the naturalistic mindset of the Enlightenment. For instance, the First Quest argued that miracles were not possible and since miracles did not occur, then any references to miracles should be categorized in the sphere of the “mytho-poetic.”

It was in the 19th century that the First Quest officially began with David Strauss’ publication Das Leben Jesu (1835-1836). He believed “that the Gospels could no longer be read straightforwardly as unvarnished historical records of what Jesus actually said and did.” Strauss’ argument was that one must acknowledge the use of myth in the Gospel accounts.² Others followed the lead of Strauss such as Joseph Ernest Renan’s Vie de Jésus (1860). It was the contention of Strauss that “unbiased historical research” needed to be done to discern truly whom Jesus of Nazareth was. Stephan Evans provided an answer as to why Strauss could no longer accept the testimony of the evangelists: “The

quick answer is simply ‘modernity.’” In the era of the Enlightenment, intense optimism concerning man’s reason quickly led to the renunciation of the supernatural. Reports of miracles and resurrections were now to be considered as pre-scientific and mythological. It was because so much of the Gospels dealt with the supernatural that the New Testament documents were no longer considered to be historical.

The First Quest ended with Albert Schweitzer’s classic *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906). Schweitzer’s classic work challenged the objectivity of the scholarship involved in the quest. It was his conclusion that most of the attempts to discover the historical Jesus revealed more about the authors themselves. Schweitzer’s research proved that the scholars of the First Quest had (as one example) distorted the eschatological and apocalyptic teachings and life of Christ rather than actually clarify whom Jesus of Nazareth was.

The next period to result was that of “No Quest,” wherein it was determined that nothing could be known of the historical Jesus. Liberal theologian Rudolph Bultmann concluded that one could know virtually nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus. Eventually the Second, or New, Quest was begun. During the Second Quest, the use of higher criticism such as form criticism (an approach that seeks to determine genre, setting, structure, and intention of each element of the Gospels in hopes of reconstructing the earliest tradition and also seeks to form a relationship between the texts and the people and customs of ancient Israel) and redaction criticism (an approach that focuses on the Gospels as they exist in their entirety, rather than on the transmission process) was an exciting tool because it was new.

The Second Quest began in the 1940s with students of Rudolf Bultmann. It was his assumption that not only could there be little information gathered concerning the historical Jesus, but also that only certain events such as His life and death could be documented as being accurate. Even though the Second Quest proceeded with predominantly moderate expectations as to what could be determined about the historical Jesus, it did maintain the firm conviction that there was some information that could be discovered concerning the historical Jesus. The deep entrenchment of the First Quest in the naturalistic mindset of the Enlightenment was still quite dominant in the Second Quest.

The Second Quest was largely cynical toward objective reality (a feature that is all too common of the ever developing postmodernism that is so common in this current age). Robert L. Reymond wrote, “... every theory that would endorse the idea that literal truth cannot be revealed or communicated.

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propositionally from God to man because language *per se* is incapable of such is ultimately an attack against Jesus Christ." Likewise, Lightner believes that any unwillingness not to believe in the knowability of revelation as doctrine is direct opposition against Jesus’ earthly ministry as Prophet, Teacher, and Messiah. The fact is that God has provided revelation of Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, who is equally and fully God.

In the mid-1970s, the Third Quest for the historical Jesus began with the rise of a new enthusiasm about the prospects of historical study. New archaeological and manuscript research together with the latest findings in the fields of anthropology and sociology has greatly increased the knowledge of Palestine in the days of Jesus. The Third Quest sought to understand who Jesus was by understanding the world in which He lived. It is noteworthy that the method of scholarship in the Third Quest was very different than the previous two quests. Additionally, the discoveries proposed by Third Quest scholarship are in numerous ways very different than the First and Second Quest.

Third Quest scholarship is predominantly differentiated from the previous quests because of its deep awareness of the necessity to consign the historical Jesus into a meaningful context of the social and cultural environment of 1st century Palestine. In contrast to the First and Second Quest, the conclusions of the Third Quest have been quite acquiescent to those particular doctrines that are held by conservative Christian scholarship. However, it must be readily stated that the Third Quest still persistently rejects the majority of the miracles of Jesus, the “I AM” statements made by Jesus, and the resurrection of Jesus.

The Jesus Seminar (or perhaps the Last, or Fourth, Quest) labors hard to appear in good favor with the scholarship of the Third Quest, but any kind of sound investigation will demonstrate that the Jesus Seminar is actually the unsound suppositions proposed by the Second Quest. Objectivity toward the propositions of the Jesus Seminar demonstrates the movement to be the result of the terrible logic in the methodology of the First Quest in combination with

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7 Witherington, *Jesus Quest*, 12.
8 The teaching that is attached to each miracle of Christ is purposed toward spiritual significance (or SIGNificance, to be more exact). In each miracle is the objective attestation of the power in Christ’s teaching. The miracles that Christ performed were designed to bring attention to Christ rather than the miracles themselves. Christ’s character did not depend upon the demonstration of the supernatural, but the signs attested to Christ’s deity (Merrill C. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948], 28-31).
the prominent modernity of the Second Quest. In actuality, the Jesus Seminar is
the aftereffect of the cynical and existential mindset of modernity that led into
the development of the postmodern mindset. In other words, the Jesus Seminar
is the result of the failed efforts of modernity.  

FROM JESUS TO CHRIST

The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) aired a television program entitled
“From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians.” The documentary was stated to be
“an intellectual and visual guide to the new and controversial historical
evidence which challenges familiar assumptions about the life of Jesus and the
epic rise of Christianity.” At one point in the PBS special (Part I) the narrator
commented that “with so little evidence to go by, archaeologists must sift the
clues and scholars decode the stories told by the first followers of Jesus.” It is
obvious that the various differences between in the Gospel records of Christ’s
arrest and resurrection will be argued as substantive proof that the records are
not historically accurate. Paula Fredriksen, professor at Boston University,
stated that “the Gospels are very peculiar types of literature. . . . What they do is
proclaim their individual author’s interpretation of the Christian message
through the device of using Jesus of Nazareth as a spokesperson for the
evangelist’s position.”

During the PBS program, each scholar presented the historical Jesus as
a mere man who preached concerning the eschatological kingdom of God. The
historical Jesus was not God. This group believes that He was simply
charismatic enough to gather a group of disciples who would follow Him and
then would circulate His teachings after His death. According to this reasoning,
the Gospel records were more the product of myth, or legend, in the desperate
hope of explaining the life of Jesus to later readers of the narratives.

The views presented on the PBS program are very typical of liberal
scholars, secular media, and college universities. These individuals will not
accept the testimony of the evangelists to stand or fall on their own. It should be
stated that the Gospel writers present themselves as eyewitnesses of the life,
death, and resurrection of Jesus at a time when mythical stories would have
been impossible to develop due to the hostile environment against Jesus. These
self-professed biblical scholars presuppose that the Gospel records are not
historical and then engage in perfectly circular reasoning that Jesus did not
perform any supernatural acts. In one of his books, John Dominic Crossan,
professor at DePaul University, wrote, “I do not think that anyone, anywhere, at

\footnote{In essence, postmodernism is the result of post-rational modernism. See The
Death of Truth, ed. Dennis McCallum (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1996).

\footnote{“From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians,” 6 April (Part I) and 7 April
(Part II) 1998, PBS.}
any time brings dead people back to life.”¹¹ The obvious presupposition is that since the supernatural is impossible then the accounts of Jesus cannot possibly be accurate because they present Jesus performing the supernatural.¹²

The title of the program itself suggests that the views of the scholars will not be orthodox. The notion is that Jesus of Nazareth evolved into the Christ figure (similar in some ways to the false teachings of the New Age movement). The impression given is that the disciples of Jesus transformed Him into the Christ, the Son of God, which was something that He never intended. The result was a discontinuity between the Jesus of history and the Jesus of faith. Therefore, the necessity of another quest for the historical Jesus is needed in the near future.

THE FIRST QUEST

The beginning of this quest was late in the 18th century until the end of the 19th century. Reimarus first attempted to distinguish between the actual words of Jesus and those words that were attributed to Him by His disciples. It was Reimarus’ proposition that the teachings of Jesus were very much in line with the nationalistic hopes of Judaism, but that later in time Jesus’ disciples changed the teachings of His into a message whereby Jesus was proclaiming Himself as the universal Savior of mankind.¹³ The belief of Reimarus was that a true historical Jesus existed in 1st century Palestine, but the real Jesus was hidden somewhere in the respective “layers” of tradition and theology of the New Testament documents.

The cynical thinking leading to the search for a historical Jesus had been laid previously set forth by John Locke (1632-1704) and his contemporaries¹⁴ (notably Matthew Tindal). For instance, Locke and his colleagues could not accept the occurrence of miracles in the Bible nor with the

¹⁴ See John Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures (1695); John Toland, Nazarens; or Jewish, Gentile and Illahometan Christianity (1718); Matthew Tindal, Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature (1730); Thomas Woolston, Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour (1727-30); Thomas Chubb, True Gospel of Jesus Christ (1738); cf. Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone (1793); Friedrich Schleiermacher, Speeches on Religion Addressed to its Cultural Despisers (1799).
Historical Jesus

consideration that both a gracious and just God would reveal Himself to only one specific ethnic group at one chronological period in time and deem this the universal offer of salvation to all mankind.¹⁵

One of the consequences of the Enlightenment period was to place an undue emphasis upon man’s reasoning capabilities. This emphasis, in turn, led to the inception of rationalism. Whereas the Enlightenment placed the emphasis upon man’s reason, rationalism would establish man’s reason as being the basis for all of religious truth. The logical conclusion of rationalism is that if there is ever anything in Scripture, whether by implication or interpretation, that conflicts with natural law, or reason, then it is Scripture that is incorrect and certainly not man’s high regard of his reason. This type of reasoning is a liberal hermeneutic that is used quite commonly amongst modern critical scholarship.

In order to keep pace with rationalistic thinking, the assumption was made that in no way do not miracles occur since natural law cannot demonstrate them. The conclusion to follow is that the miracles that the disciples documented as being performed by Jesus were pure myth. A large number among German scholarship regarded the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels as being historical, but they interpreted those so-called “miracles” with rationalistic explanations. In other words, the miracles were not supernatural, but the disciples of Jesus misunderstood natural phenomena, which led to their

¹⁵ Many have referred to this objection as the “scandal of particularity.” Kant argued that Christianity is universally acceptable based on moral (natural) law. Schleiermacher argued for Christianity’s universal acceptance based on human transcendental dependence (he also thought it was highly peculiar that God would have bestowed special favor on any one group of people, and certainly not the Jewish people, only once in history). A recent publication by InterVarsity Press warned Christians that if they regard “non-Christian religions as netherworlds of unmixed darkness, the church’s message will be a scandal not of particularity but of arrogant obscurantism” (Gerald McDermott, Can Evangelicals Learn from World Religions? [Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000]). Christopher R. Seitz in Word Without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness, wrote, “Though it should seem obvious, we should remember that a ‘historical’ Jesus has never been the object of the church’s faith, but rather the triune God, revealed in Old and New Testaments and presently alive in the body of Christ through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, to search for a ‘historical’ Jesus apart from the witness of Israel’s scriptures is to drive a wedge between the One raised and the One doing the raising. It is this avenue that Paul shuts off, as do the creeds, when they say that Jesus rose again ‘in accordance with the scriptures’” (Eerdmans, 1997). R. Kendall Soulen, The God of Israel and Christian Theology (Fortress, 1996) and Walter Brueggemann, Theology of the Old Testament (Fortress, 1997) are also somewhat recent publications addressing the issue of a supersessionist reading of Scripture. The mystery of this so-called “scandal of particularity” has the weight of both the Old and New Testament as evidence to the fact.
conclusion that the event was supernatural, and therefore a miracle of Jesus. For
example, the account of Jesus walking on water in the Gospels was not a
miracle, as the disciples understood the event. The account of Jesus walking on
water is explained by the German scholarship to be the misunderstanding of the
disciples that Jesus was walking in a shallow part of the water, amidst much
fog, which gave the illusion of a miracle. In the same manner, the
transfiguration was simply the disciples’ misunderstanding of a natural
interaction of the sun and clouds. The interaction of the sun and clouds was
certainly extraordinary, which is why the disciples misunderstood the event to
be a miracle. Of course, such reasoning follows along evolutionary thinking
that man was not evolved enough intellectually to understand that the event was
not a miracle, and just a natural phenomenon in harmony with man’s evolved
wisdom and modern understanding of natural law.

David Strauss’ work, The Life of Jesus (1835), embarked to
demonstrate that the early Christian belief concerning Jesus was the result of a
zealous Messianic expectation that came to fruition in the minds of those
disciples who believed the historical Jesus had fulfilled Old Testament
prophecies. According to Strauss, Jesus was simply a Jewish rabbi of such a
charismatic personality that the disciples conjured up an image of Him in their
mind of a mythical quality (devoid of any objectivity) after His death and set
forth those beliefs in the Gospel.

Strauss was an Hegelian who believed that the mystical views of the
disciples masked the objectivity of the life of historical Jesus, yet the Gospels
were also based upon those beliefs. He did not believe that the miracles of Jesus
were lies that the disciples conjured up after Jesus’ death, nor were they
misunderstandings of natural phenomena; rather, he believed the accounts of
Jesus’ miracles to be allegorical truths that were not restricted to an exact
historical record. In other words, Strauss believed the miracles to be purely
myths (a belief that was certainly influenced by 18th century Romanticism). For
many critical scholars the explanations provided by Strauss were palatable
answers to reckon with the Jesus of faith. Strauss’ work was not without

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16 Ferdinand Christian Baur, founder of Tübingen School, was also an
Hegelian but sought to refute the assertions of Strauss in his book Paulus der Apostel
Jesu Christi (1845). Werner Kimmel declared all that could be learned from Baur is
that the New Testament needs to be interpreted based on the history of the 1st century of
the church (The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems,
1972). In his preface to Galatians (1865), J. B. Lightfoot stated: “I feel very confident
that the historical views of the Tübingen School are too extravagant to obtain any wide
or lasting hold over the minds of men. But even in extreme cases mere denunciation
may be unjust and is certainly unavailing. Moreover, for our own sakes we should try
and discover the element of truth which underlies even the greatest exaggerations of
able men, and correct our impressions thereby.”
devastating consequences for what began as textual criticism swept into the realm of the universities and seminaries where the professors would transport their liberal views to their students who as they entered the ministry would then carry these liberal views to the local church where they served.

Another critical scholar of the First Quest is Adolph von Harnack (1851-1930). His well-admired book, *What is Christianity* (1900), was a desperate attempt to remove any offensive apocalyptic teachings from the historical Jesus. The work of von Harnack was not the result of careful scholarship; rather it revealed his expectation of the sayings of Jesus. In other words, he sought to develop a Jesus that would be in step with his own 19th century liberal worldview. Although von Harnack believed that Jesus did teach on eschatological events, he also believed that the disciples added the apocalyptic element to Jesus’ teachings. The supernaturalism of eschatological judgments and deliverances was incompatible with von Harnack’s universalistic worldview, so he decided that with a stroke of his pen the offensive material would be removed.

The end of the First Quest was the result of the work of Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965). In his classic work, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906), Schweitzer called attention to the “thoroughgoing eschatology” of Jesus (along with Johannes Weiss, *Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, 1892). It was his conclusion that “The Jesus of Nazareth (of liberal theology) never had any existence. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb.”

However, Schweitzer did assert that Jesus tried to manipulate the plan of God through His radical apocalypticism, which resulted in both the Jewish and Roman authorities putting Him to death. Although his worldview was at odds with the teachings of Jesus, Schweitzer did argue for their historicity. His work was of value since it demonstrated that the scholars of the First Quest were creating a Jesus that matched the subjective conclusions of their own worldview. Scot McKnight, professor at North Park University, commented: “Schweitzer’s book uniquely demonstrated that, in the history of scholarship on Jesus, one could demonstrate that, when a picture of Jesus was fully drawn by any given scholar, that picture so resembled the scholar himself that the entire project became a perverse comedy. Everybody simply claimed Jesus for his own cause.”

THE SECOND QUEST

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18 Wilkins and Moreland, *Jesus Under Fire*, 54.
Former students of the German theologian, Rudolf Bultmann, began the Second Quest. Bultmann’s students were not completely satisfied with their mentor’s conclusions that virtually nothing could be ascertained concerning the historical Jesus. The methodology of the Second Quest was unique because of its firm assertion of the reality of myth and its attempts to remain objective concerning the quests for the historical Jesus. This interesting blend causes quite a tension when one desires to be objective, yet their postmodern mindset deems complete objectivity to be impossible. Norman Perrin is one of the more popular scholars of the Second Quest. Perrin summarized what could actually be known concerning Jesus.

His baptism, the proclamation especially in parables of the present and future kingdom of God, a ministry of exorcism, his gathering of disciples across socio-economic boundaries, his sharing a common meal that celebrated their new relationship to God, his challenge to the Jewish teachers of His day, the arousal of opposition that led to his arrest, his trials by the Jewish authorities on charges of blasphemy and by the Romans for sedition, and his crucifixion.

Although Perrin’s list may appear to be rather long (certainly compared to the Jesus Seminar), it still omitted much more that is known concerning the life of Jesus. The author referred to Christ’s “ministry of exorcism,” which may seem fine at first glance. However, for Perrin an exorcism is nothing supernatural, but has to do with a psychological healing. Therefore, the supernatural miracles, resurrection, eschatological teachings, claims of one and only Sonship with the Father, and Messiahship are still removed from the witness of the Gospels.

THE THIRD QUEST

It was in the early 80’s that the Third Quest for the historical Jesus began. The reason for this was due to the rise of a new enthusiasm concerning the prospects of historical study. Third Quest scholarship was characterized by a driving attentiveness to consign the life and message of Jesus in 1st century Judaism. However, the Third Quest is also entrenched in the same naturalistic mindset that characterized the previous two quests. The result of this is that the Third Quest rejects the supernatural element in Jesus’ miracles because its scholarship believes that they are myth. The Third Quest also has a strong presupposition

20 Witherington, *The Jesus Quest*, 12.
that a large amount of succession exists between the traditions of the early church, as revealed in the New Testament documents, with the actual life and teachings of the historical Jesus.  

THE JESUS SEMINAR

Liberal theologians, such as Burton Mack and John Dominic Crossan, differ significantly in their conclusions than the scholarship of the Third Quest. The Jesus Seminar tried to claim intellectual scholarship with the Third Quest, but failed miserably in such desperate attempts. For example, the Third Quest believed that there are considerable sections of the Gospels that are historical. In contrast, the Seminar believes that only a minute section of the Gospels are historically reliable.

According to the Jesus Seminar, Jesus was neither a prophet nor the Messiah. After His death, the disciples of Jesus purportedly forced images upon Jesus because they could not accept the fact that their charismatic leader was nothing more than a Jewish sage. The Seminar conjured up images and words of Jesus that fit within their modern worldview. Likewise, the New Testament writers are purported to have done the same. The Jesus of the Seminar is not an historical Jesus in any respect; rather, he is the fixed projection of the Seminar’s own hopeful imagination.

END OF THE QUESTS

The conclusions of the three quests and the Jesus Seminar should not surprise those who accept the Gospels as God’s inspired, inerrant Word. There simply is no true historical reason to reject the testimony of the Gospel writers. The only explanation for their rejection is a theological bias that will not allow the real historical Jesus to speak for Himself.

The disquieting trend in surveying the scholarship of the quests for the historical Jesus is the level of demand that is placed upon the Christian church to adjust its theologies and doctrines in light of the progression of historical reconstructionism of modern scholarship. This agenda was quite apparent as a huge component of the First and Third Quest. However, these demands assume that the modern discoveries concerning the historical Jesus are the definitive interpretation of Jesus in contrast to the testimony of the Gospel writers. The question that needs answering is whether the historical Jesus of the quests is the

\[\text{(21) Gregory A. Boyd, Cynic, Sage, or Son of God? (Wheaton: BridgePoint, 1995), 49.}\]
\[\text{(22) Ibid., 118.}\]
true counterpart of Jesus in His fullness as the New Testament documents reveal Him. The answer to the question is without equivocation a resounding “No.”

The breach between the historical Jesus of the quests and the real Jesus of history and faith requires two things. First, scholars who are relying on history alone as the most important tool to understand Jesus Christ must understand and recognize the limits and restrictions of history. Without equivocation, the Christian faith is historical but understanding the whole of Christianity has never been based solely on historical studies. The interpreter of Scripture needs to be able to properly evaluate and reevaluate the role of history in studies of Jesus. Second, scholars must be able to consign correctly the real and historical Jesus within the life and theology of Christianity as a whole. The modern reconstructions of the historical Jesus quests need not put centuries of Christian thought and practice out of place. Certainly, the quests are profitable if the proper method and perspective are employed in such studies of the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

One must recognize though that any study of the Person of Jesus Christ requires humility. Man is a finite creature and does not possess complete knowledge of God and His creation. However, he must also recognize “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). Scripture does contain “all things that” pertain “unto life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3). Scripture does not allow man to be skeptical or subjective concerning the will of God.

Scholars seek academic acceptance from their peers, but they must also strive for honesty, humility, and integrity in their research. Unfortunately, these three character traits are lacking in most of modern scholarship in the historical studies of Christology. Scholars within the Jesus quests suppose to annihilate the Jesus of faith with modern critical methodology. However, the real Jesus has already spoken in history when He rose from the dead. The orthodox belief through the centuries of the church has reflected the revelation of Jesus in its simplest form: “Christ has risen from the dead, trampling down death by death.”

The Jesus of faith is a historical person. Both His words and deeds, which would include His miracles and resurrection from the dead, are accurately recorded in the Gospel records. Christians have nothing to fear of valid historical studies concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. New Testament

24 This is not to imply that historical Jesus studies are without their merit in terms of understanding the Person of Jesus Christ in the 1st century context of Palestine. It is accurate to state that the historical Jesus of the quests is a division with the real Jesus in all His fullness. The metaphor “historical,” as used in the quests, does not present the real and historical Jesus accurately.
scholar, N. T. Wright stated: “It’s hard work, but if you stick with the historical enterprise to the bitter end, not only can you preach from it, but it’s more powerful than what the Fundamentalists or the liberal reductionists offer.”

THE REAL JESUS HAS SPOKEN

The real and historical Jesus declared that to honor Him was to honor God (John 5:23) and to receive Jesus is to receive God (Matt 10:40). He also said, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). To believe in Jesus is to believe in God (12:44-45; 14:1). He revealed the exclusivity of belief in Him: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (14:6). To see Jesus in 1st century Palestine was to see God (8:19; 14:7) and to know Him was to know God (14:7). If one hated Jesus then that person was said to hate God (15:23) and to deny Jesus is to deny God (1 John 2:23). Jesus declared that God the Holy Spirit would bear witness and glorify Him (16:14). Jesus’ command to mankind is to love Him in the exact same manner that they love God, that is, with all their heart, soul, and mind (Matt 22:37-38).

In the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24—25), Jesus said that He would actually return at the end of the world itself; He alone would judge every person who has ever lived; He would personally raise all the dead of history; and, all nations would be gathered before Him for judgment. Jesus said that He would sit on His throne of glory and would separate mankind from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats (25:31-46; cf. John 5:25-34). Clearly, Jesus was teaching that mankind’s eternal destiny depended upon a personal relationship with Him (John 8:24; Matt 10:32).

Every statement given from Scripture leaves one with little indecision as to whom Jesus was claiming to be. The only choices that are possible after reading such information are that Jesus was either God incarnate (as He said) or He was absolutely crazy. The latter would be in direct contrast with His life and teachings. Eventually, the conclusions of the liberal scholarship will be relegated to the circular files of rationalistic and historical skepticism. The conclusion of David Van Biema (who wrote for Time) was in four or five years the final outcome of the Jesus Seminar would be quite questionable since “their areas of argument, thus far, have largely been in the negative, and their respective rescued Jesuses vary considerable.” Even Crossan has admitted that the end result might be “hopeless disagreement.” It may be *petitio principii,*

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26 Scripture quotations are from the *King James Version.*
but the question should be asked what else did these scholars expect based on the heavy subjectivism on their part that was employed in such biased research?

There are substantial reasons to be concerned about the kind of historical reconstructionism of the quests for Jesus. The real Jesus did not evolve into the Jesus of faith. He is, and will continue to be, the one and only Christ from the very beginning of time (cf. Luke 2:11, 26). On several occasions Jesus made one’s understanding of Him to be a primary issue (Matt 16:13-20; John 11:25-27). If liberal scholarship does not care for the “offensive apocalypticism” of Jesus Christ then they will also need to erase the indictments that Jesus placed upon the whole of humanity. For instance, He taught that man is essentially evil (Matt 12:34) because of the Fall (Gen 3) and is capable of great wickedness (Mark 7:20-23). Jesus taught that man is totally depraved and utterly bankrupt apart from Him (Luke 19:10). Man is in great need to repent before a holy and just God (Mark 1:15) and to be born again (John 3:3, 5, 7). Jesus did not describe sin as ignorance, but as blindness (Matt 23:16-26), sickness (9:12), enslavement (John 8:34), and darkness (8:12; 12:35-46).

The conclusions by reductionist scholars are utter foolishness in view of the words of the real Jesus that they claim to be discovering. Christians need to point to history and Scripture as the disclosure of God’s personal, objective, propositional, self-revelation to mankind. The ultimate answer to the identity of Jesus in found in 1 Corinthians 15 (vv. 3-4): “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” Jesus’ death and resurrection are irrevocable evidences that God came in history as a willing sacrifice for man’s sin. Jesus Christ declared Himself the very Son of God that would reconcile fallen humanity by grace through faith in Him alone, and this solely to the glory of God (an axiom revealed in Scripture alone).
TWO ATONEMENT REALMS: 
RECONCILING SACRIFICE IN EZEKIEL AND HEBREWS

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In his book Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church, the author referred to dispensational premillennialism as novel, innovative, and something which has sidetracked many Christians for 150 years. The system was diagnosed as being “filled with many contradictions.”¹ One of these apparent contradictions involves Ezekiel 40—48 and Hebrews 9—10. Ezekiel witnessed a functioning eschatological Temple, while the writer of Hebrews affirmed Christ’s offering to be final.² Consequently, John Schmitt asked, “Is it heretical to believe that a Temple and sacrifices will once again exist?” His answer is accurate.

Ezekiel himself believed it was a reality and the future home of Messiah. Then, it becomes not heresy to believe that a Temple and sacrifices will exist; rather, it is almost a heresy not to believe this, especially because it is a part of God’s infallible word. The burden on us is to determine how it fits—not its reality.³

It is the “burden” of this article to suggest how these two passages fit together.⁴ Two lines of argument have been pursued in doing this: 1) to show that Hebrews 9—10 cannot be understood fully unless the Day of Atonement background is understood. This will be shown by presenting eighteen allusions to the Day of Atonement in Hebrews 9—10. And, 2) to suggest that Christ’s sacrifice operated in a different sphere and for different purposes than did the

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¹ Gary DeMar, Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church (Atlanta: American Vision, 1997), vii, ix. The intent of this article is not to rebut this volume, but simply to cite it as representative of the vitriol against dispensational premillennialism.
sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. A common misperception is that Mosaic sacrifice was impotent to accomplish its task, and therefore Christ’s greater sacrifice was necessary. This goes contrary to the book of Hebrews.  

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT RITUAL

The pinnacle of the Mosaic sacrificial system was the Day of Atonement. It has been correctly termed the “Good Friday” of the Old Testament, and the rabbis simply called it “the day.” Herr agreed that this was the “most important day of the liturgical year.” However, this facet of God’s revelation is not complete until it is correlated with Hebrews 9—10, for these two chapters are the New Testament commentary on the Old Testament Day.

The Purpose of the Day of Atonement

There are two demonstrable purposes for the Day of Atonement. First and foremost, this was the day when the sanctuary was cleansed from the various pollutions that had infiltrated it due to the sin and uncleanness of the congregation and priests (Lev 16:16, 19). This would then permit the holy presence of God to continue dwelling among the people. Second, the Day of Atonement was the culminating day of sacrifice in the Mosaic system. Gayford has commented that the offerings of this day were “the highest in importance of all the atoning sacrifices; they summed up all the atoning power of the others.” Likewise Kurtz stated, “it was the highest, most

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5 Ellingworth captured this tension: “The argument thus moves between two poles. On the one hand, however much the author limits the scope and period of operation of the OT cultus (v. 10), he does not deny it any place in God’s will and purpose. On the other hand, he insists without qualification on the uniqueness of Christ’s sacrifice (9:26)” (Paul Ellingworth, The Epistle to the Hebrews, New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 431-432).


8 G. J. Wenham, The Book of Leviticus, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 228. Margolis agreed, “by these rites the most holy place was rendered free from all impurities attaching to it through the intentional and unintentional entrance of the unclean persons into the sanctuary” (Max Margolis, “Atonement, Day of,” The Jewish Encyclopedia, 2:284. The context supports this for Leviticus 11-15 presents wide-ranging uncleanness rules.

perfect, and most comprehensive of all the acts of expiation.” And finally Ringgren wrote, “This comprises a large number of expiatory practices to atone for sins of the high priest and the people during the preceding year.”

The Ritual of the Day of Atonement

The central passage for examining the Day of Atonement is Leviticus 16. Leviticus 16:1-10 provides a general description of the ritual. The description is introduced with a warning: Aaron was not to come into the Holy of Holies whenever he chose. This was due to God's presence above the mercy seat which would result in Aaron’s death if he entered without proper preparation. Therefore, the rest of the chapter explains how he was to make his entrance.

A detailing of the ritual is found in Leviticus 16:11-28. The first part of the ritual was the offering of the bullock (16:11-14) by Aaron to make atonement for his own sins. He took the blood of the bull along with a censer full of hot coals into the Holy of Holies. While Keil suggested that the incense was to prevent God from seeing the sinner, it seems better to understand this act with Hertz and Hoffmann as an attempt to protect the high priest from gazing on the divine presence and thereby averting his death. This appears to be the idea of verse 13 which says that the smoke covers the mercy seat rather than the

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13 Other Old Testament references to the Day of Atonement include Exodus 30:10; Leviticus 23:26-32; 25:9; Numbers 18; 29:7-11.
14 “That he is not to come is not an apodictic prohibition but merely a warning (John Bright, “The Apodictic Prohibition: Some Observations,” Journal of Biblical Literature 92 [June 1973]: 195-204). It is interesting that nothing was said about a fixed time for Aaron to enter the adytum. Milgrom suggested that the purgation rite was initially an emergency measure, and therefore Aaron could enter the adytum whenever he chose, but his successors could do so only on the annual Day of Atonement (Jacob Milgrom, Leviticus 1—16 [NY: Doubleday, 1991], 1012-13).
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high priest. Consequently, the result was that “the high priest was unable to see the Lord, and this fact saved his life.”

When he had entered the inner sanctuary, the high priest sprinkled some of the blood of the bull on the mercy seat and some in front of the mercy seat.

The second part of the ritual dealt with the offering of the first goat (16:15-19) on behalf of the nation. Interestingly, no mention is made of the ceremony of the casting of lots regarding the two goats (cf. 16:8-9). Perhaps this casting of lots was done during the preparation phase of the ceremony. The lots were drawn and one was placed on the head of each goat.

At this point, the high priest killed the goat, which was designated for the Lord, in order to offer it for the people. He then took its blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it in the same manner as he had the blood of the bull (16:15). Additionally, the sanctuary of the Holy Place needed to be cleansed (16:16). The text states that the holy place was defiled by the sin of the people. Morris explained: “The point of this is that the circumstances of everyday life made it easy for people to contract forms of ceremonial defilement . . . All this meant that they had defiled the place where they came to worship and this part of the day’s ceremonies was directed to removing uncleanness.”

The third part of the Day of Atonement ritual was the sending away of the second, live goat into the wilderness (16:20-22). This part of the ceremony had two phases. In the first, the high priest laid both of his hands on the goat’s head while confessing the sins of the people (16:21a). This symbolized the transference of the guilt of the people to the goat (16:21b; cf. Isa 53:4). The second aspect of this part of the ritual involved the actual sending of the goat into the wilderness by a man appointed specifically for this job (16:21c-22).

While there has been considerable debate regarding the term “Azazel” (scapegoat) and the sending of the goat into the desert, what is being portrayed

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18 For the details on this phase from Mishnaic sources, see Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 1019-1020.
20 Kiuchi has also noted: “the guilt that Aaron has borne in purifying the defiled sancta is devolved upon the Azazel goat. Thus the relationship of the two rites is a continuous one” (Kiuchi, The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature, 156).
21 Geikie observed that in New Testament times, in order to prevent the goat returning to Jerusalem, it was led to a high mountain where it was pushed off and certainly killed (Cunningham Geikie, The Holy Land and the Bible [NY: James Pott, 1888], 1:224-225).
is clear. The dismissal of this goat signified to the people that the consequences of their sins were removed from the presence of the Lord (cf. Psa 103:12). W. Moeller summarized the meaning of the dismissal of this goat.


This view is supported by the parallelism of “for the Lord” and “for Azazel,” later Jewish literature which cited Azazel as the name of a demon (Enoch 8:1; 9:6), and the biblical citations looking at the wilderness as the haunt of demons (Lev 17:17; Isa 13:21; 34:14; Matt 12:43; Mark 1:13). However, as Hertz noted, “The offering of sacrifices to satyrs is spoken of as a heinous crime in the very next chapter (17:7); homage to a demon of the wilderness cannot, therefore be associated with the holiest of the Temple rites into the chapter immediately preceding” (Hertz, *Leviticus*, 156). This view is further weakened by the fact that both goats are said to constitute one sin offering to the Lord. In the author’s opinion, the best view is the fourth. First, this option fits the dual aspect of the one sacrifice. Second, this is a legitimate etymology of the word. Third it avoids the pitfall of offering an appeasement to a demon. Fourth, it is supported by the translation of the Septuagint (Wilhelm Moeller, “Azazel,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:344. Fifth, the function of the live goat is expressly said to bear the sins away into the wilderness (Lev 16:21c-22). Thus the word visually symbolizes the removal of sin from the people (Feinberg, “The Scapegoat of Leviticus 16,” 333; Harrison, *Leviticus*, 171; Hoffmann, *Das Buch Leviticus I-II*, 1:444; Hertz, *Leviticus*, 154).

Whichever view is adopted, however, Hoffmann’s words are apropos. “Whether Azazel means, the mountain where the goat is destroyed, the sin which is given to destruction, or the evil angel who is given a bribe so that he does not become an accuser, it all comes back to the same basic idea: that sin is exterminated from Israel” (Hoffmann, 1:444; so, Ross, *Holiness to the Lord*, 319). The New Testament does not mention the scapegoat as typical of Christ directly, but since the Epistle of Barnabas (written c.a. A.D. 200), Christians have seen it as a type of Christ. As it was led out to die in the wilderness bearing the sins of the people, Christ was crucified
In order to make this transfer all the more impressive, both the hands are here brought into action, while in Leviticus 1:4 only one hand is used. The fact that the goat is accompanied by somebody and that it is to be taken to an uninhabited place is to indicate the absolute impossibility of its return, i.e., the guilt has been absolutely forgiven and erased, a deep thought made objectively evident in a transparent manner and in dependently of the explanation of Azazel.23

It is probably best to see the two goats of this part of the ceremony as forming one offering. It is clearly stated in 16:5 that the two goats constituted a sin offering.24 Crawford suggested consequently that the two goats embodied two aspects of one sacrifice; the first exhibited the means, and the other the results of the atonement.25 Erdman corroborated this thought. “The first goat signified the means of reconciliation to God, namely, by the death and sprinkled blood of a vicarious offering, so the dismissal of the second goat typified the effect of the expiation in the removal of the sin from the presence of a holy God.”26

Following the ritual of the two goats, the next stage of the procedure was the washing of the participants (16:23-28) so that new contamination to areas just cleansed would be prevented. Therefore, all who were involved in the activities were required to wash their clothes and flesh. The high priest at this point removed his white garments and put on his normal priestly garb (16:23-24). The fat of the sin offering was then burned on the altar while the bull and first goat were burned outside the camp.

The final part of the ritual involved duties incumbent on the people. First, they were to observe this day once each year on the given date. Second, they were to “afflict themselves.” This probably carried the idea of self-examination, prayer, and fasting.27 Third, they were to do no work on this day.

outside the city of Jerusalem for the sins of the people (N. Micklem, “The Book of Leviticus,” Interpreter’s Bible, 2:79ff.).
24 Thus the living goat was the “alter ego” of the first as hircus redivivus (Kurtz, Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament, 396; Edersheim, The Temple: Its Ministry and Services, 312). The first died as a sin offering, while the second visibly and strikingly conveyed the idea of the complete dismissal of sin.
27 Wenham, The Book of Leviticus, 236.
THE DAY OF ATONEMENT AND HEBREWS 9:1—10:18

As the author of the epistle unfolded his argument in chapters 9—10, he was preoccupied with the work of Christ and the Day of Atonement (or purgation).28 Fowler explained, “the divinely inspired commentary on this chapter [Lev 16] is found in Hebrews 9:1—10:25.”29 Likewise Barclay wrote, “It is of the ceremonies of that Day that the writer to the Hebrews is here thinking . . . If we are to understand the thought of the writer . . . we must have a picture of them in our minds.”30 In light of the fact that the Day of Atonement is in the mind of the writer, the balance of this section will examine the allusions made in Hebrews 9—10 to that Day as they are contrasted with the work of Christ on the cross.

The High Priest Entered the Holy of Holies Alone (Heb 9:7a)

In the first six verses of Hebrews 9, the writer recalled the layout and the furniture of the Old Testament tabernacle.31 Verse seven records the first allusion to the Day of Atonement where it is said “into the second went the high priest alone.”32 The δευτέραν (second) is the Holy of Holies (9:3, 7b) representing the immediate presence of God (9:5).33 Therefore, in the whole congregation of Israel only one man had the awesome honor of entering into the divine presence. This recalls the scene in Leviticus 16 when the High Priest alone entered the Holy of Holies. This amounts to the fact, as noted by

28 This understands ר позволяет to come from its Akkadian cognate “kuppuru” and to have the primary sense in the cult of “to wipe,” “to purify,” or “to cleanse.” See David Wright, The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 298; Aril Noordtzij, Leviticus, trans. Raymond Togtman (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 33; Baruch Levine, In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 56-57, 59.
31 The phrase in 9:4 χρυσοῦν ἐχοῦσα θεμιστήριον has posed two problems. Should θεμιστήριον be translated “censer” or “altar,” and where this item is located. It is probably best to take the word as referring to “altar,” and rather than geographical location being stressed liturgical function is being stressed (F. F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, The New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 184, 186-187; B. F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays [reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], 246-247).
32 Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.
33 Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 250.
Two Atonement Realms

Westcott, that “the people had access to the presence of God in the person of the High Priest.”\textsuperscript{34} By contrast, however, is the new order in which all believers have access into God’s presence. Morris explained this contrast.

The old rite gave access into a tiny chamber which symbolized the presence of God, Christ’s sacrifice of Himself gave access into the very Presence itself. . . . Under the former system the access secured was very limited, the most that can be said being that the High Priest himself with the due exercise of stringent precautions, was able to enter the Holy of Holies on behalf of the people for a short time . . . The people must be forever content with access by proxy. By contrast the access secured by Christ is for all His people, and it is no hesitant approach made in timidity behind a cloud of incense.\textsuperscript{35}

There are other primary references in Hebrews 9—10 that refer to the free access of the new order in contrast to the limited access of the old order. The first of these is 10:19. The present participle \textit{εὐπροσωπήσαν} is causal and has the idea of “since we have.” The object of the participle is \textit{παρασκεύασμα} (boldness, confidence—modified by the instrumental use of \textit{ἐν} with the dative—by means of the blood of Jesus) and is probably best understood in an objective rather than subjective sense. While the former would include the latter, the idea seems to be authorization or permission for access which was secured by the sacrifice of Christ.\textsuperscript{36} Therefore Dahl observed: “Through Christ, their high priest,

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 280.
Christians may approach God in the sanctuary of heaven and of the world to come. In their worship they participate in the heavenly worship of the angels and of the perfect saints. Having in prayer access to God through Christ, they have already a share in the life of the new, eschatological world.

The second key text is 10:20. This verse continues the thought of access into God’s presence by discussing the means which made that available. It is through the sacrifice of Christ’s own body that true access to the heavenly sanctuary is accomplished. There has been disagreement on how to understand the use of the genitive in the phrase διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦ ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ (“through the veil, that is to say, his flesh”). Andriessen and Lenglet have argued that other uses of τοῦ ἔστιν in Hebrews does not support the appositional view of the phrase. However, Young offered convincing proof supporting the appositional view and concluded that the grammatical grounds for taking τῆς αὐτοῦ as an appositional explicative of καταπετάσματος are coercive. He then proposed that the “flesh” of Christ is not to be understood as a “barrier” but rather as a “means of access” to God’s presence. Likewise Moffatt stated that “Christ’s flesh had to be rent before the blood could be shed, which enabled him to enter and open God’s presence for the people. It is a daring poetical touch, and the parallelism is not to be prosaically pressed into any suggestion that the human nature in Jesus hid God from men or that he ceased to be truly human when he sacrificed himself.”

Another verse speaking of the access into God’s presence is 10:22 which uses the word προσέρχεμαι (“draw near”). While this word was often used with a secular meaning, it is also used (especially in the Septuagint, and in nonbiblical Greek) of an individual’s approach to God. This approach could be made through prayer (Jer 7:16), or more generally in worship (Sir 2:1; Deut 4:11; Exod 16:9). However, as noted by Best, the word is frequently used to describe the approach “made by the priest rather than by the people in the
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sacrificial cultus. The priest draws near to God with the offering.” Likewise, Spicq remarked: “Dans l’Ancien Testament, c’était déjà un terme technique pour designier le pretre venant accomplir son ministere dans le Temple et s’approchant de l’autel afin d’offrir un sacrifice.” Thus the right of priestly approach to God's throne is now extended to all believers through the sacrifice of Christ. So it is seen that “the first aspect of the general priesthood of believers in the Epistle to the Hebrews is entrance into the sanctuary.”

However, the question arises as to how this freedom of access presented in Hebrews is any different than that enjoyed by the Psalmist in the Old Testament as he approached God through prayer. The answer to this question seems to lie in the pilgrimage and the vertical motifs as found in the epistle to the Hebrews. Regarding the pilgrimage motif this means that though the believer has access to God by means of prayer during the present earthly life as a result of the death of Christ, the death of Christ also has secured a place in the immediate presence of God when the believer dies. This is access par excellence, for animal sacrifices in the old administration could never have provided this.

The vertical motif in Hebrews is positing that Christ’s work had effects related to the heavenly realm. The time-continuum of Hebrews includes both horizontal and vertical modes. Therefore, while Christ’s work actually occurred

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46 Johnsson bemoaned the fact that occasional “references to pilgrimage in the recent scholarly literature of Hebrews does not provide significant insights” (e.g. Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 295, 304, 375; Buchanan, To the Hebrews, 258, Theodore Robinson, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Moffatt New Testament Commentary (NY: Harper, 1933), 43; James Thompson, “That Which Cannot be Shaken: Some Metaphysical Assumptions in Hebrews 12:27,” Journal of Biblical Literature 94 [1975]: 580-81). “The employment of the motif in commentaries is still of popular nonspecific category” (William Johnsson, “The Pilgrimage Motif in the Book of Hebrews,” Journal of Biblical Literature 97 [1978]: 244). Johnsson’s contribution will be largely followed in this section as it relates to pilgrimage (though not necessarily the application of that data to the writer’s purpose). By “vertical motif” the writer was referring to the fact that while Christ suffered and died on earth, the effects of that death had implications in the heavenly sphere. Though not developed in this article, another neglected theme to be developed in this regard is the preservation of the believer specifically linked to the unending life of Christ through intercession. See John Owen’s startling comments on this (John Owen, An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews [reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980], 5:528-529).
on earth, it had tremendous impact in the heavenly realm. In contrast, animal sacrifices took place on earth and only had impact in the earthly realm.

**The High Priest Entered Once a Year (Heb 9:7b)**

Not only was access into the Holy of Holies limited to the high priest, but even he could enter only on the annual Day of Atonement. Thus, except on this day, the way into the presence of God was barred for all Israel, even the High Priest. So, not only was access nonexistent for the whole congregation, it was limited for the one who had any access at all.

**The High Priest Used What Was Outside Himself (Heb 9:7c)**

The author presented another contrast between Christ and the Day of Atonement; namely, in order for the high priest to enter the Holy of Holies, he had to bring with him the blood of an animal. The point then is “even he entered only in the power of another life.”

This is reminiscent of the fact that each time the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies it was with the blood of an animal. The implicit superiority of Christ (to be seen later in 9:12) is that He entered the presence of God through His own blood rather than with the blood of an animal.

**The High Priest Offered for Himself (Heb 9:7d)**

Another reference to the Day of Atonement is found in this part of the verse where it is mentioned that the high priest offered sacrifice for himself.

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47 Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 251.

48 Some have suggested a distinction between the three Greek words used for “offering” in the epistle: δῶρα (5:1; 8:3, 4; 9:9) referring to sacrifices which did not include the shedding of blood; θυσίαις (5:1; 7:27; 8:3; 9:9, 23, 26; 10:1, 5, 8, 11, 26; 11:4; 13:5, 16) referring specifically to blood sacrifices; προσφορά (5:5, 8; 10:14, 18) linked to προσφέρων (5:1, 3, 7; 8:3, 4; 9:7, 14, 28; 10:1, 2, 8, 11, 12) referring to both (Wilfrid Stott, “The Conception of Offering in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *New Testament Studies* 9 [1962]: 63; Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1:227, 2:70; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 118; Hering, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 37). Others, however, argued that the three terms are a general description of the offerings over which the high priest officiated (Hughes, 175; Alford, 4:91; Gottlieb Lunemann, “The Epistle to the Hebrews,” Meyer’s Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the New Testament, ed. H. A. W. Meyer (reprint, Winona Lake: Alpha Publications, 1979), 9:503; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of James* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), 156; Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 93-94; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 89).
would be referring to his first entrance into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the bull. This reveals that the high priest was a sinner and subject to the same uncleanness as the rest of the people.

He had no right of entry on the basis of his own holiness, for he, like the rest of the people, was a sinner in need of atonement . . . The high priest who represented them before God was himself incapacitated by his own imperfection from effecting fully and finally that reconciliation which they needed, for, as we have mentioned, he, like them, was a sinner in need of forgiveness, and accordingly he offered the blood of sacrifice for himself.\footnote{Philip Hughes, \textit{A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 319-320.}

\textbf{The Levitical System Was Weak (Heb 9:8-9)}

It is plainly evident from the discussion thus far that the Levitical system was weak. This does not mean that the system was bad or that it did not accomplish the purpose for which God instituted it. One of the weaknesses was the problem of access into the presence of God (9:8).\footnote{The initial clue is found in the introductory words in v. 8: “\textit{tou\'tou dhlou\'nto} tou\' pneuvmato\' tou\' aJgivou” (“The Holy Spirit thus signifying”). The Spirit was making the point that as long as the first stands, the way of access has not been shown (Steve Stanley, “Hebrews 9:6-10: The ‘Parable’ of the Tabernacle,” \textit{Novum Testamentum} 37 [1995]: 392-93).} As Bruce reiterated: “The whole arrangement was eloquent of the difficulty of access to God; this access was more difficult, more beset with restrictions, the farther in one proceeded, until entrance into the inner shrine, the throne room of God, was permitted to one man only, and that but once a year.”\footnote{F. F. Bruce, “The Kerygma of Hebrews,” \textit{Interpretation} 23 (1969): 13.} The factor which impeded access is now dealt with by the author in 9:9, and this will be dealt with in two sequential parts.\footnote{Regarding \textit{parabolhv} (KJV-figure, NASB-type, NIV-illustration), the word should not be understood as it is used in narrative but in the sense of a comparison. Physical cleansing via animal blood anticipated spiritual cleansing via divine blood.}

The first is the problem of perfection. Even on its climactic day, the old system could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper. What is meant by \textit{τελειώσαι} (“perfect”) is somewhat problematic in that the usage of the word in Hebrews does not necessarily follow the usage elsewhere. In Classical Greek the word originally had the idea of a “turning point, hinge, the culminating...
point at which one stage ends and another begins.” Later the word had the idea of a goal or the end of something.

There is strong support, however, for the thesis that τέλος in Hebrews had acquired a technical meaning borrowed from the Septuagint which has the idea of inward fitness to approach God. Gerhard Delling marshaled the evidence for this view by noting that in Exodus 29 the word is used of the priestly consecration of Aaron and his sons (esp. vv. 9, 29, 33, 35). The Hebrew idiom in these passages (“to fill the hand”) is translated by the Septuagint as τελειώσεις τὰς χεῖρας and clearly means to qualify someone for priestly service. However, Silva has interjected an important caveat on the word. “We cannot assume, however, that these passages provide the linguistic background to the use of the verb in Hebrews unless we can show: 1) that [τελειοφ] by itself could be used in this cultic sense, and 2) that such a use is called for by the contexts of the verb in Hebrews. Fortunately, we can meet both of these requirements.”

Even if there would be instances in the book where the words had a different meaning, the non-technical use of a word by an author would not rule out the possibility of the same author using the word technically elsewhere.

Just as the flesh could be defiled and therefore inimical to Yahweh in the Old Testament arrangement, so defilement could be spread to the inner soul of a man and therefore bar him from approaching God. Consequently, the perfection “of the saints in Hebrews is, by virtue of its Old Testament roots and the consummation of Christ, a soteriological . . . concept . . . Perfection on this analogy is described as the expiation for sin.” Or, as Manson suggested, “the complete facilitation of our approach to God.” And as Michel argued, “the

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54 Ibid., 2:60-61.
issue is not the fulfillment of the promise but the qualification for heavenly sacrifice and priestly service, the definitive consecration.”

The text clearly indicated that the animal sacrifices of the old system were inadequate in providing this type of perfection for all believers at all times. It is equally clear that it is the sacrifice of Christ that has provided this perfection for the present-day believer. Delling summarized the discussion.

God has qualified Jesus . . . to come before him in priestly action. He has done so by the suffering in which Jesus confirmed his obedience. As the one qualified for priestly ministry before God, as the One eternally qualified . . . he is the high priest. By his high-priestly work . . . before God Christ has once and for all qualified those for whom he acts to come directly before God in the heavenly sanctuary as men whose sin is expiated.

The second issue related to impeded access is the problem of conscience. The object of this perfection is the conscience, meaning that it is one of the major obstacles to worship which the sacrifices of animals could not assuage. In Classical Greek, the verbal form συνειδεῖα can mean "to share the knowledge of" and "to be conscious of" (in the reflexive form). The nature of the word is seen in Greek literature through a variety of figures of speech related to the court of law (such as a judge, witness, accuser, and punisher), and others including an "inner watcher" and a "child's nurse." Especially rich is the language of Philo. “Established in the soul like a judge, [it] is never abashed in administering reproofs, sometimes employing sharper threats, sometimes gentler admonitions; threats where the wrongdoing appeared to be deliberate, admonitions to guard against a like lapse in the future, when the misconduct seemed unintentional and the result of a want of caution.”

Philo also spoke of the conscience as a “stern accuser” and of a person who stands “convicted at the bar of his conscience.” The writer to the Hebrews viewed the conscience as that which remembers past sins, while Paul

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59 O. Michel, Der Brief an die Hebraer (Kritische-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 269, note 2.
60 Delling, “τέλος,” 8:83. It needs to be remembered that the concept of perfection also fits with the pilgrimage and vertical motifs as presented earlier. While believers are presently “perfected” to enter God’s presence, there also remains a future aspect to this perfection. The ultimate goal of this perfection is to share Christ’s glory (2:10), to enter God’s rest (4:llff.—this would be supported by this reference if either the millennial or eternal view is taken of rest), to see the Lord (12:14), and to inhabit the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22; 13:14).
63 Philo, Opif. 128.
64 Philo, Deus, 128; Flacc. 7 respectively.
used the word to refer to a moral guide. As Selby observed, “Συνείδησις is for the writer of Hebrews that internal awareness of sin.” Lane explained, “It is the uneasy conscience with its internal witness that defilement extends to the heart and mind. It is not engaged in moral decision making, but in remembering. Although the ritual of the Day of Atonement might effect temporary relief, the renewal was short lived.” Pierced, “conscience . . . is the painful reaction of man’s nature as morally responsible, against infringements of its created limits.” Selby summarized the matter.

The Mosaic cult did not allow real entrance into the presence of God because it could not cleanse the worshiper’s conscience. The writer thus establishes the fundamental weakness of the old system. . . . This meant that with each offering, there was the expectation of new sin and guilt and hence the need for still more sacrifice. Even as the worshiper stood offering a sacrifice for his past sins, he would know that tomorrow he would sin again and be guilty again and would need to return and seek atonement once more. Such a system offered no real cleansing of the conscience. . . . In fact, the writer argues, the continual offering of the same sacrifices year after year had the opposite effect: it kept the people’s sin and guilt ever before them.

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65 Paul described the conscience as the faculty of moral judgment, or that which tells a person whether his actions are right or wrong (George Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 477). Theologically, the function of conscience in Pauline literature can be divided into three parts. The first is obligatory, or that which urges a man to do what is right and restrain from doing that which is wrong. The second function is judicial, or that which passes judgment on a man’s decision. Third, the conscience has an executive function that condemns an action when it is in conflict with a man’s conviction (A. M. Rehwinkel, “Conscience,” Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, 267).


68 C. A. Pierce, Conscience in the New Testament (London: SCM, 1955), 108. He also said that the conscience “does not connote a moral arbiter but rather consciousness as in the remembering of sin” (99-102). See also Theodore Robinson, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 123.

69 Selby, “The Meaning and Function of Συνείδησις” 150-52; see also, Ellingworth, “The Epistle to the Hebrews, 442. Du Plessis added, “The inefficiency of sacrificial offerings is explained as inability to banish the self-indictment or consciousness of the presence of sin even after expiatory services. A continual repetition of the deed was therefore necessary” (du Plessis, The Idea of Perfection, 231).
Thus the old system, because it was primarily external and ceremonial, could not resolve the problem of a guilty conscience. This is why the much greater sacrifice of Christ was necessary.

**The Outward Cleansing of the Levitical Sacrifices (Heb 9:10, 13)**

In these verses, the writer stated that the Levitical offerings related to “ceremonial washings,” “external regulations,” and the sprinkling of blood and the ashes of a heifer on those ceremonially unclean so they would be sanctified and made “outwardly clean.” Oftentimes this outward cleansing achieved by Old Testament sacrifices is disdained and regarded in a pejorative manner. Lunemann referred to these sacrifices as a “rudely sensuous means.” Hering associated the cult with a “magical conception of religion.” Thompson wrote that because the institutions of the Mosaic system are material, they “are not efficacious” and are referenced by the author of Hebrews with “pejorative terms.” However, animal sacrifices were efficacious in removing ceremonial uncleanness. This is one of the major reasons they were instituted by God, and they accomplished His purposes. While the author of Hebrews is admittedly demonstrating the superiority of Christ over this, the fact should not be lost that animal sacrifices did cleanse the flesh and remove outward defilement in the earthly sphere.

Σάρξ (“flesh”) and συνείδησις (“conscience”) constitute the two sides of human existence for the author of Hebrews. The earthly side of σάρξ could be cleansed by the earthly cultus whereas the συνείδησις side of human existence required a superior sacrifice. Hebrews clearly states, on the

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70 Gottlieb Lunemann, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 641.
76 See also Ernst Kasemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 61-62 where he observed
one hand, the blood of bulls and of goats did purify the flesh (9:13); however, on the other hand, it could not perfect the conscience since it dealt with external cleansing only (9:9-10). A fitting conclusion and summary to this section is provided by Whitcomb.

Only Christ’s sacrifice was of the kind that could form the basis for eternal and spiritual salvation. But this in no way refutes the . . . efficacy in the Old Testament sacrifices. Those sacrifices had to do with the covenant relationship between God and the nation of Israel. Eternal or spiritual salvation was not the issue. Therefore, the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament and the sacrifice of Christ in the New Testament were effective at their own respective and totally different levels.

The Greater Tabernacle (Heb 9:11)

During the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, sacrifice was made in a literal tabernacle in the desert. However, this is declared to be only a shadow (9:9). In contrast, Christ’s priestly work is seen to be superior because it involves a ‘greater and more perfect tabernacle.” Having mentioned the high priesthood that the Old Testament cult was operating and oriented to an earthly sphere, thus it is not the Levitical system itself which is being faulted.

77 Thus, forgiveness in the Old Testament cult dealt with the consequences of physical contamination on sancta through animal blood (see Jacob Milgrom, “Israel’s Sanctuary: The Priestly Picture of Dorian Gray,” Revue Biblique 83 [1976]: 391; idem, “A Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11,” Journal of Biblical Literature 90 [1971]: 150-151; Leviticus 1-16, 256). Spiritual cleansing was anticipated through a greater sacrifice (see note 73).

78 John Whitcomb, “Christ’s Atonement and Animal Sacrifices,” Grace Theological Journal 6 (Fall 1985): 211. This conclusion should be connected with the πάρεσις (“pretermission”) of Romans 3:26. God’s postponement or neglect of punishment for sins under the Old Covenant was not due to a frustrated sacrificial system, but to a coming Substitute whose blood was intended to deal with the spiritual issue. For the important lexical and theological distinction between πάρεσις (“pretermission”) and άφεσις (“forgiveness”), see Douglas Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 238-239; and Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Romans: An Exposition of Chapters 3.20-4.25 Atonement and Justification (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 99-100, respectively.

79 The title “high priest” is used of Jesus thirteen times in Hebrews, more than any other title, and therefore serves as a master thought of the epistle (David MacLeod, “The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews: Introduction, Prolegomena and Doctrinal Center” [Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1987], 297-298); Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 57; Neil Lightfoot, Jesus Christ Today: A Commentary on the Book of Hebrews (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 80. For information on Melchizedek.
of Christ in 9:11a, the author then presented several subordinate clauses in 9:11b-12a to “establish why Christ’s high priestly ministry was fully effective as opposed to the ministration of the high priest on the Day of Atonement.”

These verses present several cruces and they will be examined here.

The first problem is to identify what the “more perfect tabernacle” means. There are at least six views as to its meaning. 


view is to see the tabernacle as heaven itself, the very dwelling place of God. Hughes stated the view.

The term σκηνή is used in our epistle of the holy place through which the levitical priest passed to enter the holy of holies (9:2, 6, 8), yet it is also used of the holy of holies (9:3) and of the tabernacle in toto . . . Christ is envisaged as entering the true tent (heaven) which contains the true sanctuary (of God’s presence). But as the curtain which divided the tent into two outer chambers has now been abolished, it is easy to see how in the true order of things, tent and sanctuary can be treated as synonymous terms.

This position is also confirmed by 9:24 which states that “Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” This would also be consistent with the

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82 This view is capable of being understood in one of several ways. First, some understand it as the visible, upper heavens (Hering, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 84; Spicq, L’Epître aux Hebreux, 2:256; H. Koester, “Outside the Camp: Hebrews 13:9-14,” Harvard Theological Review 55 (1962): 309-310; John Brown, The Epistle to the Hebrews (reprint, Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1961), 394-395; Lunemann, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 9:612; Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 120). A second position says that the outer chamber of the heavenly sanctuary is being referenced (Alford, Alford’s Greek Testament, 4:168-169; Delitzsch, Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 2:80-81; Michel, Der Brief an die Hebräer, 375-377). A third view regards it as a reference to the Holy of Holies in heaven itself. Hughes said, “Christ is envisaged as entering the true tent which contains the true sanctuary. But as the curtain which divided the tent into two chambers has now been abolished, it is easy to see how in the true order of things, tent and sanctuary can be treated as synonymous terms” (Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 314). This would mean that the translation of “and” in 8:2 (AV, RSV, NASB) is somewhat “maladroit” (Ibid., 281-282). The “and” would then be epexegetical (Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 105) and should be translated as “even” or left untranslated (NEB, NIV). Thus, a hendiadys is intended by “the sanctuary and the true tent.” This would correspond with the conclusion of Kuss that the author of Hebrews did not possess a consistent picture of the heavenly geography, and thus no distinction is necessary (Otto Kuss, Der Brief an die Hebräer (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1966), 118. See also A. B. Davidson, The Epistle to the Hebrews, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882), 174; Marcus Dods, “The Epistle to the Hebrews,” in Expositor’s Greek Testament, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 4:332; Montefiore, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 133, 152; Simon Kistemaker, Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 216, 248.

fact that Christ is presently enthroned in heaven (4:14; 8:1). Thus Christ ministers in a better sphere than did the priests of the Old Testament.

Another difficulty is how to understand the syntactical usage of the three occurrences of διά (“by, through, on account of”) in 9:11-12. To this question there have been three proposals. The first is to take διά in a local sense (through) so that the idea is that just as the high priest passed through the holy place on the way to the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, so Christ passed through the heavens into the presence of God.\(^{84}\) This view takes διά plus the genitive in 9:11 as local and the two instances of διά plus the genitive in 9:12 as instrumental.

Others have suggested that διά should be viewed instrumentally (“by means of”).\(^{85}\) Thus all three uses of the preposition would be the same. A final proposal is to understand the preposition to express attendant circumstance (“in connection with”).\(^{86}\) This view connects διά in verse 11 with the participle παραγεγέρμενος (he appeared in connection with the greater and more perfect tabernacle). The two occurrences of the preposition in 9:12 are linked to εἰσήλθεν (“to go” or “come”) and could be rendered differently (e.g. instrumentally).

The writer feels that the first view presented (local sense) is the most satisfactory. Thus Christ passed through the σκηνή in order to enter the real sanctuary. As noted by Lane this understanding is supported contextually in that σκηνή has been used consistently to this point in a local sense to designate either the heavenly sanctuary (8:2), the desert sanctuary (8:5), or to denote the front or rear compartments of the tabernacle (9:2, 3, 6, 8).\(^{87}\) It is sometimes objected that since the last two usages of διά are instrumental, it is syntactically demanded that the first be also.\(^{88}\) However, as Hofius has noted, elsewhere in the New Testament the same prepositions may function in a different sense


\(^{85}\) Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 256; Davidson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 174; Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 153.


\(^{88}\) Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 256; Montefiore, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 151-152.
even though they are in immediate succession.\textsuperscript{89} This would be due to rhetorical considerations by the author and a case of double entendre.\textsuperscript{90}

The previous discussion of δτά leads to the problem of what the Most Holy Place is into which Christ entered. Τὰ ἅγια (“holy place”) and its variants occur ten times in the New Testament, all of which are in Hebrews.\textsuperscript{91} The disagreement is whether the reference is to the sanctuary in general or some specific part of it. In keeping with the interpretation of “tabernacle,” it is probably best to understand the phrase as referring to the whole sanctuary (i.e. the presence of God). Strong support for this position arises from the usage of τὰ ἅγια in the Septuagint to refer to the whole sanctuary without distinguishing between the inner and outer shrine.\textsuperscript{92} As Peterson said:

We may “demythologize” the language and represent the essence of the argument thus: levitical priests served in a God-ordained but man-made sanctuary, and in this ministry foreshadowed only superficially the definitive priestly ministry of Christ, in his death and exaltation to the very presence of God. Christ’s ministry is therefore superior to that of earthly priests because the sphere in which he serves is the heavenly sanctuary or the true tabernacle.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{89} O. Hofius, Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes: Eine Exegetisch-Relicrions-Geschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebraer, 81-82.

\textsuperscript{90} Compare 2 Corinthians 2:12 which includes a local and telic use of εἰς, and 2 Peter 1:4 with its local and instrumental use of ἐν. For further validation of different senses of the same preposition, see the discussion by M. J. Harris, “Appendix: Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament,” New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 3:1171-1215.


\textsuperscript{92} Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 104; Michel, Der Brief an die Hebraer, 287; Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 216; Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 161; Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 281.

Christ Entered the Holy of Holies through His Own Blood (Heb 9:12a)

The next allusion to the Day of Atonement is most important in this verse. The writer contrasted the offerings of the Day of Atonement with the offering made by Christ. A phrase much discussed is “by his own blood he entered once into the holy place.” It has been suggested by many that Christ carried His literal blood into heaven and actually sprinkled it on a mercy seat there. J. A. Bengel is an early advocate of this view. “Christ entered into the sanctuary through his own blood (not just after the blood had been shed, or by virtue of its effusion . . . but through his blood) therefore he as the high priest carried his own blood, in separation from his body, into the sanctuary, and at the time of his entry or ascension, Christ kept his blood apart from his body. His body was bloodless.”

In a similar manner, Calvin commented on Hebrews 13:11, “In order that he might atone for the sins of the world Christ took his own blood into the heavenly sanctuary.” Evidently, the motive for Protestant theologians for this position is to maintain a strict analogy with the Old Testament ritual, and for the Roman Catholics to buttress their view of perpetual offering. There are, however, a number of considerations which militate against this position. The first concerns the use of the aorist participle ἐνεργηθη (obtained). Regarding this, Hughes observed:

Hebrews 9:12 states that he entered once for all into the sanctuary above after he had secured eternal redemption. This is the proper connotation of the aorist participle. And yet another participle, in 10:12—“When Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins He sat down at the right hand of God” conveys the same emphasis on the finality and the pastness of the unique sacrifice of Calvary. Nowhere is there any mention of a sacrifice that is prolonged in some manner or continuous in the heavenly sanctuary.

(1978): 186. In keeping with the eschatological model over the Platonic one, see also R. Williamson, Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 419.
Walvoord agreed with this view. “It may be concluded that the sacrifice of Christ was completed on the cross once and for all, that Christ did not present literal blood in heaven any more than His literal blood is applied to the believer now (1 John 1:7), that all cleansing in earth and heaven is on the basis of the blood shed on Calvary, and that the work of Christ in sacrifice was finished when he died.”

A second argument against the more literal view is the use of διά. While Bengel (and others) would translate the preposition as “through” (attendant circumstance), an instrumental (or means usage) seems to be the most plausible. Thus the idea is not that He entered with blood, but by means of His blood, or by virtue of His blood. The words of Owen are appropriate here.

The apostle is so far from using the particle διά improperly for συν... for he doth not declare with what the high priest entered into the holy place, for he entered with incense as well as with blood; but what it was by virtue whereof he so entered as to be accepted with God. It is vain speculation... and inconsistent with the dignity of his person that he should carry with him into heaven part of that material blood which was shed for us on earth. The design of the apostle is only to declare by virtue of his own blood when it was shed, when he offered himself to God. This was that which laid the foundation of, and gave him right to the administration of his priestly office in heaven.

A third problem with the view under consideration is the contention of Bengel that Christ’s resurrection body was bloodless. It is interesting that one so anxious to press the correspondence of the analogy is inconsistent at this point. For when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament with blood, the blood within his own body was flowing freely.

A final problem is the question of the Lord’s ascension. Those who hold that Christ carried His blood into heaven suggest that there was a secret ascension after His resurrection in order to complete His work with subsequent

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97 John Walvoord, Jesus Christ Our Lord (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 246.
99 A corollary of this view is that Christ’s blood is presently preserved in heaven apart from His body (Bengel, Gnomon of the New Testament, 2:678; Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews, 140, 210). This view argues on the basis that no mention is made of blood in Christ’s resurrection body, and that the blood is distinct from the body in the Lord’s Supper. However, as noted by MacLeod, this does not prove anything just as His failure to mention skin and hair does not prove that he was skinless and hairless. Also, the two separate elements of the Lord’s Supper are probably a hendiadys (MacLeod, “The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews: Introduction, Prolegomena and Doctrinal Center,” 418-420).
visitations to earth during his forty-day ministry.\textsuperscript{100} This supposition is questionable, as Walvoord observed:

This concept of an immediate ascension into heaven after his resurrection has been refuted, however by able scholarship. Most conservative theologians hold that the work of Christ was finished on the cross and that the physical application of the blood never extended beyond the cross itself . . . It is improbable that Christ ascended in a formal way to heaven until the event of Acts 1.\textsuperscript{101}

Consequently, Christ did not enter heaven carrying His own blood, but rather entered heaven by virtue of the blood He had previously shed on the cross. This means that Christ accomplished the two-fold work of slaughter and presentation prefigured in the Old Testament at the cross.\textsuperscript{102} This position does not require exact correspondence between type and antitype as there are many contrasts to Old Testament ritual in addition to similarities. The words of Smeaton serve as a suitable conclusion to this matter. “It may we think be convincingly proved that the entrance of our High Priest to sprinkle the mercy seat took place at the moment of his death; that no moment of time intervened; and that the rending of the veil indicated His entry . . . While His lifeless body was hanging on the cross, the mercy seat was sprinkled.”\textsuperscript{103}


\textsuperscript{102} Bruce, \textit{The Epistle to the Hebrews}, 201; Hughes, \textit{A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews}, 327-328; Kistemaker, \textit{Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews}, 249; Smeaton, \textit{The Apostle’s Doctrine of the Atonement}, 380-381.

\textsuperscript{103} Smeaton, \textit{The Apostle’s Doctrine of the Atonement}, 339-340. The words of Bruce are also relevant. “While it is necessary under the old covenant for the sacrificial blood first to be shed in the court and then to be brought into the holy of holies, no such division of our Lord’s sacrifice into two phases is envisaged under the new covenant. When upon the cross He offered up His life to God as a sacrifice for His people’s sin, He accomplished in reality what Aaron and his successors performed in type by the twofold act of slaying the victim and presenting its blood in the holy of holies” (Bruce, \textit{The Epistle to the Hebrews}, 200-201).
Christ Offered an Abiding Sacrifice (Heb 9:12b)

Still another contrast is presented when it is written that Christ “obtained eternal redemption.” While the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonement were temporary (as seen by their repetition), the offering of Christ is forever permanent and able to cleanse the worshiper (9:14). In Koine Greek, the word “redemption” was a legal and commercial term for deliverance by means of the payment of a ransom.\footnote{F. Wilbur Arndt and William F. Gingrich, \textit{A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 483; Adolf Deissmann, \textit{Bible Studies} (reprint, Winona Lake: Alpha Publications, 1979), 327.} The thought in Hebrews is that humanity is enslaved by sin which becomes a debt owed to God.\footnote{Buchanan, \textit{To the Hebrews}, 148.} The blood of Christ is the ransom price paid to God which cancels the debt and releases humanity from bondage.\footnote{Davidson, \textit{The Epistle to the Hebrews}, 175.} Denney explained that this redemption won by Christ was “not a redemption like that which was annually achieved for Israel, and which had to be annually repeated, as though its virtue faded away, but a redemption the validity of which abides forever. . . . God, if it may be expressed, has spoken His last word; He has nothing in reserve.”\footnote{James Denney, \textit{The Death of Christ} (reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1982), 151.}

Christ’s Offering Was Voluntary (Heb 9:14)

During the preparations for the Day of Atonement, the high priest chose the various animals from the herds needed for the ceremonies of the day. The goats and bull had no say in the matter. The superiority of Christ’s sacrifice is seen from the fact that He voluntarily chose to offer Himself being fully aware of what was ahead. Thus the author states that “he offered himself” showing the voluntary nature of what was done.\footnote{Robertson, \textit{Word Pictures in the New Testament}, 5:400.}

Christ’s Offering Was Substitutionary (Heb 9:14)

In the Mosaic system, animal blood was shed on behalf of the Israelite. This was graphically displayed when the high priest laid his hands on the second goat and it became the substitute that bore (9:28) the sins of the people into the desert. Crawford stated, “the text teaches the vicarious nature of the rite of sacrifice. Life was given for life, the life of the victim for the life of the
offeree.” However, the dilemma presented by the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament was that an animal was not an appropriate sacrifice for a man bearing the *imago Dei*. As stated by Hughes, “a brute beast can never be a proper substitute for man whom God created in his own image.”

Therefore, it is discovered in the mystery of the incarnation that a theanthropic person became the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world for which an animal on the Day of Atonement would never suffice. What was accomplished by this substitution? Packer explained, “He endured and exhausted the destructive divine judgment for which we were otherwise inescapably destined, and so won us forgiveness.”

**Christ’s Death and the New Covenant (Heb 9:15-18)**

The prophecy of the New Covenant, as found in Jeremiah, is first cited by the author of Hebrews in chapter 8. It is probably correct to say that this citation was made for a fundamentally negative purpose, namely to stress the provisional nature of the Mosaic Covenant. The text is clear that Christ’s sacrificial blood ratified the New Covenant and made the soteriological benefits of that Covenant available to humanity.

It is significant that the writer expressed the purpose for Christ becoming the mediator of the New Covenant. This is done through a very
tightly constructed ὅπως ("that") clause in Hebrews 9:15 expressing purpose. The participial phrase θανάτου γενομένου εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῶν ἐπὶ τῇ πρώτῃ διαθήκῃ παρεβάσεων ("by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament") within the clause expresses attendant circumstance in a "retrospectively cumulative circumstantial manner, which reflects back upon verses 11-14 and summarizes them." Thus Jesus became the mediator of the New Covenant so that His people could obtain eschatological salvation. This was never the purpose of the Day of Atonement.

**Christ’s Offering Cleansed the Heavenly Sanctuary (Heb 9:23-24)**

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest sprinkled blood at various points in the tabernacle for it to be purged due to the uncleanness of the people. Similarly, the writer to the Hebrews notes that the heavenly sanctuary had to be cleansed. This raises two difficult questions: a) In what sense did the heavenly sanctuary need to be cleansed from defilement? b) How was this done by the sacrifice of Christ? The text seems to imply that the heavenly sanctuary became defiled by the sin and uncleanness of the creation, though some have dismissed this as nonsensical. This would fit the correspondence with the Old Testament ritual nicely and the fact that defilement is a powerful contagion which is far-reaching in its scope; so far-reaching indeed that it can defile the heavenly things. Additionally, the heavenly tabernacle could be regarded as defiled through Satan's presence (Zech 3:1; Col 1:20; 1 John 2:1; Rev 12:10). Though the sacrifices of the Old Testament could remove defilement from the earthly tabernacle, they were insufficient to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary (the presence of God there), which demanded a superior sacrifice. Westcott stated,

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115 Lane, Hebrews 9-13, 231.
117 The plural “sacrifices” is probably a generic plural and suggests that the sacrifice of Christ fulfilled perfectly what was suggested by the animal sacrifices (Delitzsch, Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 2:126; Lunemann, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 624; Alford, Alford’s Greek Testament, 4:180; Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 271; Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 132; Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 218; Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 379; Donald Guthrie, The Letter to the Hebrews, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 196.
118 Spicq, L’Epitre aux Hebreux, 2:266-267; Bruce, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 218.
“Man is . . . so bound up with the whole finite order that the consequences of his actions extend through creation in some way which we are unable to define (compare Gen. 3:17ff. with Is. 24:5-6; Rom. 8:18ff). And conversely, the effect of Christ’s work extends throughout creation with reconciling, harmonising power.”

**Christ in the Presence of God (Heb 9:24)**

It is true that on the Day of Atonement the high priest entered into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies. This entrance, however, was limited in two regards. First, the high priest had to be screened by the smoke of the incense from even an indirect vision of God. Second, the high priest entered only once each year, and even then for a limited time. By contrast, Christ’s entrance into the presence of God improves on both of these limitations. Concerning the first, Christ has entered into the immediate presence of God without need of a covering of incense, for He sees God face to face (John 1:1; Heb 9:24). Thus, “the access with which the high priest concerned himself was to the tiny dark room in the temple . . . The access with which Christ was concerned was access into the very presence of God in heaven.”

Concerning the second, Christ did not have to leave the presence of God, but rather remains there for His people (Heb 4:14; 7:25; 9:24). Lane summarized the teaching of 9:24-26 and the heavenly tabernacle in the following words.

> The contrasts developed in 24-26 clarify the basis of the superior sacrifice by which the heavenly tabernacle was purged. The writer establishes two contrasts: the sanctuary which Christ entered was not the earthly one . . . Christ entered into heaven itself which is to be identified as the place of God's dynamic presence, which was only foreshadowed by the rear compartment of the tabernacle. . . . The appearance of Christ in the presence of God on our behalf provides assurance that his saving action possesses eternal validity and will secure for his people unhindered access to God as well.

**Christ’s Offering Was Made Once (Heb 9:25-26, 28; 10:1-4, 12)**

The one offering of Christ is the most pronounced contrast with the Day of Atonement. The Mosaic system provided cleansing in its sphere of operation

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through continual offerings, but the superior sacrifice of Christ provided cleansing in its sphere of operation through one sacrifice. Concerning the salvific realm of this cleansing, Hughes stated that it “covers sin in its totality, without qualification, in every form and degree and also in every age of human history, retrospectively as well as prospectively.”

Regarding this once-for-all nature of Christ’s work, it is interesting to observe the language of the epistle. Of the sacrifice of Christ, the author uses ἀποσκοτίζω (once) four times (9:7, 26, 28; 10:2), ἐφάπαξ τριών (once) three times (7:27; 9:12; 10:10), and the numeral μία (one) twice (10:12, 14). Furthermore, the use of the aorist participle in 10:12 (προσενέχωμαι—offer) is presented in contrast to the present participle in 10:11 (προσφέρω—offer) speaking of the Levitical priesthood. Indeed, when speaking of the Aaronic priesthood, the author invariably used the present tense (5:1, 3; 8:3-4; 9:7; 10:1-2, 8) whereas when speaking of Christ’s work, he used the aorist tense (8:3; 9:14, 28; 10:12).

The Reappearance of Christ (Heb 9:28)

This verse states that Christ made His offering for the sins of humanity and that one day “he will appear the second time.” It is recalled in the Old Testament ritual that after the high priest entered the presence of God, the people waited for him to reappear. A striking parallel is seen by the fact that Christ has entered into the presence of God at His ascension, and His people today wait for His reappearance at His coming again.

Christ’s Offering Was Rational (Heb 10:1-9)

The author, in his quotation of Psalm 40, suggested the rationality of Christ’s sacrifice. By quoting this psalm, the writer contrasted the involuntary death of an animal with the voluntary, rational, and obedient sacrifice of Christ as one

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123 Hughes, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 379; Donald Guthrie, The Letter to the Hebrews, 385.
124 La Rondelle has noted that the meaning of this word is not merely “once-ness” but also the decisive term for all-sufficient expiation once and for all (H. K. La Rondelle, Perfection and Perfectionism, 195).
127 For the concentric symmetry of the passage, see Lane, Hebrews 9-13, 258.
who did God’s will. As noted by Kaiser: “Instead of the contrast in Hebrews 10 between the Levitical system and the free surrender of Christ, it is a contrast between the death of an animal, which has no way of entering into the meaning of what is happening, and the perfect obedience of Jesus for which act He specifically came into this world, ‘I have come to do thy will.’” Denney stated, “His sacrifice was rational and voluntary, an intelligent and loving response to the holy and gracious will of God, and to the terrible situation of man.”

The Seating of Christ (Heb 10:11-14; 17-18)

In these verses, the author contrasted the one sacrifice offered by Christ with the continual offerings made by the Old Testament priests. This contrast is shown by the fact that the priest of the old order was continually standing because his work was never done (10:11). Indeed, the phrase “to stand before the Lord” was a technical term in cultic rites (Deut 10:8; 18:7; Numb 16:9). By contrast, Christ offered one sacrifice and sat down at the right hand of the Father because purification for sin was accomplished une fois pour toutes. This fact leads to the crowning achievement of Christ's offering in 10:17-18. The issue of the cleansing of the conscience is forever settled in God’s eyes. “This is the logical and triumphant conclusion concerning the better sacrifice offered by Christ.”

CONCLUSION

The data in Hebrews reveals that the author was concerned in chapters 9—10 to contrast the offering of Christ with the sacrifices made on the Day of Atonement (the pinnacle of the sacrificial system). Through a series of allusions, it was clearly argued by him that the blood of Christ achieved what the blood of animals never could nor was ever intended to achieve, namely,

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129 Denney, The Death of Christ, 165.
130 MacLeod, “The Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” 445; Delitzsch, Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, 2:159; Montefiore, The Epistle to the Hebrews, 169.
131 Spicq, L’Epitre aux Hebreux, 2:10.
internal cleansing resulting in salvation and access (both presently and eschatologically) into the immediate presence of God. Thus it is obvious from the truths presented in Hebrews that the animal offerings of the Old Testament and the offering of Christ were instituted for different purposes, each efficacious on its own respective level. When these two atonement realms are grasped, the integrity of Ezekiel’s prophecy is maintained, as well as the unique and precious nature of our Lord’s sacrifice.

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133 This is why it is fitting for sacrifices to be renewed during the kingdom. Their temporal function of dealing with ceremonial defilement will once again be needed due to God’s physical presence. This, therefore, is not a step backward because that realm of cleansing once more becomes relevant. Their renewal has nothing to do with encroaching on the realm of Christ’s sacrifice.
MARTIN LUTHER’S ARGUMENT FOR PROCREATION AS A CREATION ORDINANCE: A RESPONSE TO HOMOSEXUALITY

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Identifying and developing a proper view of homosexuality as it applies to the global landscape, American society and culture, and the local church, has been the focal point of investigation by numerous researchers.¹ There has been much debate in the public arena in addition to the Christian community of the question: “Based on preference or constitution, is homosexuality a permissible relationship?” As one attempts to identify and develop a proper view of homosexuality, one must understand biblical precepts regarding human sexuality, marriage, and procreation. Therefore, it is important to define the purpose and function of human sexuality, marriage, and procreation. Specifically, what is the purpose and function of “be fruitful, and multiply” (Gen 1:28b) in marriage? Martin Luther, one of the most influential theologians of the Protestant Reformation, viewed marriage and procreation as part of the created order.² Indeed, Luther’s understanding of marriage and procreation allowed him to construct a cohesive view of the created order and its relation to God. Procreation is part of the created order—design—norm. However, such does not condemn those who are single, unable to procreate, or elderly to sin; yet, procreation is part of the created order—design. Therefore, the thesis of this article is that the purpose and function of “be fruitful, and multiply,” childbearing (1:28b), as argued by Martin Luther is defined by the covenantal, one-flesh union of one man and one woman in marriage which is modeled in the relationship of Christ and His church (Eph 5:25–33). Therefore, the conclusion one should make about “be fruitful, and multiply,” is that childbearing is by design of the created order—Creation Ordinance. Therefore, homosexuality is not a biblically permissible relationship, and rendered a myth. In order to properly analyze Martin Luther’s view on “be fruitful and multiply”

¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, God, Marriage, and Family (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004); Daniel R. Heimbach, True Sexual Morality (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004).
² See Martin Luther, “The Estate of Marriage (1522),” in Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings, 2d ed., ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 148, for a discussion of marriage and procreation as creation ordinances. In essence, God divided humanity into two classes, namely, male and female, or a he and a she (Gen 1:27). God blessed the man and woman and said to them, “be fruitful and multiply” (1:28).
Luther’s Argument for Procreation

(Gen 1:28b), this article will first identify and define three key terms: created male and female; marriage: one man and one woman; and, procreation.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Created Male and Female

Concerning mankind, Luther wrote, “Man is a creature of God consisting of body and a living soul, made in the beginning after the image of God, without sin, so that he should procreate and rule over the created things, and never die.”

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (1:27); thus, God created man and woman in his image. In Genesis 1:27, the word “image” is used to refer to the man and woman. According to Luther, the word “image” avoids an ambiguity of speech, “in His own image, in the image of God” (1:27b). While God was pleased with the other creatures (Gen 1:14–25), He was well-pleased (1:31) with humankind for the created man was in His own similitude.

Likewise, Luther noted, “In the remaining creatures God is recognized as by His footprints; but in the human being, especially in Adam, He is truly recognized, because in him there is such wisdom, justice, and knowledge of all things that he may rightly be called a world in miniature. He has an understanding of heaven, earth, and the entire creation.” God saw His creation, “and indeed it was very good” (1:31b).

While the man and woman were created in God’s image, there was a gender distinction between the man and the woman—male (maleness) and female (femaleness) (1:27). In his treatise, The Estate of Marriage (1522), Luther commented on Genesis 1:27: “From this passage we may be assured that God divided mankind into two classes, namely, male and female, or a he and a she. This was pleasing to God; thus, he himself called it a good creation (1:31).” Although, the woman appears to be a different being from the man, having different members and possessing a distinctive femaleness, Eve was

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3 Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 247.
4 Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
similar to Adam so far as the image of God is concerned, that is, in “justice, wisdom, and happiness.” Likewise, Moses, in the Book of Genesis, put the two sexes, male and female, together and said that God created male and female in order to indicate that Eve, too, was “made” by God as a partaker of the divine image. Likewise, the man and the woman are joint “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet 3:7). Luther compared the male to the “sun in heaven,” the female to the “moon,” and the animals to the “stars,” over which the sun and moon have dominion (Gen 1:28b). Likewise, the wife is a partner in the management of the home, has a common interest in the children, in addition to property, yet there are distinctions between the man and the woman. Therefore, there is an explicit distinction between the man (maleness) and the woman (femaleness).

Marriage—One Man and One Woman

In regard to those who would define marriage as a Christian sacrament, Luther challenged marriage to be in the realm of creation—not sacrament. Being instituted at creation, marriage is therefore ruled by God’s design; and as such, marriage is not a sanctifying means of grace. Likewise, marriage is rooted in “the creative will of God as one of his own divine ordinances.” Outside of one’s relationship with Jesus Christ, there is “no higher social calling in which a Christian can exercise his faith in deeds of serving love for his family and neighbors.”

In his treatise, The Estate of Marriage, Luther specified marriage as God’s gift to men and women; thus it is God who gives a man and a woman to each other; therefore, marriage is more than mere mating. When God presented the woman to the man, Adam said, “This, then is bones from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She will be called Woman because she has been

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9 Luther, “Lectures on Genesis,” 68; Ibid., 62, The author’s understanding of the image of God is that Adam had it in his being and that he not only knew God and believed that He was good, but that he also lived a life that was wholly godly; that is, he was without the fear of death or of any other danger, and was content with God’s favor.

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Luther, “The Estate of Marriage,” xv.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 5; John Calvin (Sermons on the Ten Commandments, ed. Benjamin W. Farley [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980], 170) insisted that the obligation in marriage is first to God, since He has ordained it and is its author.
taken from man” (2:23). According to Luther, “Adam was pure and holy, his utterance is rightly declared to be a divine utterance. God spoke through him, and in that state of innocence the words and works of Adam are all truly the words and works of God.” Likewise, Eve was brought to Adam by God; thus, marriage was instituted as part of the created order—Creation Ordinance.

After Adam named the woman, the Scripture states, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (2:24). Luther affirmed, when a man and a woman are married, the new couple is to leave their parents and take up residence in their own home. When a husband and wife mutually forsake each other, such is not only against this command; it is an indication of the depravity—sin—which has come into human beings. Luther affirmed that according to “natural law a wife is necessary and should maintain her inseparable association until death.” Therefore the one-flesh union of one man and one woman in marriage is life-long. Likewise, John Tarwater affirmed that the one-flesh union described in Matthew 19:4-5 intentionally connects God creating them “male and female,” and commanding “the two shall become one flesh.” Therefore, one flesh finds its basis in the concept of sexuality, what it

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19 Ibid., 136, Luther explained, “This, then is bones from my bones and flesh from my flesh,” as follows: The word “now” is not superfluous, as it appears to be; it expresses most beautifully the affection of a husband who feels his need for a delightful and full relationship or cohabitation in both love and holiness. . . . But this at last is flesh of my flesh and bones of my bones. I desire to live with her and to accede to God’s will by procreating descendants.”
20 Ibid., 138.
21 Ibid; See Genesis 3:1-7, for a discussion of how sin entered mankind—the Fall; Luther on Divorce, “You may not divorce your wife, and even if you did, you would not be free to marry again. . . . Grace goes before the law, and too strict an adherence to the law will result in a loss of grace both in God’s sight and in man’s” (Martin Luther, Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel, ed. Theodore G. Tappert [Vancouver: Regent College, 2003], 285).
22 Lohse, Martin Luther’s Theology, 273-274. Luther held to the position that even after the Fall, people know something of the law. He could actually say: “Indeed, all by nature have a certain knowledge of the law, though it is very weak and hazy. Hence it was and is always necessary to hand on to them that knowledge of the law so that they may recognize the magnitude of their sin, the wrath of God, etc.” The natural law, as Luther often stated, is written in everyone’s heart. People of all times and lands are aware that crime and idolatry are forbidden. Still, awareness of natural law is not sufficient, due not so much to the fact that humans would not know enough of the law as to the fact that they draw no conclusions from what they know.
means fundamentally to be made male and female; thus, biblical marriage is between two individuals—one man and one woman.

**Procreation**

Luther developed his theme of marriage as a covenant of physical and spiritual fidelity, consisting of a man and a woman giving and surrendering themselves to each other not for their own desire or delight, but for each other’s need and welfare.\(^{24}\) However, marriage is more than a relationship of fidelity between a man and a woman, more than a guard against lust and desire—marriage reflects the eternal relationship between God—Jesus Christ—and His people, Christians (Eph 5:25-33). Likewise, Luther affirmed that the intent of Scripture is not only for partners in marriage to reproduce, but to reproduce “spiritual” children.\(^{25}\) Consequently, it is the parents’ responsibility to bring their children to knowledge of salvation.\(^{26}\) Luther explained marriage and procreation, as follows:

God so created her body that she should be with a man and bear and raise children. The words of Genesis, clearly state this, and the members of her body sufficiently show that God himself formed her for this purpose. Just as eating, drinking, waking, and sleeping are appointed by God to be natural, so God also wills that it be natural for a man and a woman to live together in matrimony.\(^{27}\)

In Genesis 1:28a, God “blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply.” When God created the animals,\(^{28}\) He stated “it was good” (Gen 1:25b), yet when God created man He said “it was very good” (1:31).\(^{29}\) Luther affirmed, “be fruitful and multiply,” is an instruction of God added for the creature—man.\(^{30}\) According to Luther, “how blessed was that state of man in which the begetting of offspring was linked with the highest respect and wisdom, indeed with the knowledge of God!”\(^{31}\) Even after sin entered the heart of man, procreation remained part of the human race; for, God established it and preserves it.\(^{32}\)

\(^{24}\) Luther, “The Estate of Marriage,” 5.
\(^{25}\) Martin Luther, “A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage (1519)” in *Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, 415.
\(^{27}\) Luther, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 271.
\(^{28}\) See Genesis 1:20-25.
\(^{29}\) Luther, “Lectures on Genesis,” 70.
\(^{30}\) Ibid.
\(^{31}\) Ibid.
\(^{32}\) Ibid.
After God had finished his works, Scripture states, “And God saw all things that He had made, and they were very good. And evening and morning became the sixth day” (1:31). Luther explained, “God saw all things that He had made, and they were very good,” as follows:

“Behold, I have prepared all things in the best way. The heaven I have prepared as a roof; the earth is the flooring; the animals—with all the appointments of the earth, the sea, and the air—are the possession and wealth; seeds, roots, and herbs are the food. Moreover, he himself, the lord of these, man, has been created. He is to have knowledge of God; and with the utmost freedom from fear, with justice and wisdom, he is to make use of the creatures as he wishes, according to his will. Nothing is lacking.”

CONTEMPORARY VIEW OF HOMOSEXUALITY

In 1968, Francis A. Schaeffer proposed that much of modern homosexuality is an expression of a current denial of antithesis; thus, leading to an obliteration of the distinction between man and woman. In such a view, all antitheses and all the order of God’s creation are fought against—including male-female distinctions. The eventual outcome would be a society of androgynous—unisex—people.

In regard to homosexuality, Ron Johnson proposed that contemporary theologians may not be so sure of what it means to be a man in distinction to a woman. According to Linda Thompson, sex and gender would be considered variables with ambiguous meaning; and when distinctions emerge between men and women, researchers fill in a meaning that best suits the data. According to Robert Brawley, the outcome of the aforementioned view would be that sexuality does not always present itself in the form of heterosexual marriage. Moreover, sexual desire could be felt for members of one’s own sex rather than for members of the opposite sex. One reason the aforementioned view is perceived as acceptable is a tendency to stress the equality of men and women.

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33 Ibid., 72.
35 Ibid.
39 Ibid, viii.
by minimizing the unique distinction of one’s maleness or femaleness.\textsuperscript{40} The Bible states that men and women are spiritually equal in salvation (Gal 3:28); yet, if one accepts equality without gender distinction, one must logically accept the ideas of homosexuality.\textsuperscript{41} Indeed, such a view holds that since there is no longer male or female in Christ, it does not matter the gender one loves, is, or believes one’s self to be.\textsuperscript{42}

In regard to homosexuality, Bruce Hilton suggested the Bible to be silent on homosexual orientation, and defined as a life-long attraction fixed early toward people of the same sex.\textsuperscript{43} Indeed, such a word did not exist until late in the nineteenth century. Richard Alexander proposed that homosexuality was a by-product of, or as incidental to, normal heterosexual development.\textsuperscript{44} Alexander held that homosexual behavior was part of the natural evolution of heterosexuality; thus homosexuality would be the norm, and heterosexuality being an anomaly of history. Hilton suggested that sexual orientation rarely, if ever changes, heterosexual or homosexual. Thus, one has no control of the gender of people, with whom one falls in love.\textsuperscript{45} Hilton defined homophobia as, “an irrational fear or hatred of homosexual people.”\textsuperscript{46} Therefore, if one disagreed with the homosexual lifestyle or agenda, as such, would be labeled—homophobe; therefore, if “you” are not with us, “you” either possess an irrational fear or hatred—homophobe.

Koertge suggested, that given the present population explosion, one might argue the moral acceptability of homosexuality; thus a form of birth control.\textsuperscript{47} Such a position holds that since the global population is expanding at an alarming rate, one should consider the homosexual lifestyle as a moral possibility. In regard to language, Hilton stated that the term lifestyle should be dismissed, for such implies a single identical pattern for every homosexual, in addition to free choice and irresponsibility; thus conflicting with the concept of orientation.\textsuperscript{48}

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\textsuperscript{40} John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., \textit{Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood} (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 33.
\textsuperscript{42} Alexander Strauch, \textit{Men and Women: Equal yet Different} (Colorado Springs: Lewis & Roth, 1999), 100.
\textsuperscript{43} Bruce Hilton, \textit{Can Homophobia be Cured?} (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 64.
\textsuperscript{45} Hilton, \textit{Can Homophobia be Cured}, 48.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{48} Hilton, \textit{Can Homophobia be Cured}, 53.
While there are a plethora of positions attempting to justify homosexuality, the homosexual lifestyle stands in contradistinction to the biblical model. Schaeffer suggested that promiscuous sexual relationships are wrong, because they destroy the picture of God’s intent for marriage.\(^49\) Likewise, any sexual relationship outside of marriage breaks the parallel, which the Bible draws between marriage and the relationship of God with His people (Eph 5:25-32).\(^50\) The biblical position holds that marriage is not just a human institution, but rather it is a sacred mystery which, when honored, reveals something about God’s character\(^51\) and Creation.\(^52\)

God instituted marriage. Martin Luther stated that God confirms and protects marriage with a special command, and as such, requires us to honor, guard, and observe marriage as a divine and blessed estate.\(^53\) Significantly, God established marriage as the first of all institutions—Creation Ordinance—and with such in view God created man and woman distinct from each other.\(^54\) Likewise, creation included a male and a female; marriage included the husband and wife being true to each other, and procreation, as well as nourishing and raising their offspring to God’s glory (Gen 1:27-28). The third section of this article will examine Martin Luther’s theology on creation, marriage, and procreation as a response to contemporary homosexual lifestyle.

**RESPONSE TO HOMOSEXUALITY**

Martin Luther argued that at the point of Creation, God divided humanity into two distinct classes, namely, male and female (1:27), or a *he* and a *she*.\(^55\) Likewise, as the man and woman were created with gender distinctiveness—*maleness* and *femaleness*—the man was not to despise or mock the woman or her body, nor the woman the man.\(^56\) Indeed, the husband and wife were to honor the other’s image and body as a divine and good creation; thus, well-pleasing to God.\(^57\) Therefore, God constructed male and female (1:27) to

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\(^{50}\) Ibid.

\(^{51}\) Schaeffer, “The Great Evangelical Disaster,” 4:393.


\(^{54}\) Ibid.

\(^{55}\) Luther, “The Estate of Marriage,” 148.

\(^{56}\) Ibid.

\(^{57}\) Ibid.
complement each other with gender distinctions, *maleness* and *femaleness*, human sexuality.

Additionally, Luther regarded the woman as not having complete mastery over herself, for God so created the female body that she should be with a man and bear and raise children.\(^{58}\) Likewise, the members of her body sufficiently show that God himself formed her for this purpose.\(^{59}\) Just as eating, drinking, waking, and sleeping were appointed by God to be natural, so God desires it to be natural for a man and a woman to live together in marriage.\(^{60}\) Therefore, marriage is defined as the covenental, one-flesh union of one man and one woman (Eph 5:25-33).\(^{61}\) The aforementioned union of marriage involved sexual intercourse, in addition to the first instruction given to the human race, procreation.\(^{62}\)

According to Luther, the ordinance of childbearing affirmed it was not in the woman’s power to cease to be a woman, so it is not the woman’s prerogative to be without a man.\(^{63}\) Likewise, it was not in the man’s power to cease to be a man; therefore, not the man’s prerogative to be without a woman. The man and woman, husband and wife, were constructed to complement each other in marriage, physically and spiritually. Therefore, Luther affirmed such is not a matter of free choice or decision but is natural to the created order; whatever is a man must have a woman and whatever is woman must have a man.\(^{64}\) Therefore, “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28) is more than a command, namely, a divine ordinance.\(^{65}\) Procreation is part of the created order—design—norm. However, such does not condemn those who are single, unable to procreate, or elderly to sin; yet, procreation is part of the created order—design. God has given special instructions to the man and the woman. First, the two shall enter the one-flesh union of marriage (2:24); and second, the man and the woman shall “be fruitful” and multiply (1:28).

According to Luther, “be fruitful” in Genesis 1:28b was a command of God added, given to the creature, mankind.\(^{66}\) One should consider the Fall, what was lost? Likewise, “How blessed was that state of man in which the begetting of offspring was linked with the highest respect and wisdom, indeed

\(^{58}\) Luther, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, 271.
\(^{59}\) Ibid.
\(^{60}\) Ibid.
\(^{61}\) Craig S. Freeman, “*Mutual Submission: Reality or Myth?*” (M.A. thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), 3.
\(^{63}\) Luther, “*The Estate of Marriage,*” 148.
\(^{64}\) Ibid.
\(^{65}\) Ibid.
\(^{66}\) Luther, “*Lectures on Genesis,*” 69.
with the knowledge of God!\textsuperscript{67} When sin entered Adam’s race, mankind, the creature was contaminated with sin; thus entered sorrow, pain, a wife’s desire toward her husband, in addition to the husband’s toward the wife—distorted views of what it is to be a male and a female (3:16-19). While sin may taint the human race, including marriage and childbearing, one must remember that God established it prior to the Fall and preserves it after sin entered the world.\textsuperscript{68}

John Murray affirmed the first creation mandate mentioned in the Genesis narrative was that of procreation (1:28), in addition to marriage (2:23-25).\textsuperscript{69} Therefore, marriage and procreation were bound at Creation; thus childbearing was established as an effect of marriage.\textsuperscript{70} Likewise, marriage cannot be imagined apart from the dignity and privilege of the procreative acts and processes, which are interconnected.\textsuperscript{71} Marriage and childbearing are interconnected and cannot be separated. Therefore, the covenantal, one-flesh union of one man and one woman is the only relationship, in which the procreative act is allowed or approved.

Daniel Heimbach documented in his book, \textit{True Sexual Morality}, “In the Bible, God at creation revealed two main purposes for sex. First, he made sex for reproduction (Gen 1:28) and second, he designed sex to unite a man and a woman in a personal relationship within marriage (Gen 2:24).”\textsuperscript{72} Therefore, denying the authority of Scripture in areas of sexual morality is not a dispute over a matter of interpretation, such is a direct and deliberate denial of what the Bible teaches in the aforementioned areas.\textsuperscript{73} Luther stated, “the sin of the flesh, which is nothing but disobedience and loathsomeness attached to bodies and minds, is the punishment of sin.”\textsuperscript{74} Specifically, God instituted marriage and procreation—Creation Ordinances—and both are restricted to the guidelines set forth in Scripture. Likewise, all men and women are bound to the aforementioned mandate of Scripture, regardless of personal belief or justification.

Schaeffer posed the question, “Now what has happened to this beautiful picture of marriage in our generation?” answer, “It has been destroyed.”\textsuperscript{75} If one accepts spiritual equality without gender distinctions—maleness and femaleness—one begins the journey of unbiblical or even non-biblical...
justification of one’s theology; for, to deny gender distinctions between men and women one denies the precepts of Scripture—sanctity of truth. Such becomes interpretation based on experience and denial of the precepts of Scripture. Therefore, if one accepts spiritual equality without gender distinctions—maleness and femaleness—one must logically accept such ideas as homosexuality.76

Heimbach affirmed that the biblical prohibition of the homosexual lifestyle is both simple and direct: “You shall not lie [not have sexual relations] with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination [something calling for urgent moral judgment]” (Lev 18:22).77 There were no conditions, simply that the aforementioned relationship was prohibited. Such a relationship violates, not only gender-role distinctions, but violates the Creation Ordinances of marriage and procreation, as set forth in Scripture and affirmed by Martin Luther and others.

Andreas Köstenberger affirmed the biblical verdict on homosexuality as being consistent; from the Pentateuch to the Book of Revelation. Scripture—with one voice—affirms that homosexuality is sin and a moral offense to God.78 J. C. Ryle affirmed, if one does not have a correct view of morality and biblical doctrine one will have an incorrect view of holiness; wrong views of holiness can generally be traced to wrong views of human corruption—sin.79 Schaeffer held that if one has an incorrect view of holiness one does not have a correct view of biblical truth; thus the present dilemma—modern man no longer believes in an ultimate, eternal Truth.80 Luther held that God did not command any person to be a man or a woman, but created them male and female; likewise, God created the man and woman, husband and wife, to procreate (Gen 1:28).81 Additionally, Luther stated, “when men try to resist this, it remains irresistible nonetheless and goes its way through fornication, adultery, and secret sins, for this is a matter of nature and not of choice.”82

The local church must show compassion and not approach the homosexual lifestyle as though this sin were greater than others.83 However, the Christian community, in addition to the local church must call attention to the fact that the practice (in contrast to temptation) of the homosexual lifestyle is

76 Ibid., 397; See, Köstenberger, God, Marriage, & Family, 202–226.
77 Heimbach, True Sexual Morality, 186.
78 Köstenberger, God, Marriage, and Family, 223.
80 Schaeffer, “The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century,” in Complete Works, 4:83.
81 Luther, “The Estate of Marriage,” 148.
82 Ibid.
wrong; under the absolutes of God, its practice is wrong.\textsuperscript{84} If the homosexual lifestyle is a sin, the Christian community, in addition to the local church must engage the homosexual community, not in acceptance, nor in hatred, but in the name of Christ. The truth is that without Christ those enslaved in the homosexual lifestyle will die and spend eternity in Hell. Such is true for the unsaved person involved in the homosexual lifestyle, as for the unsaved pastor.

To the question—Is homosexuality a permissible relationship? Likewise, what is the purpose and function of “be fruitful and multiply,” childbearing (1:28b)? The purpose and function of “be fruitful, and multiply,” childbearing (1:28b), as argued by Martin Luther is defined by the covenantal, one-flesh union of one man and one woman in marriage which is modeled in the relationship of Christ and His church. Therefore, the conclusion one should make about “be fruitful, and multiply,” is that childbearing is a directive of the created order—Creation Ordinance. Therefore, homosexuality is not a biblically permissible relationship, and rendered a myth—sinful mistake.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 4:276.
THE SABBATH AND DISPENSATIONALISM

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In the twenty-first century, dispensationalism faces challenges from two opposing poles within evangelicalism. At one extreme are scholars who find it unbiblical, such as Karlberg:

Covenant theology is guided by the principle of sola Scriptura. The Scriptures are self-interpreting: this is what is meant by the Reformational principle of the analogy of Scripture. Taking their cue from the NT’s use of the OT, covenant theologians formulate their theological method in terms of the biblical pattern of promise and fulfillment. On the other hand, the dispensational hermeneutic, it seems to me, imposes an a priori definition of “literalness” upon the meaning and interpretation of Scripture.¹

At the other extreme are laymen who enjoy its eschatology—especially in fictionalized form—but otherwise find it irrelevant. By applying a consistent, literal hermeneutic, this article addresses both extremes. It uses the Bible’s own teaching about the Sabbath to show that dispensationalism is both biblical and practical.

ABOLITION OF THE SABBATH:
DISPENSATIONALISM AS BIBLICAL

Dispensationalism is defined, at least in part, by its “literal” hermeneutic. Indeed, Ryrie considers the literal, or “normal,” hermeneutic crucial to the dispensational system, part of its sine qua non.² Literal interpretation does not involve any voodoo or complicated machinations. One simply interprets Scripture as any other written text, taking it at face value within its context. Approached this way, Sabbath passages lead inevitably to the conclusion that the Old Testament command to keep the Sabbath does not apply to the New

Testament church. Even some covenant theologians come to this conclusion. The implications of this fact, however, cannot be reconciled with the covenant position.

**The Abolition of the Sabbath**

In the New Testament, the legal requirement to keep Sabbath is abolished. While individual Christians are allowed to keep Sabbath, the practice is never imposed on the church. Two major Pauline passages prove this. The first is Galatians 4:10–11: “You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.”

Some argue that Paul was referring to non-Jewish festivals, whereas others to a syncretistic mixture of Jewish and pagan celebrations. After weighing the merits of these explanations, however, De Lacey concluded, “Paul viewed any attempt to impose Sabbath keeping (or indeed the keeping of any of the regular festivals of the Jewish or astrological calendars) upon Gentiles as wrong, and any tendency on the part of converts to submit to this coercion as a retrograde step.”

The second passage, Romans 14:5, indicates that the keeping of Sabbath is a matter of personal conscience for the believers at Rome, not a legal requirement: “One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.” Stifler remarked, “It is impossible to say that this general language does not include the Sabbath.” Colossians 2:16–17 apparently makes the same point, but exegetical issues render the matter less certain.

Law is mandatory, not optional. In the Old Testament, the Sabbath is a matter of law. Failure to keep it brings capital punishment (Exod 31:14-15; 31:16; 35:2).
In the New Testament, however, keeping Sabbath is optional; breaking it brings no negative consequences. If the Sabbath is no longer mandatory, the Sabbath is no longer law. The conclusion is inescapable.

Despite this evidence, many Christians still call Sunday the Sabbath, the “Christian” Sabbath, and consider their worship a fulfillment of the fourth commandment. This position is formalized in the Westminster Confession of Faith (21.7):

[God] hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto Him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.

In keeping with this understanding, Hendriksen argued that Romans 14:5 refers to the Jewish Sabbath, not to the Christian Sabbath, which is still governed by the fourth commandment:

Since the New Testament does indeed ascribe very special significance to the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10), it is indeed very doubtful that the apostle would have expressed himself in such moderate terms if the “weak” members of Rome’s church had been indifferent about setting this day apart from all the others (as far as practical in those days) as a day of rest and worship.12

Even taken together, however, Hendriksen’s nine passages cannot support the weight of his conclusion. The first six (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19) only report that Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday, a day the Synoptic gospels explicitly distinguish from the Sabbath (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56). The rest probably do refer to Lord’s Day worship, but none identify it as a Christian Sabbath or treat it as divinely mandated.13

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11 In Exodus 16:1-10, when the Lord first provided manna, He also issued the first Sabbath restrictions. When these were ignored, however, He did not require executions. In Numbers 15:32-36, however, He did. As Ferris explained, the difference had to do with the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant: “Pre-covenant rebellion was not generally punished by death, whereas post-covenant violations were” (Paul Wayne Ferris Jr., “The Mana Narrative of Exodus 16:1-10,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 18 [Summer 1975]: 199).


13 Commenting on 1 Corinthians 16:2, De Lacey concluded, “While we may reasonably see a link between the collection and the church’s regular worship, our text
texts show only that first-century Christians met on Sunday, not that they believed that the fourth commandment required them to do so.

Thus, taken at face value, Scripture testifies that the commandment to keep the Sabbath is no longer binding as law. This conclusion fully accords with the long-term claims of dispensationalists, such as Charles L. Feinberg. “A study of the period from the death of Christ and the descent of the Spirit on Pentecost till the rapture of the church reveals most unmistakably that the Sabbath has been abolished.”\textsuperscript{14} Dispensationalists, however, are not the only ones to see it this way. Speaking for a consortium of seven, non-dispensational scholars, D. A. Carson comes to essentially the same conclusion: “We are not persuaded that the New Testament unambiguously develops a ‘transfer theology,’ according to which the Sabbath moves from the seventh day to the first day of the week.”\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{Implications of Abolition}

When compared with the testimony of other Scripture, the abolition of the Sabbath brings three further facts to light: (1) that the church and Israel are distinct entities; (2) that the Mosaic code in its entirety has been abolished; and, (3) that the Jews have a future role in God’s plan. Deductive logic evokes these implications, but the testimony of Scripture validates each of them.

\textbf{Distinction of Church and Israel}

The logic behind the first implication is taught in Algebra I: things not equal to the same thing are not equal to each other. If Sabbath observance is a distinguishing mark of Israel but not of the church, the church cannot be Israel.

\textit{The Sabbath and Israel.} In Scripture, the Sabbath is unique to Israel. The command is given only to Israel and is contextually linked to the exodus from Egypt, an event affecting only Israel: “You were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (Deut 5:15). As part of the Decalogue, the Sabbath is at the core of the LORD’s covenant with Israel at Sinai: “And he declared unto you His covenant, which He commanded you to perform, \textit{even} ten commandments;

gives no support for the positing of any particular practice or belief relating to Sunday on the part of either Paul or the church” (De Lacey, “Sabbath/Sunday Question, 185).
\textsuperscript{15} D. A. Carson, “Introduction,” 16.
and he wrote them upon two tables of stone” (Deut 4:10, cf. Eph 2:12). Indeed, it is the sign of the special relationship established by that covenant: “Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you” (Exod 31:13, cf. Ezek 20:12, 20). In Israel, keeping the Sabbath was more than an act of worship; it was a manifestation of loyalty. Breaking the Sabbath was tantamount to treason, a capital offense (Exod 31:14–15; Numb 15:32–35).

The Sabbath and Mankind. Scripture is clear: the Sabbath belongs to Israel. Nonetheless, most covenant theologians insist that the Sabbath was instituted at creation. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith (21.7), it was imposed on all men:

As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in His Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, He hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto Him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week [emphasis added].

Not all covenant proponents are willing to go that far. Karlberg, for example, acknowledged that elements of the statement “are at variance with the teaching of Scripture,” insisting that the Sabbath is for all time, but not for all men:

Although the sabbath ordinance is a binding obligation upon the people of God in all ages, the manner of observance changes over the course of covenant history, most notably between the Mosaic and New Covenants. Contrary to the teaching of the Confession, the sabbath as sign of God’s covenant is not binding on nonbelievers, simply because they are not recipients of the covenant-sign.18

Thus, the covenant belief is that the Lord established the Sabbath commandment when he sanctified the seventh day in Genesis 2:2-3.19 The facts

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16 This fact also argues a fortiori the Sabbath has been terminated: since the Old Covenant as a whole has been abrogated (Rom 6:14-15; 7:4; 1 Cor 9:20-22), the Sabbath, an included part, must also be abrogated.


19 Even some dispensationalists, such as Unger, have taken this view: “God . . . revealed and imposed the sanctity of the Sabbath upon unfallen man” (Merrill F. Unger, “The Significance of the Sabbath,” Bibliotheca Sacra 123 [1966]: 54. Emphasis in the original.)
of the passage, however, do not require this conclusion. Genesis 2 does report that God rested (or “ceased”); it does not command that man (in whole or in part) practice such a rest. Furthermore, if the Sabbath did begin in Eden, why is it not even mentioned again until Exodus 16? Arguments from silence are often weak, but as Feinberg demonstrated, this silence is deafening:

If the Sabbath did exist, then it is more than passing strange that, although we find accounts of the religious life and worship of the patriarchs, in which accounts mention is specifically made to the rite of circumcision, the sacrifices, the offering of the tithe, and the institution of marriage, we should find no mention of the great institution of the Sabbath.\(^{20}\)

Proponents also argue that the fourth commandment itself asserts jurisdiction over more than just Jews. At first glance, this does seem correct: “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates” (Exod 20:10, cf. Deut 5:14). The male and female servants here might be Hebrews, but the “stranger” clearly is not. The Hebrew term גֵר (ger) refers to a foreigner, a resident alien. Thus, the Sabbath commandment does govern more than Jews. It does not, however, govern more than Israel. The alien is one that resides “within your gates,” that is, in the cities of Israel. Pre-exilic Israel was a theocracy, and its law applied to the nation, not just to its Jewish or believing population. The alien had to observe the Sabbath while living in Israel for the same reason that an American motorist has to drive on the left while living in England—even though English traffic laws are not binding in the United States. Similarly, Sabbath law did not govern those outside of Israel, but it did govern all within it, even resident aliens.

**Implication.** The Sabbath then is distinctively Israelite, the sign of its covenant relationship with the LORD. As previously shown, however, it is not continued in the church which means that Israel and the church are different entities. This idea is fundamental to dispensationalism, but note its source. This conclusion is not imposed by the theological system; it flows naturally from the text of Scripture. It is beyond the scope of this study to offer detailed proof, but two examples should suffice.\(^{23}\) The most notable is 1 Corinthians 10:32: “Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.” According to this text, Israel and the church are as distinct as Israel and the Gentiles. The rest of the New Testament maintains the same distinction. Thus,


the book of Revelation specifically refers to the church twenty times in chapters 1—3, a portion addressed to the churches of Asia Minor, but not once in chapters 4—21, which portray the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies given to Israel.24

**Abolition of the Mosaic Law**

The abolition of the Sabbath implies a second thing: that all of the commandments of the Mosaic code are now nullified. Here again, the logic is easy to follow, and the Scriptural support is overwhelming.

**Theological Explanation.** Many scholars divide the Mosaic code into three parts: the ceremonial law, the civil (or social) law, and the moral law. The ceremonial law deals with ritual worship; the civil, with the administration of justice in the nation; and the moral, with timeless ethical principles. According to this reckoning, the ceremonial and civil portions of the law have been abrogated,25 but the moral law, and specifically the Ten Commandments, remains in effect. For example, Hodge argued, “the precepts of the decalogue bind the Church in all ages; while the specific details contained in the books of Moses, designed to point out the way in which the duty they enjoined was then to be performed, are no longer in force.”26

**Old Testament Evidence.** The tripartite division proves theologically useful to some since it suggests how the law can be both abrogated and binding at the same time. The problem is that the Old Testament itself suggests no such classification. The law makes no such distinction when arranging its commands. Everyone agrees that Leviticus 19:18 states a universally applicable moral principle: “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the

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24 “Since both terms—Israel and the church—are employed freely in Scripture without ever being used synonymously, the burden of proof is on the opponents of the dispensational emphasis” (Robert P. Lightner, “Theological Perspective on Theonomy—Part 3: A Dispensational Response to Theonomy,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 [July-September 1986]: 236).

25 While this represents the basic debate, the situation is actually more complex. For example, most covenant theologians agree that the “moral laws” continue, but do not agree which laws are moral. For a defense of this position, see Willem A. VanGemeren, “the Law Is the Perfection of Righteousness in Jesus Christ: A Reformed Perspective,” in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, ed. Wayne C. Strickland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 13-58. For others, only the Decalogue remains active. Fee and Stuart, however, argued that only commands repeated in the New Testament are binding on the church (Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982], 139). The Theonomists take all but the ceremonial law as permanently binding (Greg L. Bahnsen, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* [Nutley: Craig, 1977], 207-216).

children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” The very next verse, however, is ceremonial and would thus be limited to Old Testament Israel: “You shall keep My statutes. You shall not let your livestock breed with another kind. You shall not sow your seed with mixed seed. Nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you.” Nothing in these verses or the surrounding context suggests that Israel saw them as qualitatively different. Indeed, why should the first be binding on the church but not the second?

Furthermore, the law makes no such distinction when encouraging readers to heed its commands. The same motivational clauses appear with commands of all three classes. In Leviticus, for example, the Lord repeatedly commanded His people to “be holy; for I am holy” (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26). In the context, however, being holy involves obeying commands from all three categories of law. To be holy, the Jew had to limit his diet (11:41-45), a ceremonial command.²⁷ He also had to leave the corners of his field for gleaners (19:9-10), which was a civil command, and to revere his parents (19:2-3), which was a moral command. All three are motivated by the same comment: “I am the LORD.”

Finally, the law made no such distinction when assigning penalties for violators. The same punishment applies to the different classes of law. The death penalty is attached just as readily to Nadab and Abihu’s failure to follow proper ritual procedure (10:1-7) as to sexual immorality (20:8-16).

New Testament Evidence. The New Testament also regards the law as a unified whole. Paul, for example, testified to “every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law” (Gal 5:3). Similarly, James insisted, “whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jas 2:10). Kaiser, however, disagreed, arguing that Christ’s distinction between “weightier” and “lighter” things of the law (Matt 23:23) justifies the categories.²⁸ Kaiser’s argument is appealing at first glance,

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²⁷ Approached with different presuppositions, this commandment could also be classified as ceremonial, civil or moral. Although not developed here, the arbitrariness of classification is a major problem with the division of the law. As Dorsey observed, “all the so called ‘ceremonial’ and ‘civic’ laws embody or flesh out eternal moral and ethical principles. Conversely a number of the laws popularly categorized as ‘moral’ contain time-bound and culture-bound elements” (David A. Dorsey, “The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 34 [September 1991]: 330). For Dorsey, the Sabbath is a classic example of this latter type.

but it fundamentally misunderstands what Christ meant. Dorsey, a non-dispensationalist, clarified the matter:

Jesus, in agreement with the OT writers (cf. Deut 10:12; 1 Sam 15:22–23; Isa 1:11ff; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21–24; Mic 6:6–8; etc.), is simply arguing that the overarching principles and purposes of the corpus as a whole, as well as the underlying principles and purposes of each individual law (of whatever category), are more important (“weightier”) than the minor verbal details in the wording of specific regulations and the accompanying minutiae of oral traditions. ⁵⁹

Matthew 5:19 shows that whatever He did mean by these terms, Jesus clearly did not mean that certain laws are more significant than others: “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” In other words, every violation is a major violation. In light of this and other evidence, scholars of all theological persuasion reject the tripartite division of the law. ³⁰

**Implication.** Consider the implication of all this. If the Sabbath law is nullified, then all the law is nullified. As one of the Ten Commandments, Sabbath keeping is usually considered part of the moral law. Certainly, that is how Warfield understood it: “I am to speak to you today, not of the usefulness or of the blessedness of the Sabbath, but of its obligation. And I am to speak to you of its obligation, not as that obligation naturally arises out of its usefulness or blessedness, but as it is immediately imposed by God in his Word.” ³¹ If the Sabbath—one of the Ten Commandments—is no longer binding, how can any part of the law still be in effect?

As in the previous case, this idea is more than a logical conclusion; it is the clear and direct teaching of Scripture:

But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit be more glorious? For if the ministry of

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condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious (2 Cor 3:7-11).

In 2 Corinthians 3:7 and 11, the New King James Version translates καταργεῖω as “passing away.” The Greek term refers to that which has been done away with or abolished. The New Revised Standard Version makes the sense even clearer: “set aside.” Thus, the law with its glory is set aside—not just the law, but the portion specific “written and engraved on stones.” Ryrie noted the significance of this phrase:

The only part of the Mosaic law which was written in stones was the Ten Commandments — that category which some designate as the moral part of the law. Thus, this passage says that the Ten Commandments are a ministration of death; and furthermore, the same passage declares in no uncertain terms that they are done away (vs. 11). Language could not be clearer, and yet there are fewer truths of which it is harder to convince people.32

A Future for Israel
The end of the law leads to one more implication: God is not finished with Israel as a people. In both the Old and New Testaments, prophecy shows that the Sabbath law has a future. If the Sabbath, a peculiarly Israelite institution, has a future, then Israel must also have a future.33

Sabbath in the Future. Though abolished at this time, the Sabbath has a future. References to that future occur in Isaiah 66:23 and Matthew 24:20, but the most complete information comes from Ezekiel 36—46. In these chapters, the Lord promised the Babylonian exiles that He would ultimately bring in a new and permanent order for Israel. When He would gather Israel and Judah from captivity, He will retrieve each and every person (36:24; cf. 39:28), reunify the two nations of Israel and Judah (37:21-22) under the authority of a Davidic king (37:24-25), and reestablish them in their land (36:8-12, 33). At that time, He will give them a new heart (36:26) and place His own Spirit in them (36:27; 37:11-14; 39:29), so that they become His people, and He becomes their God (36:28; 37:23, 27; 39:22, 28). As part of this deliverance, the Lord will destroy the army of Gog in a conflict so great that it will take seven months to bury the dead (39:12). A huge, new Temple will be built (40—44), a Temple far greater and glorious than that built by Zerubbabel (cf. Hag

33 Indeed, as other Scriptures show, Israel’s future is the future of the world.
In this new Temple, the Lord will dwell, and from it, He will reign forever among His people Israel (43:7). None of these things have happened yet; the fulfillment must be in the future.

As part of the LORD’s instructions for worship in the new order, Ezekiel 44—46 makes six references to Sabbath observance. First, the priests are to sanctify the Sabbath (44:24). Second, each Sabbath, the prince is to offer sacrifices (45:15). Third, the eastern gate of the Temple’s inner court will be kept shut during the week, but on the Sabbath, it is to be opened (46:1). Fourth, on the Sabbath, the people are to worship (46:3). Fifth, it is at the eastern gate that the prince is to offer his Sabbath offering of six spotless lambs and a ram (46:4). Sixth, any voluntary offerings brought by the prince at other times are to be prepared according to the pattern of those for the Sabbath (46:12). In each and every case, the Sabbath is treated as a literal day of worship and rest.

Ezekiel 36—46 creates problems for amillennialists, who try to explain it as figurative of the new covenant relationship that has existed since the resurrection of Christ. Clowney’s explanation of Ezekiel’s Temple is a good example. He denied that spiritualized the text; nevertheless, he insisted that Ezekiel’s Temple is a reference to the incarnate Christ.

This is not spiritualization in our usual sense of the word, but the very opposite. In Christ is realization. It is not so much that Christ fulfills what the temple means; rather Christ is the meaning for which the temple existed. As the symbolic language of the temple cultus continues to be used for Christ and for the heavenly temple of his eternal ministry, we know that our understanding is being drawn from earthly things to heavenly, from the creature to the Creator. 34

If Ezekiel’s Temple refers figuratively to Christ, what is the interpreter to do with all the details associated with it? Why does the text spend three chapters just measuring every part of this imaginary structure? And what about the rituals, including the Sabbath, which are prescribed? How do they fit the “realization”? How much simpler and more natural it is to understand Ezekiel as describing an actual building!

Implication. The Lord has promised a new order, but it has not come. Why not? Since the Scriptures cannot err, there are only three possible explanations: (1) the promised new order is fulfilled spiritually in the church, which functions as the New Israel; (2) the promised new order has been forfeited by Israel, and so will never come; or, (3) the promised new order will yet be fulfilled in the future.

As already demonstrated, the church is not Israel. The abrogation of Sabbath law testifies to this fact. Thus, Scripture negates the first possibility. The second runs afoul of the specific emphasis of Ezekiel 36—46. These chapters condition everything on the Lord, nothing on Israel. Israel is the beneficiary, but the focus is on what the LORD does and why.

Throughout the passage, it is the Lord alone who acts, performing what He has spoken (36:36; 37:14). Israel, in contrast, is as dead and helpless as scattered dry bones. It is the Lord who raises them, restores them, and puts his Spirit within them (37:1-14). He even accepts responsibility for making them righteous, promising to “put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (36:27). Two verses later, he added, “I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses.” After such dogmatic assertions, it is hard to imagine an implied condition: “I will do all this—provided, of course that you do not stop me by rebelling.” Indeed, how can a condition be attached to a promise such as Ezekiel 39:29: “I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,” says the Lord GOD”?

If the Lord’s works suggest that the promise is unconditional, the motives that generate them are even more convincing. The Lord does not act because of compassion for Israel here, but because of concern for His own holy name: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went” (36:22; cf. 36:21, 32; 39:25). In all that He promises to do, the Lord has but one objective: that all men might know that he is the Lord, all Israelites (36:11, 38; 37:13-14; 39:22, 28) and all Gentiles (36:23, 36; 37:28; 38:23; 39:6-7). If, however, the promise is conditional, how does it vindicate the name of the Lord? How will the nations know that He is the Lord if He does not perform what He has spoken? Thus, the only viable explanation is that the new order is still future. If that is correct, then Israel must have a future.

CONCLUSIONS REGARDING DISPENSATIONALISM AS BIBLICAL

The preceding analysis dissected the Sabbath question biblically, examining the pertinent texts and interpreting them at face value. It validated its findings by comparing them with the teaching of other Scripture. By this means, it uncovered three specific insights: (1) the church is not New Testament Israel; (2) the entire Mosaic Code is no longer binding as law; and, (3) Israel has a role to play in the future. Each is a distinctive aspect of the system. All three are

35 According to Heideman, two of these are among its four basic tenets: “The main distinctives of Dispensationalism are, first, the consistent use of the grammatical-
clearly biblical. Thus, contrary to the pronouncements of some, there is nothing “unbiblical” about dispensationalism. In this case at least, its teachings are derived inductively from the text, not artificially imposed upon it. In short: dispensationalism is biblical.

APPLICATION OF THE SABBATH: DISPENSATIONALISM AS PRACTICAL

Everything based on Scripture is inherently useful, “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). Therefore, to be valid, the dispensational approach must show how the New Testament saint profits from the Old Testament commandment. The remainder of this article attempts to do just that.

Traditional Approaches to Application

As already demonstrated, most covenant theologians distinguish moral from non-moral laws. This classification dictates their application. Moral laws, such as the Sabbath, are applied as law, just as they were in the Old Testament. They do make minor adjustments to account for different times and circumstances, but as Hays explained, these adjustments raise another problem: If changed, is it still the same law?

Although many Christians claim that the Sabbath law is a moral law, practically none of them obey it. Going to church on Sunday, the first day of the week, can hardly be called obedience to the Sabbath law. Moses would not have accepted the first day of the week as a substitute for the seventh day. Also obeying the Sabbath regulations was much more involved than mere

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historical hermeneutic; second, the distinction between Israel and the Church; and, third, the reign of Jesus Christ and His saints in the Millennial Kingdom. The latter is the goal toward which God providentially works in human history. The fourth distinctive is that the unifying thread from the beginning to the end of the biblical record is the manifestation of God’s attributes, namely, His love, justice, faithfulness, and sovereignty” (Phillip Heideman, “Dispensational Theology,” Chafer Theological Seminary Journal 4 [Summer 1998]: 31).

That is, the civil and ceremonial laws.

Fortunately, these adjustments tend to “principalize” the commandments; thus, those practicing this approach often suggest the same practical application as those taking the approach suggested here. While the practice may be the same (e.g. “Honor your father and mother”), there is a major difference between living by principles and living by rules.
church attendance. In the Book of Numbers a man was executed for gathering wood on the Sabbath (Num. 15:32–36). 38

Conversely, non-moral laws are generically explained as foreshadowing some New Testament “realization.” Otherwise, they are ignored as no longer applicable. 39 This also creates a problem: Is the interpreter free to ignore large portions of inspired text? This is particularly troubling since it contradicts New Testament use of the Old. Consider Dorsey’s summary of Paul’s approach of Paul.

Paul holds the corpus in such high esteem that his inner being delights in it. Most significantly for the present inquiry, he maintains that the individual laws (speaking specifically of the law dealing with muzzling the ox; Deut 25:4) were given “for us” and are written “for us” (1 Cor 9:8-10). In no instance does he imply that only a particular category of laws possesses such high value. 40

To state things briefly, the traditional, moral—non-moral, approach runs a double risk: On the one hand it may add to the Scripture and on the other, subtract from it. Failure at either extreme brings dire consequences (cf. Rev 22:18-19).

Unfortunately, many dispensationalists follow the traditional approach without considering its theological implications. Others, in their zeal to defend their system, go even further, ignoring the law altogether, describing it only in negative terms, 41 or refusing to apply any command not explicitly repeated in the New Testament. 42 While intended to prevent legalism, this approach tends

39 This approach goes back at least to John Calvin, who dismissed ceremonial laws as nullified by the Gospel (Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Henry Beveridge [reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], 2.7–8).
41 Such thinking is in direct contrast to the positive testimony of both Old and New Testament passages, such as Psalm 119:97 and Romans 7:12. The negative attitude is especially evident in classic dispensationalists such as Robert Clark, who regarded the law not as a blessing that God gave, but as a mistake that Israel made: “When Israel had been delivered from Egyptian bondage and was about to receive the Law, God proposed to make them ‘a kingdom of priests’ (Exod 19:6); but Israel refused the obligation through fear of too close contact with God (Exod 20:19) and God accepted their renunciation (Deut 18:16,17)” (Robert Clark, “the Imperial Priesthood of the Believer (Revelation 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5, 9),” Bibliotheca Sacra 92 (1935): 443–444.
42 No dispensational scholar endorses these practices; nevertheless, a lifetime spent in dispensational churches has shown them to be somewhat common, especially among laymen.
to sidestep sanctification altogether either by stimulating antinomianism, a condition just as foreign to grace as legalism (Rom 6:1–14); or, in an exquisite irony, by producing its own kind of legalism where believers measure spirituality by the degree of liberty they allow themselves. Whatever its motive or effect, this approach tends to treat the Mosaic code not just as terminated law, but as expired Scripture, inspired texts with no message for the current dispensation.

“Principlism” as an Approach to Application

How then should a New Testament saint apply the Old Testament law? In keeping with the dispensationalist’s commitment to a consistent hermeneutic, Hays suggested that the proper approach must meet five criteria:

1. It should be an approach that (a) is consistent, treating the Old Testament Scripture as God’s Word, (b) does not depend on arbitrary noncontextual categories [e.g., dividing the law into moral, ceremonial, and civil commands], (c) reflects the literary and historical context of the Law, placing it firmly into the narrative story of the Pentateuch, (d) reflects the theological context of the Law, and (e) corresponds to New Testament teaching.

For Hays, this approach is “principlism,” an approach that attempts to identify and apply the universal principles implicit in Old Testament texts.

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43 Hays derived this approach from Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Biblical Interpretation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1991), 286–289; John Goldingay, *Models for Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 92; and Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 223–224, 255. For Hays’s defense and explanation of the approach, see Hays, “Applying Old Testament Law,” 21–35. Using this approach William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard Jr. argued that the law serves as “a paradigm of timeless ethical, moral, and theological principles”; therefore, the interpreter must seek to “discover the timeless truth beneath its cultural husk” (*Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* [Dallas: Word, 1993], 279). Dorsey suggested a similar scheme, consisting of four steps: “1. Remind yourself that this law is not my law, that I am not legally bound by it, that it is one of the laws God issued to ancient Israel as part of his covenant with them. . . . 2. Determine the original meaning, significance, and purpose of the law. . . . 3. Determine the theological significance of the law. . . . 4. Determine the practical implications of the theological insight gained from this law for your own NT circumstances” (Dorsey, “The Law of Moses and the Christian,” 332–333, *passim*).


45 An implication is an unstated, but necessary component of the author’s meaning. Christ treated the implications of Scripture as authoritative (Matt 22:29–32), as did the Apostle Paul (Rom 4:5-12; 1 Cor 9:8-10; 1 Tim 5:17-18). Valid applications of Scripture must fall with the bounds implicit in the text. The issue is serious because
This scheme involves five steps, each correlating with one or more of his criteria. First, discover what the law meant to its original readers, how they understood it, and were supposed to respond to it (i.e. grammatical-historical interpretation). While no longer regulation; the Mosaic code is still revelation, and this step treats it as such. Second, identify how the theological and situational reality of the original readers differs from that of modern Christians. Third, distinguish the universal principle behind the specific command. To assist in this process, Hays offered five guidelines: “(a) It should be reflected in the text, (b) it should be timeless, (c) it should correspond to the theology of the rest of Scripture, (d) it should not be culturally bound, and (e) it should be relevant to both Old Testament and current New Testament believers.”

Fourth, check the proposed principle against the teaching of the New Testament. Several Mosaic commands, including nine of the Ten Commandments, are repeated to the church, but their status has changed. “When the New Testament repeats a law it thus becomes a commandment for believers, to be obeyed as a command of Christ. But the validity and authority as a command comes from the New Testament and not the Old Testament.”

When, however, the New Testament nullifies a command, it is still God’s word. As such, it still demands a response, a response that reflects the same principle, but expressed in a way appropriate to the new dispensation. For example, the holiness code in Leviticus 11 gives a detailed list of what Israel could and could not eat. The church is not bound by that law (Acts 10:9-16), but it is bound by the principle implicit in it. New Testament believers are also to manifest a difference even in the mundane matters of life: “whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). Fifth, apply the principle to modern life. Perhaps the clearest example of this in the New Testament is found in 1 Corinthians 9:9, where Paul used a Mosaic command about oxen to demonstrate that those in ministry ought to receive material support. Deuteronomy 25:4 was not given to the church at Corinth; indeed, the law did not even deal with the matter at issue. What was relevant was the principle behind the law: those who work should receive reward from their labors. If it is true of an ox, how much more is it true of a man of God!

Priniciplism and the Application of Sabbath Law

Sabbath observance is an excellent case for evaluating the usefulness of principlism. The Sabbath is the only one of the Ten Commandments not repeated to the church; thus, the New Testament does not assign any present...
application to it. Furthermore, the ethical principle that requires the distinction of one day from the rest of week is not immediately obvious. Indeed, one can question whether that principle is even an ethical one. Though many Christians consider the Sabbath a moral obligation, Scripture often regards it as a ceremonial ritual along with the other celebrations of Israel: “Let no one judge you . . . regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths” (Col 2:16).

**Original Meaning**

*Requirements.* The fourth commandment was given to Israel at Sinai as one of its basic stipulations of the Mosaic covenant. As such, the Lord made the requirements explicit. Israel was to set apart (“keep holy”) the seventh day of the week. On it, no one in Israel (Jew, slave, resident alien, or even animal) was to do any work (Exod 20:10; Deut 5:14). Plowing and reaping were to cease (Exod 34:21). Fires were not to be kindled (35:2-3). However, it was not a day of inactivity; it was a day of worship. Every Sabbath, there was to be a “holy convocation,” an assembly of the people for celebration (Lev 23:3), a weekly remembrance of the Lord’s grace paralleling the annual remembrances at New Years, Passover, and Pentecost (Numb 28). In addition to the daily burnt offerings, the priests were to offer a special burnt offering of two male lambs, a special grain offering of fine flour, and a special drink offering on the Sabbath (28:9-10).

*Significance.* Sabbath observance had special significance to Israel; it commemorated their unique relationship with the Lord: “It is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you” (Exod 31:13). Consequently, failure to comply was a capital crime (Numb 15:32-36). The law explains its ban on working in light of this significance. In Exodus 20:11, Sabbath rest is seen as a reflection of the Lord’s own “rest” after completing creation. As such, it marked Israel’s special relationship with the Creator. In Deuteronomy 5:15, it is seen as an opportunity for remembering that the Lord had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Thus, it also marked Israel’s special relationship with their Redeemer.

**Modern Differences**

In the New Testament, participation in Sabbath rest is an option, but no longer a requirement. Furthermore, the modern Christian is under the New Covenant, not the Old (Mosaic) Covenant. The sign of that covenant is the cup taken at the Lord’s Table, as Christ himself declared: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood” (1 Cor 11:25).

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48 In Leviticus 23, the Sabbath is listed as one of the “feasts of the LORD” along with Passover, First Fruits (Pentecost), Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.
Universal Principle
Even before the commandment was abolished, Jesus’ controversy with the Pharisees reveals at least one principle implicit in the law of the Sabbath. As Deffinbaugh observed, Jesus and His opponents saw the law differently. They saw it as a precept, or rule; He saw it as a principle: “To the Pharisees, the essence of the Fourth Commandment was this precept: *Thou shalt not work*. To the Lord Jesus, the essence of this commandment was this principle: *Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy*. One could cease from work on the Sabbath (as the Pharisees did) without keeping the Sabbath holy.”\(^49\) The Sabbath as law is now abolished, but the principles behind it remain.

When seeking applications of the Fourth Commandment, most people start (and end) their search with a comparison of the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day, but there is a better and more general basis for application. This principle is often missed when people read Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The Sabbath commandment does more than regulate the seventh day; in reality, it regulates the entire week: “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it you shall do no work*” (Exod 20:9-10, cf. Deut 5:13-14). Implicit in all this is the fact that the Lord, not man, has authority over his people’s time.\(^50\) He organizes their time into distinct periods and claims the right to determine how each is to be used. Thus, in work as well as worship, they are accountable to God.

Correlation with New Testament
The New Testament authenticates this principle. In Romans 14, Paul explained why Christians should not judge each other in matters of individual conscience. In the process, however, he reflected a balanced New Testament view of the Sabbath issue:

One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and he gives God thanks. For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s (Rom 14:5-8).


\(^50\) The author gained this insight from a conversation with Rev. Bruce Baker, a friend and adjunct professor at Calvary Bible College and Theological Seminary.
In one respect, this clearly teaches that the Sabbath is no longer a matter of law. In another respect, it shows that the real issue is not keeping Sabbath, but how one uses his time, whether it is used for the Lord. This understanding is confirmed by Paul’s parallel example, the application of Jewish dietary laws. The Sabbath issue is applied to the believer’s use of his time, the food issue, and to his reception of God’s provision. In both cases, he demonstrated that the command is defunct, but the principle is still at work.

**Modern Application**

In light of the preceding, one basic way for the Christian to apply the Sabbath is to regard his time as given and regulated by the Lord. With God in charge, there is always time for what he needs to do, time to finish his work, and time to worship his God. Nothing in this conclusion is intended to imply that regular church worship is optional for the Christian. Hebrews 10:25 is clear and binding on the church: Christians are not free to forsake regular assembly with others of like faith. This, however, is a matter of New Testament law, not an application of the Fourth Commandment.

**DISPENSATIONALISM AS BIBLICAL AND PRACTICAL**

In the twenty-first century, as already stated, dispensationalism faces challenges from two opposing poles within evangelicalism: those who consider it unbiblical and those who consider it irrelevant. This article has examined the issue of Sabbath observance to show that dispensationalism rises to both challenges. By approaching Scripture with a consistent, common sense hermeneutic, it discovers truths “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). In short: dispensationalism is profitable, and it is profitable because it is biblical.
Book Reviews


Anderson has attempted to provide a theological framework for emerging churches. Whereas an emergent theology is messianic, revelational, kingdom coming, and eschatological, he distinguished an emergent church as missional, reformational, stressing kingdom living, and incarnational (pp. 16-17). Anderson wrote, “An emergent theology without being embedded in emerging churches becomes isolated, speaking only to itself (solipsistic!), and living the monastic life of those whose windows to the world are not only stained glass but unable to be opened from the inside” (p. 17).

The thesis of his work is “the Christian community that emerged out of Antioch constitutes the original form and theology of the emerging church as contrasted with the believing community at Jerusalem” (p. 20). Convinced the thesis is true, Anderson defined an emergent church as “the first-century emerging church at Antioch, including the various churches that came into existence through Paul’s ministry based in Antioch” (p. 10). The emerging church was then referenced as “a rich variety emerging in both Protestant and Roman Catholic communities.”

According to Anderson, the differences between the Christian community in Antioch and Jerusalem were about theology, not geography. “What clearly set apart the emerging church at Antioch from the church at Jerusalem was a theology of revelation as contrasted with a theology of religion. The theology of the Jerusalem church was committed to historical precedent, crippled by religious scruple and controlled by a fortress mentality.” The contrast was the emerging church at Antioch, which “was oriented to a theology of revelation as led by Paul” (p. 25). Anderson’s premise is difficult to distinguish from his conclusions concerning an alleged schism and essential differences in belief and practice between the churches in Antioch and Jerusalem. His work is divided into nine chapters with each attempting to identify essential differences between the churches in Antioch and Jerusalem.

Based on the title of the book, Anderson’s work is confusing. For instance, his definition of “emergent” is quite different from widely used and recognized definitions among emerging churches. Emerging churches have a strong relationship to the Emergent Village (www.emergentvillage.com). Since the definition and relationship is already established, his work will likely cause greater confusion concerning the emerging church movement. Due to its redefinition, this book is not recommended for understanding the emergent church. Furthermore, the thesis concerning the alleged differences between the
chairs in Antioch and Jerusalem is based on a distinctive interpretation of biblical passages.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.


This book is another antagonistic response to God’s chosen methods for growing and sustaining His church. The thesis of the book is that the church will have irresistible influence as the Gospel is incarnated “so well and so effectively that our city—rather than scoffing or ridiculing our proclamations, or worse, ignoring us altogether—would, instead, because of our good works, literally feel compelled to give glory to the God they saw working through us” (p. 64). The primary means of having irresistible influence is through bridge-building. The author confessed, “Frankly, I cannot think of a better metaphor for what the church of Jesus Christ is biblically designed to be than that of a bridge” (p. 15). “The message of this book is simple: the church must rediscover its essential role and craft as bridge builder” (p. 28). On the contrary, the Apostle Paul _who was inspired by God_ used the analogy of the church to a body (never a bridge). Certainly the author has been entirely too dogmatic with his analogy in stating, “If the church functions with any other design than that of a bridge, it dooms itself” (p. 31).

The book is divided into five parts. Each chapter begins with a story of bridge-building to help reach one’s community. The author supported his conclusions by illustrations from the science of bridge-building. Part one, “Spanning the Great Divide,” was the author’s attempt to give evidence of “the great chasm” between the church and culture. Part two, “Designing the Structure,” was an explanation of how the author’s church in Little Rock, Arkansas has attempted “incarnational bridge building” to overcome that chasm. Part three, “Experiencing the Results,” was a compilation of true stories of i^2 (irresistible influence) in action. Part four, “Expanding the i^2 Effort,” explained how Fellowship Bible Church was led into “some surprising new partnerships, particularly with other churches” (p. 16). Part five, “Anticipating the Future,” claims to answer concerns “that this book already sounds too much like the ‘social gospel’” and would answer theological concerns, “while providing a balanced perspective” (ibid).

The “church of irresistible influence” is not proposing anything new. It is yet another attempt to document how the church has lost its connection to the culture. The dominance of postmodern thought in the culture means the world is skeptical of anything that is not authentic. The author believes bridge-building is the means to become authentic and reconnect to the culture by
becoming “incarnational.” The author wrote, “The church, we now firmly believe, is to be in the bridge-building business, according to the design of Jesus Christ. Over this bridge the church must travel and prove its reality to a disbelieving world. Only then will the world reconsider its skepticism, hostility, and lostness. Our world must experience the same incarnational influence as the first century experienced when Grace and Truth suddenly bridged that Great Chasm and became flesh” (p. 30). The second chapter, “Living Proof,” contains numerous biblical references stressing that the church is exhorted in the following: “let everyone see your good deeds” (Matt 5:16); “love your enemies, do good to them” (Luke 6:31-35); “it is more blessed to give” (Acts 20:35); “overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:20-21); “do good to all people” (Gal 6:9-10); “created to do good works” (Eph 2:10); “do not grow weary of doing good” (2 Thess 3:13); “be rich in good deeds” (1 Tim 6:17-19); “engage in good deeds” (Tit 3:8); “be eager to do what is good” (2:11-14); “spur one another to love and good deeds” (Heb 10:24); and, “be eager to do good” (1 Pet 3:13). The church does need to be reminded of these exhortations, and the author’s point is good here. Indeed, the church must repent of indifference to serious engagement with the culture. Unfortunately, most conservative evangelicals reacted to the liberal social gospel of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century so that the majority ceased any serious engagement with the culture because of the social gospel that was so prevalent at the time.

Chapter ten, “Equipping Leaders,” is also good to remind church leaders “there is no greater investment in the future of the church than by identifying, encouraging, and providing training for the young leaders in our midst” (p. 179). Bible colleges and seminaries are crucial partners with the church in providing a biblical and theological foundation and working with the church to provide “mentoring in the field” (p. 181). The author gives a good emphasis to “finding and training tomorrow’s leaders” (p. 180).

There are some good points in the book, as in chapters two and ten. However, there is a superseding emphasis in the book encouraging antagonism to God’s chosen methods for growing and sustaining His church. Lewis wrote, “Still, let me say straight up: I do not believe in a social gospel that seeks to save the world through human compassion and good works. My trust is in Jesus Christ alone” (p. 16). One would like to give the author the benefit of the doubt, but one cannot ignore that the emphasis of the book does manifest antagonism toward biblical preaching and teaching. Indeed, the tenor of the book is such that proclamation of the Word of God is secondary to community service (“human compassion and good works”). Since the author has stated that he does not believe in a social gospel, then if human compassion and good works is the emphasis of the book, it appears that the author has disengaged his readers from thinking critically about this emphasis. Later in the book, the author confesses belief in a “powerful combination” of a “social gospel” and a
“spiritual gospel” (p. 208). If the author believes in the validity of both, the question is regarding which gospel receives the greatest emphasis, and what is the primary emphasis of Scripture.

No matter what the author has said about unbelief in a social gospel, the emphasis of the work is a drift from a spiritual Gospel and a shift toward a social gospel. For example, the author wrote, “I love expository preaching and deeply admire those who do it well. But great preaching alone will not reach our world or magically transport unbelievers across the Great Chasm” (p. 24). Throughout the work, preaching and teaching of God’s Word is secondary to community service. For example, Lewis believes, “Proclamation was more a matter of essence—in life and death—than it was an enunciation of words” (p. 42). “Human compassion and good works” is a powerful apologetic of the Christian faith and the fact that Christians have been “born from above” (John 3) should evidence itself in the life of the church, but it is not indicated as the primary means for reaching the lost. The church preaches Christ, not self. It is essential to recognize postmodern trends that deny the Lord Jesus Christ will build His church by the agency of the Holy Spirit and by the power of the Gospel. Very simply, it is the Word of God building the church. The preacher exposits the point of the biblical passage to speak with the authority of God so the church may hear and heed God’s Word. Preaching is only with God’s authority as the Word of God is handled aright. The church is continually conforming herself to God’s mind. One must recognize the authority of God over the heart, mind, and soul. Whenever anything is substituted for the accurate teaching of Scripture, God’s authority is usurped. Pride must never allow this, nor must it elevate one’s own thoughts, or even using scores of illustrations and stories that are unrelated to explaining the meaning of Scripture and the mission of the church. Preachers are stewards who are to explain the meaning of the text of Scripture and exhort people to obey it. The problem is that many pastors fail to preach and teach the Word of God, and therefore, they abandon their authority from God. As a result, the church is not confronted with a word from God and the authority of God is not in the preaching, which is why the message receives little more than a yawn. What the church needs is more biblical, disciplined thinking through the preaching and teaching of God’s Word. Western Christendom especially needs a deeper, more biblical knowledge of God.

When the accurate preaching and teaching of the Word of God is neglected, the work of the Holy Spirit is hindered. The church will be catapulted into the future only as she is carefully governed and powerfully driven by the Word of God. Nevertheless, the “church of irresistible influence” would have the church believe “more preaching is not the answer to today’s spiritual hunger” (p. 47). The author stressed, “Don’t preach. Prove! Serve! Give! Love! Put flesh on the Word of God” (p. 163). The Word of God in the
“church of irresistible influence,” as in so many books today, gives consistent disregard to the faithful enunciation of Scripture.

There is always a strong relationship between doctrine (orthodoxy) and application (orthopraxis) in Scripture. The foundation of orthopraxis is orthodoxy. If ever there is a problem with orthopraxis, it is inevitably a problem with orthodoxy, which is why the church needs more expositional preaching. Expositional preaching is the communicating of God’s truth by God’s servant to meet the needs of God’s people and to confront a godless culture. The church grows quantitatively and qualitatively through the systematic teaching of God’s Word. The Holy Spirit creates and sustains the church by the Word of God (2 Kgs 22—23; Neh 8—9; Isa 55:10-11; Ezek 37:1-14; Matt 4:4; John 1:1, 4, 14; Acts 19:20; 20:32; Rom 1:16; 10:17; 1 Thess 2:13; Heb 4:12; Jas 1:18, 21; 1 Pet 1:23, 25). It is crucial to teach the church that God’s chosen method to bring new life is to use His Word, that is, the enunciation of God’s words. The Church of Irresistible Influence disparages God’s chosen means for growing and sustaining His church.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.


Bat Ye’or’s scholarship is again highly impressive in her most recent book, _Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis_. Ye’or was born in Egypt, and has been a British citizen living in Switzerland since 1960. Her work examines the historical relationship between the European Union and the Arab states from the 1970s. “The decisive shift in European policy” came after the Yom Kippur War and “as a result of the oil crisis of 1973” (p. 10). Eurabia, therefore, is the Arab/Islamic influence upon Europe; it is the shifting of Europe into the Arab-Islamic sphere of influence, which is accomplished through European-Arab collaboration developed at all levels: political, cultural, social, economic, and technological spheres of influence.

The Euro-Arab collaboration became the means for Arab immigration into Europe, leading to what Ye’or called a pseudo-culture imported from Arab countries, which is characterized by anti-Americanism, Judeophobia, and a universal hatred of the West. This pseudo-culture that Ye’or described is evident in its anti-Christianity, anti-Westernism, and anti-Zionism. Ye’or believes the demure response to violent Muslim protests is ingrained in a multiform European symbiosis with the Arab world. Since Eurabia began in the 1970s, Europe has still been unable to resist the Muslim world, even when the nation’s own basic ethics are being threatened. Indeed, such impotence has determined Europe’s relentless anti-Zionism and its anti-Americanism.
Europe renounced its Judeo-Christian heritage and set the stage for its own Islamicization. A continual decline in the European population and sustained increase in Arab immigration have coincided. The result is a revered welfare state among an aging, decreasing population that is dependent upon new immigrants who are predominantly if not wholly Muslim. A youthful Muslim society to the south and to the east of the Mediterranean is fully prepared to colonize. The decline of European Christianity makes the prospect even more significant. Less than ten percent of the population attends church once a month or more. Europe renounced its Judeo-Christian heritage because European intelligentsia believed consideration and secularism for Islamic beliefs would benefit the nation, but it only encouraged and strengthened Muslim fundamentalism. The combination of a decreasing population, predominantly Muslim immigration, religious tolerance, and decadent social and sexual freedoms has left Europe anemic in the face of fanaticism. The creeping Islamicization of a decadent Christendom in Europe should be a concern to all. Europe is oblivious to the reality that the clash of cultures war is already occurring, and the nation is feebly equipped to fight. Moreover, the pseudo-culture imported from Arab countries in a post-Christian nation has empowered the Muslim colonies in their religious observance.

Ye’or examined a wide range of contemporary and historical facts and sources to document the Islamicization of the European Union that is affecting the ethics and values of Europe itself. *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* is mandatory reading.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.


*Uncommon Dissent* includes a collection of essays from leading theorists of intelligent design. Only three of the fourteen chapters have appeared in other publications. This volume contains four parts: Part I: A Crisis of Conscience; Part II: Darwinism’s Cultural Inroads; Part III: Leaving the Darwinian Fold; and, Part IV: Auditing the Books. Part I addresses why Darwinism fails to inspire confidence from the general public. Part II addresses the effects of Darwinism upon culture and society as a total worldview. Part III provides three intellectual journeys from Darwinism. Part IV addresses the failures of Darwinism. This collection of essays demonstrates that the most formidable critics of Darwinism are intellectuals and scientists who can identify its flaws. For instance, in his chapter “Teaching the Flaws in Neo-Darwinism,” Edward Sisson wrote, “The proponents of intelligent design whom I find persuasive do
not argue that evolution must be suppressed because of some conflict with the Bible. Instead, they argue that unintelligent evolution should be questioned because the scientific evidence offered to support it is weak” (p. 95).

The value of this collection of essays is to demand that scientists function as scientists, which means they should have the integrity to ask questions concerning their theories. Furthermore, when scientists are criticized, to respond with logical and rational argument or discussion in contrast to affront, misrepresentation, and plea to so-called “experts.” *Uncommon Dissent* makes it clear that something other than pure science is responsible for the beliefs of those who advocate Darwinism.

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.


Several years ago, John Blanchard wrote a book for atheists, agnostics, and others who doubted the existence of God. Although the original intent was to be a relatively concise work, the result was the nationally acclaimed *Does God Believe in Atheists?* It was beyond 650 pages, which exceeded the desired scope and depth of the author. The present volume is the author’s much briefer work in apologetics for the average man.

It is not uncommon to read philosophers and scientists who believe God is non-existent, irrelevant, or “past His sell-by date.” Blanchard’s book has been written specifically with them in mind, and also for those who are skeptical regarding these issues.

Most of the previous topics in *Does God Believe in Atheists?* are also found in this work. However the book also contains a chapter, “Where was God on September 11” (previously published as a pamphlet), which is an excellent response to the question of human suffering. The last chapter, “The beginning?”, is an assessment of Pascal’s Wager and plea to an unbeliever to consider the data presented. With passion and sensitivity, Blanchard challenged his unbelieving readers, “Even if you have unanswered questions or honest doubts, take God at his Word! Call upon him! Ask him to do for you what you can never do for yourself!”

Each chapter ends with the personal testimony of a witness who substantiates the claims of the author in the chapter. Blanchard has proven that the unbeliever does not reject Christianity on the basis of evidence, but because they have been seduced by the ungodly spirit of the age. Throughout the reading of this book, one could not help but think the question is not whether God is relevant, but whether the message of Scripture is propositional truth.
This book is a welcome read, and will equip the saints to always be ready to give a defense (1 Pet 3:15).

Ron J. Bigalke Jr.


Over one million copies of *Wild at Heart* have been sold, which means a number of men welcome its message. One reason for the welcomed response is that Eldredge writes as “one of the good old boys.” In *Wild at Heart*, he invited “men to recover their masculine heart, defined in the image of a passionate God” (dust jacket). Eldredge believes that true masculinity can only be recovered in the wilderness. Even Jesus (in addition to Moses, Jacob, Elijah, and John the Baptist) “was led by the Spirit into the wilderness” (p. 5). “Deep in his heart, every man longs for a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue. That is how he bears the image of God; that is what God made him to be” (front flap). Real men need a battle, adventure, and a beauty to find fulfillment. This is why men are supposedly bored in American churches and do not find fulfillment being spiritual leaders; they must find recover their hearts “on the burning desert sands” (p. 6).

Eldredge wrote, “Look at the heroes of the biblical text: Moses does not encounter the living God at the mall. He finds him (or is found by him) somewhere out in the deserts of Sinai. . . . The same is true of Jacob . . . who has his wrestling match with God . . . in a wadi. . . . Where did the great prophet Elijah go to recover his strength? To the wild. As did John the Baptist, and his cousin, Jesus. . . .” (p. 5). Of course, Eldredge is confused regarding prescriptive and descriptive texts in Scripture. Godly men do not always “encounter” God “in the wild,” some “encountered” God in urban areas. Throughout his book, Eldredge displays an appalling disrespect and casualness to rightly divide Scripture in a manner glorifying to God.

A more serious matter is the inadequate portrayal of God in *Wild at Heart*. Dimishing the sovereignty of God, Eldredge portrayed Him as “a person who takes immense risks” (p. 30). He added, “He did not make Adam and Eve obey him. He took a risk. A staggering risk, with staggering consequences” (p. 31). Although Eldredge stated he was “not advocating open theism” (p. 32), he does use that language and understanding. This reviewer is not convinced of the author’s pointless and meaningless language. His portrayal of God as one who “takes immense risks” is idolatrous and unbiblical. Both the Father and the Son are always portrayed in a manner that supports Eldredge’s thesis that even God is wild at heart. Eldredge failed to present all the attributes and characteristics of God by focusing only on the justice, omnipotence, and wrath of God.
Eldredge encouraged readers, “Compare your experience watching the latest James Bond or Indiana Jones thriller with, say, going to Bible study” (p. 13). Throughout the book, he referred to movies as equal, if not more important, than inductive Bible study. For instance, Eldredge wrote, “God is intimately personal with us and he speaks in ways that are peculiar to our own quirky hearts—not just through the Bible, but through the whole of creation. . . . God’s word to me comes in many ways—through sunsets and friends and films and music and wilderness and books” (p. 200). The model for masculinity in this work is not Scripture but Hollywood. It is not biblical study that forms the author’s conclusions; rather movies serve as the primary source for Eldredge’s conclusions. The author does praise some character traits that would be commended in Scripture; however, the authority and source used to garner the traits is Hollywood. As he wrote earlier (p. 13), movies are much more exciting than study of the Word of God. This review is not intended to commend or denigrate movies, but it is to state that to search for renewed spiritual passion, one should look to Scripture (cf. Eph 5:25-33; 1 Tim 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9; 2:1-8) not Hollywood. The author’s attempts to be relevant make human wisdom clearly more important than Scripture. Not only does Eldredge give much attention to movies, but also he claimed several alleged revelations from God.

On page 103, the author claims Jesus whispered a question to him. Although Eldredge later admitted “the Evil One” may “whisper to you as if he were the voice of God” (p. 134), he refers to his “revelations” with little or no discernment. For example, he recorded in a journal an alleged conversation with God (p. 135).

What of me, dear Lord? Are you pleased? What did you see? I am sorry that I have to ask, wishing I knew without asking. Fear, I suppose, makes me doubt. Still I yearn to hear from you—a word, or image, a name or even just a glance from you.

This is what I heard:

You are Henry V after Agincourt. . . . the man in the arena, whose face is covered with blood and sweat and dust, who strove valiantly. . . . a great warrior. . . . yes, even Maximus. And then You are my friend.

How did Eldredge know his revelation was from God? The way he felt afterward. He wrote, “I cannot tell you how much those words mean to me. In fact, I’m embarrassed to tell them to you; they seem arrogant. . . . They are words of life, words that heal my wound and shatter the Enemy’s accusations” (p. 135). Eldredge’s “revelations” are obvious contrasts to the examples of Scripture. Furthermore, instead of personal accountability for sin, Eldredge focuses upon personal “wounds” that every man possesses (pp. 120-138). For example, he wrote of one man, who “saw the whole sexual struggle not so much as sin but as a battle for his strength” (p. 147). Sin and repentance are
avoided and focus is given to inner healing and battles for personal strength. The message is consistent with Hollywood fantasy, but antithetical to biblical truth.

Eldredge claimed to help a man discover the secret of his soul. He wrote, “the desires are there for a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue... Desire reveals design, and design reveals destiny. In the case of human beings, our design is also revealed by our desires” (p. 48). According to Eldredge, man was designed to pursue his desires. Since man has a desire for a battle, adventure, and beauty, then these are things he should pursue. By contrast to Wild at Heart, true and biblical masculinity is to pursue the glory of God first and foremost, and to be satisfied in Him. To pursue the desires that Eldredge believes every man desires is unbiblical and unwarranted.

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In this hilarious and razor-sharp inquiry, the late philosopher David Stove, an expert on the philosophy of David Hume and a widely published polemical journalist, concluded that Darwin’s theory of evolution is “a ridiculous slander on human beings.” Indeed, the inadequate record of Darwinism has not stopped Darwinists from slandering humanity. Stove was a man of “no religion,” and regarded Darwin as a “great genius” and believed “the theory of natural selection is the most successful biological theory in history” (front flap). His argument was “that Darwinism is not true; not true, at any rate, of our species.” He did believe natural selection explained much “of sponges, snakes, flies, or whatever” (p. xiv). If Darwinism were true of known humanity, “there would be in every species a constant and ruthless competition to survive,” when “it is perfectly obvious that human life is not like that, however it may be with other species” (p. 3). Stove’s cited abortion, alcohol, and even altruism as examples of behaviors that diminish human life or the number of children born into the world. Against Darwinism, he argued, none of these behaviors are being “rigidly destroyed” (back flap). Since the author intended to portray the human species rightly as it is known in historical time, he did not explain “how our species came to be the kind of thing it is” (p. xv). What was important to Stove was “to see our species rightly” and “not to be imposed upon by the ludicrously false portrayals which Darwinians give of the past, and even of the present, of our species.” For those “who want to get behind the doctrinaire cant” of Darwinism, Stove’s eleven key points are worth observing.

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