

Faith, Hope and Love

(Expanded Edition)



"But the greatest of these is love"

Apostle Paul

Brother Woody Brohm

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By Brother Woody Brohm

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For through the Spirit we eagerly await by *faith* the righteousness for which we *hope*. For in Christ Jesus...the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through *love*.

Galatians 5:5-6

Chapter 1: A Treasured History

The story of salvation is recorded in the Bible through true accounts of real people. Faith is a core element of salvation and has a long and treasured history. The narrative of Adam and Eve recounts the first sin and promise of redemption. After they had sinned, God sacrificed an innocent animal and demonstrated the concept of substitutionary sacrifice. Adam and Eve wore the animal skin that subsequently served as a remembrance of that important event. From the very beginning, God revealed that salvation would require a substitutionary sacrifice. The innocent animal offered in Eden was a foreshadowing, and all the sacrifices that followed anticipated the coming Redeemer. The full plan would be unveiled over time, culminating in the sacrifice of God's own Son, Jesus Christ.

In that moment, though the Garden was lost, the hope of restoration was born. God did not leave Adam and Eve without covering—both physically and spiritually. The animal's death pointed to a future sacrifice that would fully atone for sin. This was not merely a lesson in shame or consequence, but a revelation of mercy. For the first time, mankind was given a glimpse into God's redemptive character—a God who would one day offer His own Son in place of the guilty.

The narrative goes on to present Abel, their second son, making an acceptable offering to the Lord. Abel was a shepherd and sacrificed animals selected from the firstborn of his flock. He understood the interdependence of faith and obedience. Though there is no record of him saying anything, he demonstrated his faith by his actions. By his example, we have learned to approach God on the right terms,

and with the proper attitude. Abel's life came to an abrupt end, but he left a legacy of faith that will last for eternity.

“By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead” (Hebrews 11:4; Matthew 23:35).

Abel's offering reveals a theological truth that echoes throughout the Bible: only by blood can there be forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22). Cain's offering, though sincere, was rejected—not because it lacked effort, but because it lacked obedience and the correct object of faith. This distinction is crucial. Salvation is not achieved by good intentions, but by trusting and obeying God's revealed way. Abel's sacrifice foreshadowed Christ's own perfect offering, and though he died young, he is eternally remembered in the “hall of faith.”

The Old Testament tradition of faithfulness and sacrifice is recorded in the story of Job. Even before Moses and the Law, men would make appropriate sacrifices for themselves and those in their household. The father, in essence, served as a priest for the family. Job was a righteous and wealthy man and had seven sons and three daughters. They lived in Uz, southeast of the Dead Sea. The events and customs described in the book of Job indicate that he was a contemporary of Abraham, during the patriarchal period, or about 2000 BC. His priestly role is evident by his faithful actions.

“When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them [his family] to be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them,

thinking, 'Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' This was Job's regular custom" (Job 1:5).

Here we see that faith is not passive. It leads to action. Job's sacrifices weren't based on visible sins, but on the possibility of unseen failings—"perhaps they have sinned." His reverence for God and sense of responsibility point to a man who trusted not in his riches or status, but in the holiness and justice of the One who sees the heart.

Job's greatest testimony comes not in his wealth, but in his suffering. Stripped of everything—possessions, family, health—he still proclaimed:

"I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"
(Job 19:25–27).

This remarkable declaration shows that Job understood far more than we might expect. He believed in resurrection. He believed in a personal Redeemer. And he looked forward to standing before God in a glorified body. He may not have known all the details of the gospel like we do today, but he believed up to the extent of revelation God made known to him. Faith was required to make regular sacrifices in anticipation of God's ultimate plan of redemption.

Faith in God's plan requires knowledge and understanding of God's plan. It is obvious that God had revealed much to Job as he

confidently spoke of his own resurrection. God has revealed much to mankind at large, but it is a progressive revelation. It began in the Garden of Eden and has been steadily unfolding throughout the ages. The recurring themes of this revelation are sin, sacrifice, and eternal destiny. Our eternal destiny will be either restoration with God, or isolation apart from Him.

This truth lies at the center of dispensational theology. God has dealt with mankind in distinct ways across different ages, or dispensations, each marked by unique responsibilities and increasing light. From innocence in Eden to conscience, to human government, to promise, to Law, and now to grace—each dispensation unfolds more of God's redemptive plan, culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The sacrificial systems of old anticipated the cross; the promises of the patriarchs pointed forward to the Seed. Even in the darkest moments of human failure, God's covenant promises continued shining forward, unwavering in their trajectory toward Christ—the Lamb of God who would fulfill every shadow, every promise, and every expectation.

It is at this point in the unfolding plan that the cross takes center stage.

Salvation is a work of God for sinful man and is based on the sacrifice of God's own Son, Jesus Christ. The animal sacrifices instituted in the Old Testament were never intended to take away sin permanently, but they pointed forward to the one perfect sacrifice that would. The blood of bulls and goats served as a temporary covering, a placeholder until the appointed time when God would send the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John

1:29). These ancient offerings anticipated the ultimate atonement. In their repetition, they revealed the need for something greater. That “something greater” was Christ. His death on the cross fulfilled every shadow, every symbol, and every hope embedded in the sacrificial system.

The veracity of God’s redemption plan has not been revealed all at once, but slowly and methodically across time. From the garden to the cross, and from the cross to the promise of Christ’s return, God has progressively made known His intentions, His heart, and His power to redeem. And while humanity changes with the seasons, God’s plan remains unchanged. His promise of salvation is not a vague religious hope—it is rooted in the finished work of Christ. To exercise faith effectively, we must believe that God is both willing and able to save us, and that His means of salvation is not through self-effort or religious ritual, but through faith in the crucified and risen Son of God.

This brings us to a crucial truth: biblical faith is not generic optimism. It is not “believing things will work out,” or “trusting that everything happens for a reason,” or “hoping the universe is on our side.” That may pass as cultural faith, but it is far from biblical faith. The object of faith matters infinitely more than the strength of it. A person can have unshakable faith in a flawed object and be gravely disappointed. True faith—saving faith—is faith placed specifically in God’s redemptive plan, centered on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This faith does not rest on our understanding or circumstances, but on God's unchanging truth revealed in His Word.

Biblical faith believes that God has spoken, and that what He has said is trustworthy and final. It trusts that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, who took on human flesh, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death, and rose bodily from the grave. It believes that Jesus bore our sins in His body on the cross and that, by believing in Him, we are justified before God—not by works, not by effort, not by religious merit, but by grace through faith. This faith produces assurance, not because we feel saved, but because God has declared us righteous through Christ's atonement.

And from this living faith springs hope—not a vague longing, but a confident expectation. In the biblical context, hope is not wishful thinking or sentimental daydreaming. It is a rock-solid conviction that what God has promised, He will surely fulfill. This kind of hope is transformational. It changes our outlook, our decisions, and our desires. It shifts our focus from the fleeting pleasures and pressures of this world to the eternal realities that await us in Christ. Hope, in this sense, is not passive. It actively pulls us forward. It reorients our goals, purifies our motives, and stirs our obedience. Paul wrote that we are “looking for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). This hopeful expectancy is the lens through which believers are called to view all of life.

Hope born of faith lifts our eyes beyond our present struggles. It teaches us to see trials as temporary, suffering as purposeful, and obedience as worthwhile. The believer who has fixed their hope on Christ cannot be shaken by the changing winds of fortune or fear. Hope acts as an anchor for the soul (Hebrews 6:19)—steadfast and

secure. It anchors us in the promises of God when the storms of life threaten to sink us in despair.

Job's life illustrates this vividly. Though he endured unimaginable loss, he declared with unwavering faith, "I know that my Redeemer lives." He could endure hardship not because he ignored it, but because he placed it in the context of eternity. He understood that even if this life crumbled, God's promise remained. And so it is with us. Our trials may be intense, our sorrows deep, but the hope of eternal life with Christ is deeper still. It is not detached from suffering—it is forged in it. As Paul wrote, "suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3–4). That hope grows not in luxury, but in loss. Not in pleasure, but in perseverance.

Even after we believe the gospel and are saved, our experience of this life can still fluctuate. Circumstances change, emotions ebb and flow, and disappointments come. But when we fix our eyes on Jesus, the *pioneer and perfecter* of our faith (Hebrews 12:2), we are reminded that our future is not uncertain—it is glorious. If we stay focused on our eternal inheritance, we will walk with endurance and grace through the trials of life. But if we lose sight of that hope and fixate only on what we can see, discouragement will take hold. We will begin to live as though this world is all there is, and in doing so, we make decisions that only deepen our frustration.

And this is where love becomes the outflow of faith and hope. It is not the starting point—it is the fruit. Love without faith and hope may be sentimental or admirable, but it lacks the power and purity of divine love. True love—the kind that pleases God and reflects His

nature—can only spring from a heart transformed by Christ. This is the love that Jesus demonstrated when He laid down His life for sinners. It is the self-giving, others-focused, unshakable love that moves us to obey God's greatest commandments: to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30–31). This kind of love is not humanly generated. It is empowered by the Holy Spirit and sustained by faith and hope.

Faith lays hold of the gospel, hope carries us through the journey, and love overflows into action. These three remain. And as Paul wrote, “the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13), not because love stands alone, but because it is the visible and eternal expression of what faith and hope have accomplished in the heart. Love like this doesn’t simply happen. It is the result of anchoring our trust in Christ and living with our eyes fixed on His return. When we love as Christ loved us, we bear witness to the transforming power of the gospel—not only in doctrine, but in daily life.

The extent that hope affects our journey through life may be observed by studying the experiences of Abraham. His story is a pillar in apostolic doctrine and is pivotal to understanding God’s love for mankind. When God called Abraham out of his land of idolatry, it was not because of any merit in Abraham himself—it was an act of grace. And when he responded by faith, he became the prototype of those who would be justified by faith. But the journey was not without struggle. His obedience faltered, his understanding grew in stages, and his hope was often stretched to its limits. Yet through it all, the

covenant God made with Abraham stands as a testament to divine faithfulness.

As we move into the next chapters, we'll see how these three virtues—faith, hope, and love—come alive in the life of Abraham. His journey will not only deepen our understanding of how God works, but will inspire us to walk more faithfully, hope more eagerly, and love more fully.



Chapter 2: Abraham's Journey of Faith

The Abrahamic Covenant contains a foundational element in God's redemption plan. God made a promise to Abraham that affects all people of all time. We will examine the details regarding the past, present, and future aspects of this important covenant. As the story unfolds, we will clearly see the gracious aspect of faith; the firm foundation to which the hope of believers is anchored; and the vast extent of God's love.

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you’” (Genesis 12:1–3).

This divine call was more than a personal instruction—it was the launching point of a redemptive timeline that would extend all the way to Christ. In Abram’s day (Abram was his original name and was later changed to Abraham). In his day, the world was engulfed in idolatry. The region of Mesopotamia, particularly Ur of the Chaldeans, was a hub of pagan worship. There is no indication that Abram had any prior relationship with the God who now spoke to him. This call, then, was an act of sovereign grace. God chose Abram not because of his merit, but because of His own plan. That plan involved setting apart a man through whom He would establish

a nation—a people uniquely His—through whom the Redeemer would ultimately come.

From the outset, God made it clear that obedience required separation. “Leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s household.” Each of these elements represented a tether to the old life. Abram’s family was steeped in false worship, and the ties that bound him to them would ultimately hinder the new identity God intended to give him. God’s purpose was to build something entirely new, beginning with Abram, and He was calling him into a life of faith marked by dependence, not familiarity.

And yet, Abram’s initial obedience was only partial.

Rather than immediately separating from his extended family and homeland, Abram journeyed with his father Terah and his nephew Lot. While Scripture makes it clear that God’s call was personal and specific, the initial response was more communal and cautious. Abram did leave Ur, but he remained under his father’s headship. Terah assumed leadership of the journey and, perhaps guided more by practical necessity than divine direction, chose a route along the Euphrates River. This path followed the fertile crescent—ideal for grazing livestock, but indirect and geographically removed from the land God had promised to show Abram.

Instead of continuing directly into Canaan, the group settled in a place that bore a familiar name—Haran. It’s possible that the comfort of a namesake city, or the needs of aging Terah, led to this extended stay. But Haran was not the final destination. It was a halfway point—geographically, spiritually, and in terms of obedience. Abram had

responded to God, but not fully. He had heard the call, but allowed the pull of family ties and logistical concerns to slow his obedience.

This period in Haran is revealing. Abram was not yet the man of great faith we often remember. He was a man in process. While God allowed this delay, it is worth noting that no further divine revelation came during this time. The journey stalled. The covenant promise lingered, but the blessing did not unfold. Terah's presence, Lot's inclusion, and the diversion to Haran marked a period of spiritual pause.

Abram's life at this point was still rooted in the system he had grown up in. He remained part of a clan—a complex network of family, servants, and livestock under the leadership of a patriarch. Terah, though aging, retained authority, and Abram was being groomed to succeed him. This transition would have been significant within the clan structure. He would have been expected to manage the family's affairs, oversee the flocks, and ensure the prosperity of future generations. To forfeit this role, especially without a guaranteed outcome in a new land, would have seemed reckless. But that was precisely what God was calling him to do—step away from security into the unknown, trusting the word of a God he had just met.

The death of Terah marked a turning point. With the patriarch gone, Abram was now free to lead—and to obey. At seventy-five years old, he finally resumed the journey, continuing toward Canaan with Sarai and Lot still by his side. It's important to see that while this was a significant move forward, the full separation God had requested had not yet occurred. Lot's presence would later bring trouble. For now,

though, Abram entered the land in faith, and that act of obedience was met with renewed revelation.

He arrived at Shechem, a location that would later hold deep significance for the people of Israel. There, by the great tree of Moreh, the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” This was more than a geographical promise—it was a confirmation that the childless Abram would indeed have descendants. This marked the first recorded appearance of the Lord to Abram and introduced a deeper intimacy to their relationship. In response, Abram built an altar and worshiped. This was a spiritual high point. A renewed call, a reaffirmed promise, and a personal act of worship—this was what obedience began to look like.

And yet, even in this moment of worship, the seeds of future trials were still present. Lot, still journeying with Abram, symbolized an incomplete break from the past. The full blessing of the covenant would not unfold until that separation occurred. But for now, God was patient. He was drawing Abram forward, one step at a time, allowing the man of faith to become the man he was called to be.

The narrative of Abram’s life reveals a faith that grows over time. It is not static or instant. It develops through decisions, both wise and foolish. Each test, each circumstance, each revelation serves as a shaping force. The calling from Ur was clear, and the destination was divinely chosen, but the journey was marked by detours, delays, and moments of doubt.

This is important to understand: faith is not always linear. God calls, we respond, and sometimes that response is hesitant, filtered

through fear or comfort or human reasoning. But God is patient. He does not abandon us when we falter. He continues to work in us, leading us forward, allowing circumstances to refine our trust in Him.

Abram's initial detour to Haran didn't cancel the covenant, but it delayed its unfolding. His partial obedience postponed the full experience of blessing, but it didn't revoke God's plan. The Lord was gracious. He waited. And when Abram finally set foot in Canaan, the covenant promise resumed with renewed clarity.

Still, the journey of faith was far from over. Peaks would be followed by valleys. Moments of bold worship would be shadowed by episodes of fear and failure. Abram's walk with God was not pristine—it was human. His hope often wavered as his circumstances shifted. But that is precisely what makes his story relatable. He didn't start as the father of many nations. He started as a hesitant wanderer, clinging to a promise he barely understood.

Even his response to God's presence at Shechem—the building of an altar—was a mixture of faith and uncertainty. He worshiped, yes, but he had not yet seen the fulfillment. He believed, but the specifics were still unknown. That tension—between belief and reality, between promise and fulfillment—is the crucible in which biblical hope is forged.

Faith, as we've seen, is trust in what God has said. Hope is the eager expectation that God will do what He has promised. In Abram's case, his faith was tested by the ambiguity of the journey. He believed enough to leave, but not enough to let go of everything. He hoped in the promise, but still clung to elements of the past. His

path to blessing required not only faith in God's word but hope in God's timing and methods. That hope had to shift from self-preservation to God-dependence.

God's patience with Abram underscores a profound truth: the development of spiritual maturity is a process. The Abram who left Ur with his family and livestock was not yet the Abraham who would later be called a friend of God. There would be more altars, more failures, more revelations. And all of them would shape the man and his mission.

By the time Abram reached Shechem and then moved to Bethel, building yet another altar and calling on the name of the Lord, we begin to see a rhythm developing in his spiritual life. These altars weren't merely memorials—they were personal landmarks of faith, built in the soil of a land not yet his, offered to a God he was just beginning to understand.

This was the start of something monumental—not because of Abram's strength or wisdom, but because of God's grace. And though Abram's obedience had been delayed and partial, God still chose to bless, guide, and use him. His peaks and valleys were not barriers to God's plan; they were the terrain through which that plan would unfold.

As we'll see in the next chapter, the path of obedience is not without pressure. From the heights of communion with God, Abram would soon face the pressures of survival, scarcity, and self-preservation. His response would reveal much—not just about his faith, but about

his hope. Where we place our hope determines how we respond when the pressure is on.

Abram had begun his journey. He had heard the call, stepped out in faith, and worshiped the One who promised him more than he could imagine. But the real testing had not yet begun. Ahead lay the proving grounds of the soul—where hope would be refined, faith would be stretched, and love would be revealed through the unfolding of God's covenant.



Chapter 3: Failure Under Pressure

The best parts of the land were occupied. Abram's group was large, and the herds required a constant supply of food and water. After grazing in an area for a period, they had to move on. The search for fresh pastures was unrelenting, and the pressures of survival in an unfamiliar land were intensifying.

From Shechem, Abram and his caravan journeyed to Bethel, about ten miles north of present-day Jerusalem. There, he built another altar and called on the name of the Lord. This act of worship marked an important spiritual milestone. It was a continuation of his journey of faith, a visible reminder that he was trusting in the God who had called him out of Ur. Though still surrounded by the Canaanite peoples, and with no land officially his own, Abram established a place of communion with the Lord. God had spoken to him; now Abram was speaking back in worship.

But spiritual highs are often followed by divine tests. As it was with Job, as it would later be with Israel in the wilderness, God uses testing not to gain information—He is omniscient—but to shape and reveal character. Trials clarify what is truly believed. The altar at Bethel was an expression of communion, but it would soon be followed by circumstances that would expose Abram's heart in ways the peaceful pastureland never could.

God allowed a famine to spread across the land. The scarcity of food and water made survival difficult, especially for a nomadic company with extensive flocks and herds. The land of promise no longer

seemed hospitable. And in this moment of trial, Abram faced a defining choice: would he trust the God who had called him and promised to bless him, or would he fall back on familiar methods and human reasoning?

This famine was no accident. It was not merely a geographical inconvenience; it was a sovereign test. The very land that God had led him to now appeared to be unable to support him. And yet, this was the land God had promised. Abram had received divine assurance: “I will bless you... I will make you into a great nation... I will curse those who curse you.” Those weren’t abstract sentiments—they were concrete promises. But under pressure, Abram reverted to an old instinct: to solve problems himself.

Instead of seeking God’s provision through prayer and patient obedience, Abram made a calculated, strategic decision. He led his entire group south toward Egypt, the land of abundance. Egypt had the Nile, fertile fields, and a track record of stability. It was a logical move—but it was not a step of faith.

At this point in his journey, Abram was fully functioning as the patriarch. With his father Terah gone, he bore the responsibility of leadership. Decisions about movement, safety, provision, and protection fell squarely on his shoulders. And in this moment of crisis, Abram’s leadership reflected more of Mesopotamian survivalism than covenant trust. His decision was pragmatic, but it lacked the foundation of God’s promise. It leaned on human logic, not divine direction.

As the caravan approached Egypt, Abram developed a troubling plan. He feared for his life because of Sarai's beauty (Sarah's name was originally Sarai and was later changed to Sarah by the Lord). It was well-known that Pharaohs would take desirable women into their courts, and eliminate any threat posed by their husbands. Rather than risk his life or trust in God's protection, Abram resolved to lie. Sarai, his wife, was also his half-sister—a technicality he now planned to exploit. He instructed Sarai to present herself as his sister alone, omitting their marital status. In this way, Abram believed he could protect himself while still benefiting from her favor.

This plan was not spontaneous. It had likely been conceived long before—perhaps even during their initial departure from Haran. It was the product of human ingenuity shaped by fear, not faith. And Sarai, whether out of loyalty, pressure, or cultural expectation, complied. She entered Pharaoh's household, was treated as a prospective wife, and Abram received lavish gifts in exchange—livestock, servants, and wealth.

On the surface, the scheme succeeded. The group was spared. Resources were plentiful. Their social standing increased. But spiritually, it was a disaster. Abram had effectively traded his wife's purity for personal safety. He had placed Sarai in a compromised position and abandoned the sanctity of their covenant marriage. God had promised that Abram would have an heir. Had Abram stopped to consider that this plan endangered the very woman through whom the promise would come?

This was not a minor slip. It was a significant failure of faith, and it placed the entire promise of God in jeopardy. Abram had left the land

God had shown him, trusted in Egypt for provision, and devised a deceptive plan to protect himself—at great cost to his wife’s dignity and the integrity of their marriage.

And yet, God intervened.

The Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his household with serious disease. We aren’t told how Pharaoh discovered the truth, but somehow the deception was exposed. Abram’s lie came to light, and Pharaoh confronted him directly. His rebuke is a humbling moment: “What have you done to me? Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife?” (Genesis 12:18). Pharaoh, a pagan king, stood in judgment over God’s chosen man—not because Pharaoh was righteous, but because Abram had behaved unrighteously.

In the end, Pharaoh expelled Abram and his household from Egypt. There is no record of Abram defending himself or trying to justify his actions. Silently, perhaps shamefully, he retraced his steps back to the land he had left. He returned to the altar at Bethel—the last place he had worshiped before his failure. There, he once again called on the name of the Lord.

This return is significant. Abram had wandered, fallen, and failed—but God had not forsaken him. The covenant still stood. The promise had not been revoked. But Abram had learned a painful lesson: human wisdom cannot substitute for divine direction. The blessings of Egypt were hollow. The wealth acquired through deception did not equate to spiritual success. Only in the land of promise, walking in obedience to God, could Abram find peace.

This episode reveals much about the nature of faith under pressure. It is easy to trust God when things are going well—when the land provides, when the herds flourish, when altars are built without opposition. But faith is proven in famine. It is revealed not in theory, but in practice. When the resources dry up and fear sets in, the true condition of the heart emerges.

Abram's failure was not final, but it was formative. It exposed the lingering influence of his old life—the self-reliance, the strategic manipulation, the tendency to protect self at any cost. These traits had served him well in Mesopotamia. They had been part of his upbringing and his success under Terah. But they had no place in the life God was calling him to live. Canaan required something more. God was not merely giving Abram a new location—He was giving him a new identity. And that identity would only take root as Abram learned to surrender control and embrace the promises by faith.

Sarai's role in this account also deserves attention. She went along with the deception, but it came at great personal cost. Separated from her husband, housed among foreign people, and placed in danger—she bore the consequences of Abram's fear. And yet, God defended her. When Abram failed to protect her, God did not. The diseases that struck Pharaoh's household were not random—they were surgical. God's intervention preserved Sarai's dignity, exposed the lie, and ended the ruse. Even in failure, God was faithful.

The restoration that followed was quiet but sincere. Abram returned to Bethel—not to a new place, but to the altar he had previously built. There, he renewed his communion with the Lord. This return to

worship signified more than repentance. It marked a turning point in Abram's spiritual development. He had tasted the bitterness of failure and the mercy of restoration. And that experience would inform the decisions he would soon make.

This was the second clear cycle in Abram's walk with God. The first began with God's call and was followed by partial obedience, delay in Haran, and then a renewed step of faith into Canaan. That cycle ended with Abram worshiping at Shechem. The second cycle began with that worship, peaked at Bethel, and then plummeted into deception in Egypt. Now, having returned, the cycle concluded once more at an altar. Each peak and valley was shaping him, clarifying his faith, and preparing him for the next step.

There's a valuable lesson in this. The Christian life is not marked by uninterrupted victory. Like Abram, we experience times of genuine faith, followed by moments of fear and failure. The measure of maturity is not perfection, but perseverance. What do we do when we've failed? Do we hide in Egypt, holding onto the spoils of a compromised decision? Or do we return to the altar—to the place of prayer, of humility, of renewed surrender?

Abram's journey reminds us that God doesn't abandon His people in their weakness. He disciplines, yes. He allows consequences. But He also restores. He calls us back to the place where we last heard His voice, not to shame us, but to reestablish communion. And as we'll see in the next chapter, that restoration bore fruit almost immediately.

After this episode, Abram would soon face another test. The land still held challenges, but this time, he would respond differently.

Something had changed. He had failed under pressure, but he had not been crushed. He had been humbled, but not cast off. He had returned to the altar, and that return marked a pivot point in his spiritual maturity.

Abram had learned the hard way that trusting in God's promise meant more than believing a blessing was possible. It meant rejecting the false safety of human strategy and clinging instead to the character of God. Egypt had given him wealth—but it had also revealed the poverty of his faith. Canaan, though famine-stricken, was the place of promise, because it was the place where God was present.

And so, Abram stood once again at the altar, not yet the man he would become, but no longer the man he had been. His eyes were now fixed more fully on the God who had called him, and his heart—though still growing—was learning the depth of what it meant to walk by faith, not by sight.



Chapter 4: Hope Is the Key

The growth of Abram's character became evident with the next test he faced. The land around Bethel had limited resources, and the growing demands of his household, livestock, and entourage were straining the environment. To make matters more difficult, his nephew Lot had also accumulated wealth and herds. Tension was growing within the ranks, not between Abram and Lot directly, but between their herdsmen. The land simply couldn't support them both. The situation was tense and ripe for conflict.

This wasn't just a logistical challenge—it was a spiritual opportunity. Abram had been here before, though in a different form. In a prior test, he fled the land and trusted in Egypt instead of trusting in God. But this time, the stakes were different. There was no famine, no external enemy, no overwhelming threat—just a situation that required a decision. Abram had returned to Bethel and had worshiped the Lord there. His recent failure had brought humility, but it had also brought growth. Now he was facing a relational test that would reveal whether he had truly learned to walk in faith.

In that moment, Abram chose to act in hope.

Hope in the biblical sense is more than wishful thinking. It is confidence in the promises of God. It changes how we make decisions because it shifts our trust from what we can see to what God has said. Abram didn't know exactly how God would fulfill the promise of land and descendants, but he had seen enough of God's faithfulness to believe that He would. That hope gave Abram the

freedom to act selflessly. He didn't need to fight for the land. He didn't need to assert his rights. Instead, he generously offered Lot the first choice.

“Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me,” Abram said, “or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are close relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left” (Genesis 13:8–9).

This was a remarkable offer. As the elder and the one to whom God had made the covenant promise, Abram had every right to claim the first choice. But he laid that down. Why? Because his hope was no longer in the land itself—it was in the God who had promised to give it to him. He didn't need to grasp for provision because he believed the Lord would provide. That's what hope does. It removes the fear of loss by reminding us of the certainty of God's plan.

This was not an easy decision. Lot was Abram's nephew. They had shared much of the journey together. Lot had likely looked up to Abram as a spiritual leader and protector. And despite Lot's eventual moral failure, he was, as Peter later affirms, “a righteous man” (2 Peter 2:7). The bond was more than familial—it was spiritual. To separate from Lot meant to relinquish a companion and a possible heir. In that culture, inheritance often passed to the nearest male relative if no sons were born. Lot may have appeared to be the natural solution to the promise of offspring. Letting him go was a big step. It was not just a test of generosity—it was a test of hope.

But Abram passed the test. He had come to trust that the heir would come not through his own arrangements, but through the sovereign work of God. He was finally learning to stop striving and start resting in the promise. He believed that God would give him descendants in God's way, and in God's time.

Lot, perhaps flattered by the offer, looked up and saw the well-watered plain of the Jordan, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. He chose for himself the land near Sodom and headed east. Abram remained in the hill country and settled near the great trees of Mamre, near Hebron. The separation was final. For the first time since God's original call, Abram was alone—separated from his country, his relatives, and his father's household.

It had taken time. The journey had been indirect, filled with detours and half-measures. But finally, Abram had reached the place God had intended him to be—not just physically, but spiritually. The outward separation from Lot reflected an inward transformation. Abram was no longer clinging to familiar people or pragmatic plans. He was ready to live by faith.

And at that moment, God spoke again.

“The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, ‘Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and

breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you” (Genesis 13:14–17).

This renewed revelation came only after Lot had departed. The timing is deliberate and instructive. God was waiting for Abram to be in the right place—not just geographically, but spiritually. The covenant blessings were not contingent upon perfection, but they were timed with obedience. Once Abram had fully responded to God’s call, the promise was re-confirmed and expanded.

Previously, God had promised to make Abram into a great nation. Now, the promise was amplified. Abram’s descendants would be countless—like the dust of the earth. The land would belong to them not temporarily, but forever. And God invited Abram to walk through it, to claim it with his feet and to see it with his eyes. This was an invitation to deepen his hope. Every step Abram took would now be a step in expectation. God was giving, and Abram was finally ready to receive.

Hope had changed everything.

Hope freed Abram to be generous. Hope gave him the courage to separate. Hope positioned him to receive greater revelation.

But hope also anchored him. He moved his tents and settled near Hebron, at the great trees of Mamre, and there he built another altar to the Lord. This was not just a ritual—it was an expression of gratitude, a public declaration of allegiance. Each altar Abram built marked a moment of progress in his faith. Each one stood as a physical testimony of inward transformation. And this altar, in particular, symbolized hope fulfilled—not the full fulfillment of the

promise, but the confirmation that he was on the right path, and that God had not forgotten His word.

It is important to see that Abram's hope was not blind. It was based on God's spoken word. He did not invent it. He did not conjure it through emotion or wishful thinking. He heard, and he believed. That's what biblical hope always does. It listens to the voice of God, and it responds with confidence.

There is a moment in every believer's life when hope becomes more than an idea—it becomes a posture. It's not just something we feel. It's how we live. Abram no longer needed to control the outcome. He no longer needed to cling to Lot as a backup plan. He didn't fear the future, because he had begun to see the future through the lens of God's promise. That is hope.

This change was not lost on heaven. God's response to Abram's hope was swift and generous. And as we will see, it would become the basis for even greater victories. Abram would soon be thrust into a surprising military conflict, and this newfound hope would allow him to act with boldness, humility, and faith. But before the next trial would come, God gave him a moment of peace—a moment to walk the land, build an altar, and take in the view.

And what a view it was.

From the highlands of Hebron, Abram could see the land in every direction. The breeze carried the scent of the trees. The hills rolled outward like a promise unfolding. Though he still possessed none of it legally, by faith it was already his. Though he still had no son, he

believed God would provide. The future was uncertain in the eyes of the world, but in Abram's heart, hope had made it certain.

The transformation was real. The Abram who had once fled to Egypt in fear was now confident enough to offer the best land to Lot. The man who had once relied on deception was now resting in truth. Hope had rewired his priorities and clarified his identity. He was not just a traveler—he was a man of promise. He was not merely surviving—he was walking in faith.

This is the power of hope. It doesn't eliminate hardship, but it changes how we respond to it. It allows us to give instead of grasp, to wait instead of scheme, to release instead of control. And in doing so, it creates space for God to bless, to guide, and to reveal more of Himself.

This chapter of Abram's life reminds us that spiritual growth often happens quietly. There was no miraculous intervention here, no divine plague, no supernatural sign. Just a test—a relational, everyday, practical decision. And yet, in that moment, Abram showed that he was learning to live differently. He was learning to walk not by sight, but by hope.

We all have moments like this—moments when we must decide whether to cling to what is comfortable or release it in faith. When those times come, hope becomes the key. Not the vague optimism of worldly thinking, but the rock-solid confidence that God will do what He has said. That kind of hope changes everything.

And for Abram, that hope would soon be tested again—not through land or livestock, but through war. Lot's decision to live near Sodom

would soon bring him into danger, and Abram's next move would require courage, sacrifice, and leadership. But this time, he would act not from fear, but from faith. Not out of self-preservation, but out of confidence in the God who had called him.



Chapter 5: Victorious Under Pressure

After a period of peace, Abram faced a new test—one unlike any he had encountered before. This time, the trial would not arise from famine or internal strife, but from a regional war that threatened his family. Word reached Abram that Lot, his nephew, had been taken captive during a conflict between a coalition of eastern kings and the cities of the Jordan Valley.

Four powerful kings from Mesopotamia had launched a sweeping campaign across Canaan. These kings had previously subjugated several western cities—including Sodom and Gomorrah—collecting tribute and asserting dominance over the region. But after thirteen years, the western kings rebelled. In response, the eastern coalition returned with vengeance, conquering and looting rebellious cities, including Sodom, and taking its people and possessions captive. Among them was Lot.

Although Lot had chosen to settle near Sodom, Abram still felt a responsibility toward him. Blood ties ran deep, and Lot, for all his flaws, was still a fellow believer in the Lord. The news of Lot's captivity stirred Abram to action—not because of political ambition, but because of covenant loyalty and moral conviction.

Abram quickly assembled his trained men—318 born in his own household—and joined forces with three Amorite allies: Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner. These men were more than neighbors; they were covenanted partners, bound together in mutual respect and defense. With this coalition, Abram pursued the eastern kings, chasing them

nearly 200 miles north to the region of Dan, and then beyond Damascus.

What followed was a surprise attack under the cover of night. Abram's forces routed the enemy, recovering the captives, goods, and livestock. It was a remarkable victory—both in scale and in speed. This was no minor skirmish; it was a decisive triumph over experienced kings with larger armies. Abram, a man known primarily for his tents and altars, had proven himself a capable and courageous military leader.

But the key to his success was not military genius—it was the providence of God.

God had promised to bless Abram and to make his name great. That promise was being fulfilled in real time. News of this victory would spread rapidly. Abram had rescued entire cities. He had recovered stolen goods and liberated prisoners. The returning procession would have looked like a celebratory parade—a column of rejoicing captives, reclaimed livestock, and triumphant warriors. Abram's influence in the region had grown significantly. He was no longer just a wandering herdsman—he was a man of renown.

Yet as Abram returned from battle, he was about to face a far more subtle test. This test would not come from an army, but from two kings—each offering him something very different.

As he approached the Valley of Shaveh, two rulers came out to meet him. One was Bera, king of Sodom, the leader of a wicked and corrupt city known for its rebellion against God. The other was

Melchizedek, king of Salem, a mysterious figure who appeared unexpectedly and brought with him bread and wine.

Melchizedek is introduced without ancestry or lineage. He is described simply as “priest of God Most High” (Genesis 14:18). This dual identity—both king and priest—is extraordinary. No one else in the Old Testament held both offices. The Levitical priesthood would not be established for hundreds of years, and even then, it would be strictly separated from kingship. But here stood Melchizedek, a type and shadow of someone greater yet to come.

Melchizedek blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” In response, Abram gave him a tenth of everything—an offering of gratitude and acknowledgment that the victory belonged to the Lord.

This exchange was deeply significant. In the ancient world, blessings carried spiritual weight, and the lesser always honored the greater. Abram’s act of tithing to Melchizedek signified his recognition of Melchizedek’s superior spiritual authority—not as a man, but as God’s representative. And Melchizedek’s blessing affirmed that Abram’s victory was not self-made—it was divinely ordained.

Immediately after this holy encounter, the king of Sodom made his offer: “Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.” It was a tempting proposal. After all, Abram had risked everything in this military campaign. By all rights, the plunder was his. But Abram’s response revealed just how much he had grown:

“I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you... so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich’” (Genesis 14:22–23).

Abram refused to accept anything from the king of Sodom. He was determined that all credit for his prosperity would go to God alone. This was a man who had once schemed in Egypt for survival, who had once bartered his wife’s dignity for security. But now he stood tall—not as a man seeking advantage, but as one resting in the hope of God’s promise. His confidence was no longer in kings or alliances, but in the Lord Most High.

This turning point is marked by an encounter with Melchizedek, and it is here that we must pause the narrative for a moment and consider the broader biblical significance of this mysterious figure.

Excursus: Melchizedek and the Heavenly Priesthood

The appearance of Melchizedek in Genesis 14 is brief but profound. He reemerges in only two other places in Scripture—Psalm 110 and the book of Hebrews. Together, these passages reveal that Melchizedek was more than a historical figure; he was a prophetic type of the coming Messiah.

In Psalm 110:4, David writes under inspiration: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’” This is a Messianic psalm, pointing forward to the reign of Christ. The phrase “in the order of Melchizedek” sets Christ’s priesthood apart from the Levitical system. Jesus, of the tribe of

Judah, could not be a Levitical priest. But Melchizedek's priesthood was different—prior to the Law, outside the lineage of Aaron, and eternal in nature.

The book of Hebrews explains this in rich detail. Melchizedek is described as “without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever” (Hebrews 7:3). This doesn't mean Melchizedek was eternal—but that his priesthood, as recorded in Scripture, has no beginning or end. He represents an unbroken, superior priesthood—one that finds its fulfillment in Christ.

During the Church Age, Christ is serving as our High Priest—not in an earthly tabernacle, but in the true sanctuary of heaven. He intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father, not offering animal sacrifices, but presenting the finished work of His own blood. His priesthood is not limited by time or tribe. It is universal, eternal, and perfect.

Hebrews 6:19–20 says, “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

This has profound implications for believers today. As our High Priest, Christ mediates on our behalf. He advocates for us, sanctifies us, and empowers us by the Holy Spirit. But He also leads a new kind of priesthood—the royal priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9). This priesthood is not defined by ritual or lineage, but by relationship.

All who trust in Christ are part of it, equipped with spiritual gifts and called to serve God and others.

During the Church Age, Christ has temporarily set aside His crown. He is indeed King—but He is presently serving as our Mediator, our Advocate, and our High Priest. His kingship will be fully exercised at His Second Coming, when He rules the earth in righteousness. But today, He intercedes for us from heaven, and His priesthood is the unshakable foundation of our hope.

Melchizedek's brief appearance in Abram's life foreshadows this glorious truth. He blessed Abram with bread and wine—symbols that point forward to Christ's ultimate sacrifice. He pronounced blessing on behalf of God Most High and received tithes as a priest of God. In every way, he prefigured the ministry of Jesus Christ, who blesses us, intercedes for us, and calls us to walk in faith and obedience.

Return to the Narrative

Abram's encounter with Melchizedek clarified his allegiance. He had seen the difference between the king of Salem and the king of Sodom—between righteousness and corruption, between heavenly blessing and earthly reward. He had chosen to align himself with God Most High and to publicly declare that the Lord alone was the source of his success.

This decision was not made in a vacuum. It was the fruit of faith, hope, and love. Faith had brought Abram to the land. Hope had enabled him to relinquish Lot. Now, love for God and honor for His name compelled Abram to refuse the spoils of war. He was not

driven by ambition, but by reverence. His choices reflected a transformed heart.

Soon, God would meet Abram again and reaffirm the covenant with even greater clarity. But for now, Abram stood victorious under pressure—not just in battle, but in principle. He had defeated kings, but more importantly, he had triumphed over compromise.



Chapter 6: Greater Revelation

After some time had passed, Abram began to wrestle with doubt. He believed God, yes, but the years were slipping by, and the great promises—offspring as numerous as the stars and a land for his descendants—remained unfulfilled. He had left behind his homeland, his security, and even Lot, in obedience to God. But where was the son? Where was the land? Doubt, when delayed promises linger, is not the enemy of faith—but a testing ground for it.

God responded not with rebuke, but with reassurance: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward” (Genesis 15:1). God reminded Abram that He Himself was both protector and provider. Yet even with that comfort, Abram voiced what had been building within: “Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless?” Abram was honest. He was not doubting God’s ability—he was questioning his own place in the unfolding plan.

God answered with grace and clarity. Abram would not need to adopt a servant as heir. “This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” Then the Lord took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them... So shall your offspring be.”

And here, Scripture records one of the most pivotal statements in all of redemptive history: “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). This is the first time righteousness is connected directly to faith. It sets a precedent that would echo across millennia—through the cross, into the epistles,

and on into our day. Salvation has always been by grace, through faith.

But God wasn't finished. Abram had believed the promise regarding a son, but another question lingered. God had promised land as well. "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it." Yet Abram asked, "Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"

Once again, God condescended to meet Abram in a way he could understand. God instructed Abram to prepare animals for a covenant ritual—common in the ancient Near East. In this widely known custom, two parties entering into a binding agreement would cut animals in two and walk between the pieces together. It was a gruesome but serious display. The act symbolized, in essence, "May it be done to me as to these animals if I break this covenant."

Abram did as he was told. He cut the animals and arranged the halves opposite each other, forming a corridor of blood between them. He waited. As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. In that darkness, God revealed more than Abram had ever heard before.

The promise would be fulfilled—but not in Abram's lifetime. His descendants would suffer oppression as slaves in a foreign land for four hundred years. But God would judge the oppressing nation and bring Abram's offspring back to this land. The delay would serve a purpose: "The sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

Then, something astonishing happened. “When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces” (Genesis 15:17). God alone passed through. Abram, still in a deep sleep, did not walk through the pieces as he normally would have in such a covenant agreement. This covenant was not bilateral. It was not contingent on Abram’s faithfulness. It was unilateral—an unconditional covenant grounded solely in God’s sovereign will.

This moment stands as one of the highest peaks of biblical revelation. The God of the universe entered into a covenant with man—and bound Himself to its fulfillment. The bloodied pathway between the animals spoke of death for covenant-breaking, but God walked it alone, declaring that the fulfillment of the promise depended entirely on Him. Abram was not being asked to secure the future. God was pledging that He would bring it to pass.

This was grace in ceremonial form. The covenant was ratified not with mutual vows, but with divine action. God would give the land. God would raise up the nation. God would bring blessing to all families of the earth through Abram’s line. No condition was placed upon Abram to maintain the covenant. This was God’s doing from beginning to end.

The New Testament picks up this moment with awe and affirmation. The writer of Hebrews reflects on this very oath:

“When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself... God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is

impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:13–19).

This covenant is not only the foundation of Israel’s inheritance—it is the foundation of our hope. It shows us the nature of God’s promises: they do not rest on our performance. They rest on God’s character. He does not lie. He does not fail. He does not forget. When He makes a promise, He binds it to Himself.

As believers in the Church Age, we are not physical descendants of Abraham, but we are spiritual heirs. Paul makes this clear in Romans 4: “Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring... to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all” (Romans 4:16).

The Abrahamic covenant also points directly to Christ. Jesus is the promised seed through whom all nations would be blessed. Galatians 3:16 says, “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.”

Even the image of God alone walking through the blood-stained path anticipates the cross. Christ would take the full responsibility for the covenant’s fulfillment. He would shed His own blood to secure the blessing for all who believe.

As Jesus later told the descendants of Abram, “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad”

(John 8:56). Abram may not have known all the details, but he understood the heart of the promise. He knew the fulfillment would come through divine provision, not human striving.

God used a familiar cultural rite to communicate an eternal truth. In doing so, He gave us one of the clearest pictures in Scripture of His sovereignty, His grace, and His unwavering commitment to fulfill His redemptive plan.

Faith receives the promise. Hope anchors the soul. Love flows from both. This covenant, established with blood and bound by divine oath, is the soil from which all three virtues grow.

As we move forward in Abram's journey, we will see that even after this dramatic covenantal moment, his faith will be tested again. He will stumble. He will scheme. But the covenant will not waver. God had sworn by Himself. And that oath remains the anchor of our hope to this day.



Chapter 7: Patience

Ten years had passed since Abram entered the land of Canaan in obedience to God's call. A full decade of wandering, trusting, worshiping—and waiting. Despite God's clear and repeated promises, Abram and Sarai remained childless. The tension between faith and reality grew heavier with each passing year. In a culture where offspring were a sign of divine blessing and social stability, the absence of a child was both painful and perplexing.

Sarai, unable to bear the weight of waiting any longer, proposed a solution that was culturally acceptable, though spiritually misguided. She offered her servant Hagar to Abram as a surrogate. This arrangement, while common in the ancient Near East, was never part of God's plan. It represented a turn toward human reasoning—a way to achieve divine ends through fleshly means.

Abram agreed. Hagar conceived. But the result was not peace—it was discord. The conception of Ishmael introduced strife between Sarai and Hagar, setting the stage for conflict that would ripple through generations. Even though the plan “worked,” it lacked God's blessing. As always, when human impatience attempts to accomplish what only God can do, the outcome is a mixture of broken relationships and spiritual confusion.

Yet God was not absent. He saw Hagar's distress and met her in the wilderness. She gave birth to Ishmael, and Abram, now eighty-six years old, had a son. But Ishmael was not the child of promise.

Thirteen years passed. Thirteen long, silent years.

Then God appeared again. He restated the covenant with even greater clarity and expanded the scope of His promise. Abram was renamed Abraham, “father of many,” and Sarai became Sarah, “princess.” These name changes were not cosmetic—they signified divine intention. God was not merely reminding Abraham of the covenant; He was reaffirming that it would be fulfilled on God’s terms, in God’s time, and through God’s chosen vessel—Sarah.

Abraham fell facedown. God revealed that within a year, Sarah would bear a son. His name would be Isaac, meaning “laughter,” for joy would replace sorrow. God promised to establish His covenant through Isaac—not Ishmael. Abraham pleaded for Ishmael to be included, but God was firm: Ishmael would be blessed and become the father of twelve rulers, but the covenant would pass through Isaac.

In obedience, Abraham circumcised every male in his household that very day. This act of submission sealed the covenant symbolically. It marked a physical separation from the old ways, a literal cutting off of the flesh. Abraham was no longer striving to accomplish God's will through human means. He was learning to wait, to trust, and to obey.

In time, Isaac was born, just as God had said. The child of promise had arrived. But joy was soon mingled with conflict. Ishmael, now a teenager, mocked the young child. Sarah, protective of the covenant and the future, demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away. Though distressed, Abraham obeyed after God instructed him to listen to Sarah. Hagar and Ishmael were sent into the desert, and God provided for them there.

Ishmael would indeed become a great nation, as God had promised. His descendants settled across the Arabian Peninsula. Later Islamic tradition would trace the lineage of Muhammad to Ishmael. From this came Islam—a religion that, like Judaism, emphasizes obedience to divine law as the path to righteousness.

This moment in Abraham's life opens the door to a critical theological distinction—one that Paul would later explore in depth. The difference between law and grace, between flesh and promise, between Hagar and Sarah.

Islam, Judaism, and many other world religions share a common theme: righteousness through law. In these systems, obedience becomes the currency of salvation. The better the law is kept, the greater the reward in the next life. But such a system creates spiritual bondage. It places the burden of righteousness on the shoulders of the individual—an impossible weight to bear.

Christianity stands apart. The gospel declares that righteousness is not earned, but received. It is not a wage, but a gift. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us... so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit" (Galatians 3:13–14). The promise to Abraham comes to us—not by works—but by grace through faith.

Jesus Christ, the true Seed of Abraham, fulfilled the law perfectly and bore its curse. When He died, the temple veil was torn in two from top to bottom, signifying that access to God was no longer restricted to the priesthood or dependent on law-keeping. The way into God's presence was now open to all who come by faith in Christ.

The Apostle Paul explains this distinction powerfully in Galatians 4. There, he uses the story of Hagar and Sarah to symbolize two covenants. Hagar represents Mount Sinai—the law—bearing children who are slaves. Sarah represents the heavenly Jerusalem—grace—bearing children of promise. Paul writes:

“Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar... But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.

...Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does Scripture say? ‘Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.’

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman” (Galatians 4:21–31).

This isn’t merely historical reflection—it’s deeply personal. To live under the law is to live in bondage. It is to strive endlessly for acceptance, fearing that one misstep could sever communion with

God. But to live under grace is to rest in what Christ has already done. It is to be free—truly free—not to sin, but to serve.

Paul continues, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery... You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace... The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Galatians 5:1–6).

Patience is not merely about waiting—it’s about trusting God’s process, God’s timing, and God’s method. Abraham’s attempt to fulfill God’s promise through Hagar resulted in heartache. But when he waited for God’s provision through Sarah, the promise was fulfilled in joy.

Every believer must wrestle with the temptation to help God fulfill His promises. But God’s way is better. His timing is perfect. And His covenant of grace—like the one He made with Abraham—is not dependent on our striving, but on His faithfulness.

As we move into the next chapter, we see Abraham tested in a deeper way than ever before. With the child of promise now growing before his eyes, Abraham would be asked to surrender everything. And once again, faith, hope, and love would guide him—but this time, through the shadow of a mountaintop altar.



Chapter 8: Faithful Obedience

With Ishmael sent away and Isaac growing before his eyes, Abraham had reached what seemed like the final stage of promise fulfillment. The child of promise was here, and the long-awaited covenant appeared to be securely in motion. But God was not done shaping Abraham's faith. The most difficult test still lay ahead.

Many years later, when Isaac was a teenager—likely around fifteen years old—God called to Abraham and issued a command that struck at the very heart of every promise He had made: “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you” (Genesis 22:2).

The command was as shocking as it was specific. Abraham was not being asked to symbolically surrender his son, or to entertain a hypothetical scenario. He was being called to walk up a mountain and place his beloved son—through whom the covenant would continue—on an altar of death. Yet Abraham did not delay. Early the next morning, he saddled his donkey, gathered the wood, and set out with Isaac.

This obedience was not born of emotional resolve or blind acceptance. It was the fruit of decades of walking with God—of seeing His faithfulness through failures, waiting, and correction. Abraham had come to a point of trust so deep that he believed even death could not thwart God's plan. Hebrews 11:17–19 affirms this:

“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son... Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.”

Abraham lifted the knife—but God stopped him. At the very last moment, the angel of the Lord called out from heaven and said, “Do not lay a hand on the boy... Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son” (Genesis 22:12). A ram was provided in Isaac’s place, a vivid picture of substitutionary atonement that would later be fulfilled in Christ.

Because of Abraham’s obedience, God restated and expanded the covenant once again. “I swear by myself,” the Lord declared, “that because you have done this... I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore” (Genesis 22:16–17). This moment—on Mount Moriah—stands as a turning point not just in Abraham’s journey, but in redemptive history. Faith had matured into obedience, and that obedience had validated Abraham’s faith in the eyes of all who would follow.

James, the brother of Jesus, later reflected on this very event in his epistle. Using Abraham’s willingness to offer Isaac as the ultimate example of faith in action, he wrote:

“Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was

made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone" (James 2:20–24).

This passage has often been misinterpreted to suggest that works play a role in salvation. But James is not contradicting Paul's teaching on justification by faith. Rather, he is emphasizing the visible expression of saving faith. Faith that is real, James argues, will produce action. Abraham's faith, declared righteous decades earlier, was proven to be genuine when he obeyed God's extraordinary command.

Here we must pause and explore the doctrine of justification—a truth that lies at the heart of the gospel. Scripture teaches clearly that justification is by faith alone, apart from works. Paul writes in Romans 3:28, "For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."

To be justified means to be declared righteous in the sight of God. It is a legal standing, not a process. The moment a person believes the gospel—that Christ died for our sins and rose again—God credits them with the righteousness of Christ. This is not based on human merit or religious observance, but on divine grace.

Romans 4 builds on Abraham's example:

"If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as

righteousness’... Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness” (Romans 4:2–5).

Paul emphasizes that righteousness is not earned—it is imputed. That is, it is placed into the believer’s account entirely by grace. This truth becomes even more vivid when we understand the three great imputations in Scripture:

1. Adam’s sin was imputed to all mankind (Romans 5:12).
2. Humanity’s sin was imputed to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).
3. God’s righteousness is imputed to those who believe (Romans 4:24–25).

These doctrines rest on the solid foundation of substitution. Christ died in our place, bearing our sin, so that we might receive His righteousness. Just as Abraham trusted that God could raise Isaac from the dead, we trust that God has raised Jesus from the dead—and by that resurrection, we are justified (Romans 4:25).

Justification is God’s declaration. It cannot be undone. It is perfect, complete, and eternal. Yet it is often misunderstood. Some believe that righteousness must be maintained through good works. Others fear that salvation can be lost through sin or neglect. But Scripture is clear: the righteousness that justifies us is not ours—it is Christ’s. And His righteousness cannot be defiled.

So where do works fit in? They are the fruit, not the root. As James wrote, faith and works cooperate—not for salvation, but as evidence

of salvation. Abraham was declared righteous when he believed; he demonstrated that righteousness when he obeyed. In this way, his faith was made complete—matured, proven, and revealed.

This distinction is vital. Salvation is not by faith plus works—it is by faith that works. As Paul put it, “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Galatians 5:6).

Abraham’s obedience on Mount Moriah was not the cause of his justification, but the confirmation of it. His willingness to sacrifice Isaac stands as a timeless picture of what true faith looks like when tested.

And it also points forward. Just as Abraham did not withhold his son, God did not withhold His. In the very place where Isaac was laid on the altar, God would one day offer His only begotten Son. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, would be sacrificed—not in theory, but in reality—for the sins of the world.

The substitution that spared Isaac was a shadow of the substitution that would save us all.

As we turn the page to the next chapter, we will step back and trace the unfolding of God’s covenantal plan through the generations that followed Abraham. From Isaac to Israel, and from slavery in Egypt to the establishment of the nation, the promise continued to unfold—each step guided by the same faith, hope, and love that marked the life of Abraham.



Chapter 9: Through the Ages

To grasp the full significance of God's redemptive plan and the promise given to Abraham, it is essential to understand the grand sweep of Old Testament history that bridges the gap between Abraham and Christ. The covenant that began with one man would unfold across generations, shape a nation, and ultimately point the world to the coming Savior.

God's promise to Abraham—that he would be the father of many nations—was fulfilled in both a physical and spiritual sense. Physically, Abraham's descendants multiplied. Through Ishmael came the Arab peoples, and through Isaac came the nation of Israel. Spiritually, the promise found its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, through whom people of every nation could be blessed by faith. But the storyline of the Bible keeps its primary focus on Israel—the nation chosen by God to receive His covenants, His law, His prophets, and ultimately the Messiah (Romans 9:4–5).

The line of covenant blessing passed from Abraham to Isaac—not Ishmael. From Isaac, the promise continued through Jacob, not Esau. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and he became the father of twelve sons, the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. During a severe famine, Jacob and his family—seventy-five in all—migrated to Egypt, where one of his sons, Joseph, had risen to power under Pharaoh. For a time, the family was safe and prosperous in Egypt.

But as generations passed, a new Pharaoh came to power who did not know Joseph. Fearing the Israelites' growing numbers, he enslaved them and subjected them to harsh oppression. This period of slavery lasted approximately four hundred years, just as God had foretold to Abraham during the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15. Yet during this time, the descendants of Jacob multiplied into a mighty nation.

God raised up Moses from the tribe of Levi to lead the Israelites out of bondage. Through ten miraculous plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and God's mighty power, Moses delivered the people and led them toward the land promised to Abraham's descendants. At Mount Sinai, God gave Israel His law—a comprehensive covenant that would govern the moral, civil, and ceremonial aspects of their life as a nation.

This Mosaic Covenant, however, was conditional. It required obedience to God's statutes and included blessings for compliance and curses for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28). It was never intended to replace or nullify the Abrahamic Covenant, which was unconditional and based on God's promise, not human performance. Paul later clarified this distinction, writing, "The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise" (Galatians 3:17).

The Israelites failed to keep the law, often turning to idolatry and rebellion. As a result, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years before the next generation entered the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. The period that followed—known as the time of the Judges—was marked by cycles of sin, oppression,

repentance, and deliverance. God raised up leaders like Deborah, Gideon, and Samson to rescue His people, but the nation lacked unity and spiritual stability.

Eventually, Israel demanded a king to be like the surrounding nations. God allowed it and appointed Saul, then David, and finally Solomon. David, a man after God's own heart, received yet another covenant promise from God—the Davidic Covenant. This promise declared that David's throne would be established forever and that one of his descendants would reign eternally (2 Samuel 7:12–16). This pointed forward to Jesus Christ, the Son of David, who would fulfill the promise as King of Kings.

After Solomon's reign, the kingdom split into two: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. Both nations struggled with idolatry and injustice, despite the warnings of prophets like Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea. God sent foreign powers—Assyria and Babylon—to judge them. Israel was taken into captivity by Assyria in 722 BC, and Judah was exiled to Babylon in 586 BC.

During the exile, the prophets continued to proclaim hope and restoration. Daniel, Ezekiel, and others reminded the people that God's promises had not failed. After seventy years, a remnant returned to Jerusalem, rebuilt the temple under Zerubbabel, and restored the walls under Nehemiah. But the glory of the former days was gone. The prophetic voice eventually grew silent for four centuries.

These four hundred years between Malachi and Matthew—known as the intertestamental period—were filled with turbulence, foreign rule,

and religious development. The Greeks, under Alexander the Great, spread Hellenistic culture across the region. Later, the Romans conquered Judea and imposed their rule. The temple was expanded under Herod the Great, and various Jewish sects arose—Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes—each interpreting the Law and tradition in their own way.

By the time Christ was born, Israel was ripe with expectation. The Jews longed for deliverance—a Messiah who would free them from Rome and restore the glory of David’s kingdom. Yet their expectations were rooted in political ambition, not spiritual transformation. They missed the deeper meaning of the promises and the true purpose of the law.

Throughout the Old Testament, the priesthood was central to Israel’s worship. The Levites—descendants of Jacob’s third son—were set apart for service in the tabernacle and later the temple. Among the Levites, only descendants of Aaron could serve as high priests. These priests mediated between God and man, offering sacrifices for sin and performing rituals that foreshadowed Christ’s ultimate work.

Levi’s descendants received no tribal land but were distributed among the other tribes and supported through tithes. Their responsibilities included teaching the law, offering sacrifices, maintaining temple worship, and representing the people before God. This system remained in place until the destruction of the temple in AD 70.

But long before Levi, there was Melchizedek.

Melchizedek, the mysterious priest-king of Salem, met Abraham and blessed him after the victory over the kings. Abraham gave him a tenth of the spoils—a sign of respect and acknowledgment of Melchizedek's spiritual authority. Unlike the Levitical priests, Melchizedek had no recorded genealogy, no beginning or end. He was both king and priest—a unique combination never seen in the Levitical system.

The writer of Hebrews picks up this theme to show that Jesus Christ, like Melchizedek, holds a permanent priesthood. He is not from the tribe of Levi, but from Judah. Yet He is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek—appointed by divine oath, not genealogy. This royal priesthood is eternal and perfect, surpassing the limitations of the Mosaic system.

Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, received his father's blessing as the royal line. From Judah's descendants came David—and eventually Jesus. Both Joseph and Mary were from this line, ensuring that Jesus, by both legal and natural descent, fulfilled the messianic requirements.

By the time of Christ, the temple had replaced the tabernacle as the center of worship. Sacrifices were daily, offerings continual, and the high priest still entered the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. But the presence of God was no longer visibly manifested as in the days of the wilderness tabernacle. The rituals continued, but the glory had departed.

And yet, behind the scenes, God's plan was advancing. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David were moving

toward their fulfillment—not through law or tradition, but through the arrival of grace and truth in the person of Jesus Christ.

As we turn the page to the next chapter, we will witness how the Jewish people, steeped in religious heritage, encountered the light of the world—and many, tragically, remained blind. Their very Scriptures foretold the coming of a priest-king like Melchizedek. Their temple rituals pointed to a better sacrifice. Yet when the fulfillment came, they clung to shadows and rejected the substance.

But God's plan was not thwarted. The better covenant had come. The true Priest had arrived. The time of reformation was at hand—and everything the law foreshadowed was about to be fulfilled in Christ.



Chapter 10: Blinded by the Light

During the time of Christ's death and resurrection, the Jewish people were thoroughly immersed in their religious identity. Tribal affiliations, priestly regulations, temple rituals, and Mosaic law shaped the framework of life and worship. Into this context came the radical assertion made by the writer of Hebrews: that Jesus of Nazareth, a man from the tribe of Judah, was not only the promised Messiah but also a high priest—*not* of the Levitical line, but in the order of Melchizedek. This claim struck at the very core of the Jewish religious system and challenged centuries of tradition, ritual, and theological understanding.

To understand the force of this argument, one must appreciate how central the Levitical priesthood had become. Every offering, every sacrifice, every ceremony was overseen by priests descended from Aaron of the tribe of Levi. Their duties were many, their office was revered, and their ministry was essential. But as the writer of Hebrews emphasized, their service was only temporary, symbolic, and incomplete. The Levitical system could never bring true perfection or lasting access to God. That could only come through a better priesthood—a better covenant.

“This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means ‘king of righteousness’; then also, ‘king of Salem’ means ‘king of peace.’ Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end

of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever...” (Hebrews 7:1–3).

The use of Melchizedek, a mysterious Old Testament figure who appears briefly in Genesis 14, was brilliant and inspired. This king-priest, who received tithes from Abraham and blessed him, foreshadowed Christ’s superior priesthood. Unlike the Levitical priests whose offices were defined by genealogical descent and limited by death, Melchizedek had neither recorded lineage nor death, making him a type—a prophetic shadow—of Christ. As Hebrews explains, “he remains a priest forever.”

This contrast continues to unfold:

“Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people... but this man [Melchizedek] did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater... If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood... why was there still need for another priest to come...?” (Hebrews 7:5–11).

These rhetorical questions were not theoretical. They were piercingly practical. If the Levitical priesthood was enough, why did David, centuries after the Law of Moses, prophesy a coming priest “in the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4)? This indicated something lacking, something needing fulfillment. And Jesus fulfilled it.

“For it is declared: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’ The former regulation is set aside because it was

weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God” (Hebrews 7:17–19).

To modern ears, this may sound complex or irrelevant, but we must not gloss over it. What God is revealing in these passages is monumental. He is announcing the end of a temporary system and the inauguration of a superior one. He is transferring the means of access to Himself from a line of dying priests offering continual sacrifices, to one eternal high priest who offered Himself once for all.

This new priesthood is not based on ancestry but on the power of an indestructible life. Jesus, risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, now ministers as our high priest in the true tabernacle—not made by human hands, not on earth, but in heaven itself. He intercedes continually for those who come to God through Him. This is the basis for our security, our salvation, and our access to the Father.

“And it was not without an oath!... ‘The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever.’ Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant” (Hebrews 7:20–22).

The permanence of Christ’s priesthood is contrasted with the mortality of the Levitical priests. Their ministry ended in death. His never will.

“Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Hebrews 7:24–25).

This is not abstract theology. This is the foundation of Christian hope. Our salvation is not based on our ability to keep a law, or perform rituals, or achieve moral perfection. It is based on the finished work of Christ, who offered Himself as a once-for-all sacrifice, and now lives forever as our high priest. He meets our need completely.

“Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day... He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself... the Son... has been made perfect forever” (Hebrews 7:27–28).

And yet, despite the clarity and power of this message, many of the Jews rejected it. They were blinded by tradition, hardened by pride, and resistant to change. The very Scriptures they revered pointed to Christ, but they refused to see it. The writer of Hebrews argued passionately, but their hearts remained closed.

Up to the destruction of the temple in AD 70, the Jewish people still clung to the old system. They had the temple, the scrolls, the rituals, the genealogies. Christians, in contrast, had nothing tangible—no building, no altar, no Levitical priest. All they had was faith in a crucified and risen Messiah, and the invisible ministry of the Holy Spirit.

To them, it seemed like Christians were the poor beggars. But Christ told a story that put things in perspective:

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen... At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus... The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to

Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades... he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side... Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things... now he is comforted here and you are in agony... between us and you a great chasm has been set in place...' (Luke 16:19–31).

The rich man pleaded for someone to rise from the dead and warn his family. Abraham's answer was chilling: "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them... If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

The lesson is clear. The Jews had all the religious privileges imaginable, but they missed the Messiah. They failed to recognize Him, even after He rose from the dead.

And the same danger remains for modern readers. We may be tempted to skim over passages like Hebrews 7, dismissing them as ancient logic for a distant culture. But if we slow down, reflect, and listen carefully, we find that the message is as relevant as ever. Christ is our high priest. He lives to intercede for us. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Through Him, and Him alone, we draw near to God.

This royal priesthood is not ceremonial. It is transformational. It changes how we live, how we worship, and how we serve. It anchors our hope in the heavenly sanctuary, not in earthly buildings. And it reminds us daily that our salvation is secure—not because of what we do, but because of who Christ is.

In the next chapter, we'll examine the profound implications of this priesthood, not only in Christ's role but in ours. As His followers, we are called into a royal priesthood ourselves—set apart to serve, intercede, and reflect the glory of our eternal High Priest.



Chapter 11: The Priesthood of Christ

The comparison of Christ's priesthood to that of Melchizedek was to emphasize its superiority over the Levitical priesthood. This is not a secondary doctrine in the New Testament—it is central. Christ's priestly ministry is essential to understanding the believer's complete salvation, ongoing sanctification, and ultimate glorification. It was as High Priest that Christ offered His own body as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. And it is as High Priest that He now intercedes for us continually in heaven. By His once-for-all offering, believers are saved completely. And through His ascended role, believers have been established as a new, royal priesthood under His direction.

This priesthood was inaugurated in the upper room the night before His crucifixion. The farewell discourse of John chapters 13–17 reveals the first glimpse of this new ministry. The teaching began not with a sermon, but with a demonstration: Jesus washed the disciples' feet. At first, this seemed like a gesture of humility alone. But Jesus explained, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand" (John 13:7). He clarified that their bodies were already clean, but their feet needed washing. This was not about hygiene or custom. It was a metaphor for the cleansing of sin from the lives of believers.

Those who are justified—those who have placed their faith in Christ—are already cleansed positionally. Their eternal destiny is secure. Yet, as they walk through this fallen world, they still stumble and sin. The guilt and shame associated with those failings do not affect their standing before God, but they do affect their experience of fellowship

with Him. That is where the priestly role of Christ becomes active. He is our advocate (1 John 2:1), our High Priest who defends us against the accuser and applies the cleansing power of His blood to our consciences. This dual cleansing—of guilt and defilement—became a foundational doctrine for the early church. It is what allows for the confession of sin, the restoration of joy, and the renewal of service.

In the new priesthood, Christ is not only the one who cleanses, but He empowers His followers to do the same for one another. Believers, now members of a royal priesthood, are called to participate in this ministry of restoration. Just as Jesus washed the disciples' feet, so we are to metaphorically "wash" one another by encouraging confession, offering forgiveness, and guiding the penitent back to fruitful fellowship. The metaphor becomes a model. This priesthood is not distant or ceremonial—it is relational and redemptive.

This new command was reinforced by a new hope. For generations, Jewish believers had focused on the land, the temple, and the visible blessings tied to the covenant with Abraham. But Jesus raised their sights to heaven. "In My Father's house are many rooms; I go to prepare a place for you," He said (John 14:2). The way to God was no longer through a priest entering the temple once a year. The curtain would soon be torn. Jesus would enter the heavenly sanctuary, and the way would be permanently open.

The Levitical priesthood had functioned according to a strict system: a gate, an altar, a basin for cleansing, a holy place with bread, a lampstand, incense, and finally, the Most Holy Place. Each station represented a truth: the need for substitutionary sacrifice, cleansing,

sustenance, illumination, communion, and atonement. But access was limited. The message was clear: sinful man could only approach a holy God on His terms. Abel learned this when his acceptable sacrifice was received by God, while Cain's was rejected.

But now Christ declared, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). He was replacing every station along the path. He is the gate, the sacrifice, the cleansing water, the bread of life, the light of the world, the fragrant incense, and the eternal High Priest. The next day, the temple curtain tore from top to bottom, confirming that the way to God had changed forever.

This new path would not be possible apart from divine assistance. So Jesus promised the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit's indwelling presence, the royal priesthood of believers is empowered to serve both God and man. Christ, from His heavenly position, bestows gifts by the Spirit for the purpose of equipping the saints. "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." (Ephesians 4:11–12).

Paul exhorted believers to offer their own bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). The writer of Hebrews urged, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess His name" (Hebrews 13:15). Peter declared that we are "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (1 Peter 2:9).

This priesthood is not an elite spiritual class. Every believer is called to it. We have been set apart not only to worship, but to serve. Through this priesthood, God is glorified, the Church is edified, and the world is evangelized. Christ, though He is King, is presently functioning as High Priest. He intercedes, advocates, purifies, and empowers.

This present priestly ministry is essential to fulfilling the Abrahamic covenant. Through Christ's ongoing ministry in heaven and the priesthood of believers on earth, the blessing to all families is being carried out. The seed of Abraham has become a global body united not by race or ritual, but by faith. As Paul said, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

One day, Christ will return. He will transition from priest to King—not in identity, but in emphasis. He will rule with a rod of iron from the throne of David. The Abrahamic covenant will find its full expression in the land promise. The descendants of Israel will inherit the land stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates. Peace will cover the earth. Righteousness will reign. The knowledge of the Lord will fill the nations.

Until that day, we live by faith. We fix our eyes on the hope revealed in Christ. We walk in love. And we serve as priests under the great High Priest who lives forever.

Because of the progressive revelation of Scripture, we can see God's plan clearly. The sin of the world has been paid for by Christ. Salvation is offered freely to all. The only thing left is the response.

Will we believe? Will we receive? Or will we cling to other ways that lead only to condemnation?

"Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all" (Romans 4:16).

This is our calling: to believe the promise, to embrace the grace, and to serve in love. This is the way of the royal priesthood. This is the way of Christ.



Chapter 12: Faith, Hope, and Love

"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

As we conclude this journey through the life of Abraham and God's unfolding redemptive plan, we arrive at a summit of Christian spirituality—a place where three virtues stand tall, enduring beyond dispensations, covenants, and centuries. Faith, hope, and love. These three, Scripture says, remain. And not only do they remain; they define what it means to live as a child of God in the present age.

These are not abstract ideals. They are spiritual gifts granted to every believer at salvation. They are not reserved for spiritual elites or apostolic figures; they are meant to function daily in the life of every Christian. Yet, their power and presence in our lives can be stifled, not because God is stingy, but because sin and self often get in the way. Like the moon that reflects the sun, our ability to reflect these divine gifts is hindered only by the extent that the world gets in the way. The brilliance of faith, hope, and love is always available, but it is up to us whether we let them shine.

Consider the simple equation: Faith + Hope = Love.

Love, the greatest of the three, is not a feeling we manufacture, but the fruit of properly aligned faith and hope. When we place our faith in God's Word and fix our hope on His promises, love naturally flows. It is the culmination of trust in what God has said and confidence in what God will do. This is why love is called the greatest. Not

because it replaces faith or hope, but because it is the outward, visible expression of both working in harmony.

This divine formula is beautifully illustrated in the life of Abraham. From the moment God called him out of Ur to the final act of obedient sacrifice on Mount Moriah, Abraham's life was a journey of developing faith, tested hope, and maturing love. He didn't always get it right. He faltered when famine came and fled to Egypt. He wavered when Sarah offered Hagar as a solution to God's delay. But Abraham never let go of faith. And when his hope caught up with his faith, love became evident—seen in his intercession for Lot, his graciousness toward others, and his willingness to offer Isaac back to God.

Faith, in biblical terms, is always rooted in revelation. It is not a blind leap, but a confident step based on what God has said. Abraham's faith began the moment he believed God's voice and left his homeland. He didn't know where he was going, but he trusted the One who was leading.

This same faith is required of us today. Paul says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Faith justifies. Faith opens the door to grace. Faith lays hold of salvation. And this kind of faith is not a one-time event. It begins at conversion, but it must continue throughout the Christian life. Abraham believed, and it was credited to him as righteousness. We believe in the death and resurrection of Christ, and we are credited with His righteousness.

Faith is the foundation of our relationship with God. Without it, we cannot please Him (Hebrews 11:6). Yet, faith alone is incomplete if it is not joined with hope.

Hope is often misunderstood in modern language. We use the word casually, as wishful thinking. "I hope it doesn't rain," or "I hope I get the job." But biblical hope is entirely different. It is not uncertain; it is confident. It is the unwavering expectation that what God has promised, He will surely do.

Abraham had faith, but his hope was tested repeatedly. Would he really be the father of many nations? Would Sarah bear a child in her old age? Would the land ever truly belong to his descendants?

In the end, Abraham learned to fix his hope not on immediate results but on God's long-range plan. He looked forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). His faith gave him eyes to see, and his hope gave him courage to keep walking.

Romans 5 describes the progression beautifully:

"We boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Romans 5:2b-5).

Hope is forged in the fires of trial. It is strengthened when faith is tested. Abraham waited twenty-five years for Isaac, and even then,

was asked to offer him back to God. His hope matured through hardship. Ours must as well.

When faith lays the foundation and hope builds the structure, love is the beauty that adorns the house. Love is the fruit, the evidence, the expression of a soul rightly aligned with God.

Abraham's life teaches us that love is not sentimentality. It is action. He showed love when he rescued Lot, when he pleaded for Sodom, when he welcomed strangers, and when he trusted God with his most precious son.

Jesus said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). And Paul tells us that love fulfills the law (Romans 13:10).

But love is not something we muster up on our own. It is the natural byproduct of a life saturated with faith and hope. When we trust God's Word (faith) and expect His promises (hope), we are free to love sacrificially.

Paul told the Galatians, "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 5:6). Faith alone is not static. When paired with hope, it moves. It serves. It gives. That movement is love.

Israel's story helps us see what happens when these three virtues are out of alignment. From the moment God called them out of Egypt to be His treasured possession, Israel was entrusted with God's covenants, the Law, the priesthood, and the promises. They had the oracles of God, the presence of the Lord dwelling in the tabernacle,

and the prophetic word that guided them through generations. The nation, as a whole, had faith—at least in the sense of knowledge and acknowledgment of the one true God. But their hope was often misplaced.

When trials came, they longed to return to Egypt. When God delayed, they built golden calves. When He promised a Messiah, many looked instead for political deliverance. Their actions repeatedly revealed a faith not anchored in hope. Even with faith in God's existence, they failed to trust in His plan. And because their faith was not coupled with hope, they struggled to love God with all their heart and to walk humbly with Him.

Yet God was not finished. A faithful remnant always remained, and through them the lineage of Christ was preserved. The Law, which they could not keep, served as a tutor to lead them to Christ. Their failures became the backdrop for God's grace. And in the fullness of time, the long-awaited Messiah came—not with fanfare, but with humility; not to condemn the world, but to save it.

Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, not because they lacked religion, but because they had lost hope in God's redemptive promise. They had the Scriptures, but they missed the Savior. Their zeal lacked understanding, and as Paul would later say, they pursued righteousness by works rather than by faith (Romans 9:31–32). It was a tragic example of how faith, when distorted or disconnected from hope, becomes brittle—unable to produce the fruit of love that God desires.

The early Church, on the other hand, stood as a vibrant testimony to what happens when faith, hope, and love are operating in harmony. These believers, most of whom had never seen Christ in person, were transformed by the gospel message and empowered by the Holy Spirit. They believed in a crucified and risen Savior, hoped in His return, and loved each other deeply in the meantime.

This triad of virtues—faith, hope, and love—became the distinguishing marks of the Church's early witness. Paul opened his letters with commendations of these gifts: "We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

Despite fierce persecution, economic hardship, and cultural hostility, these believers endured. Why? Because their faith was fixed on Christ, their hope was anchored in eternity, and their love was poured out by the Holy Spirit. They sold possessions to help one another, forgave each other freely, and were known for how they loved—not only their fellow believers but even their enemies. This kind of sacrificial love wasn't learned; it was produced by the Spirit of God working through believers who were living out their faith in full assurance of hope.

And even as doctrinal challenges, relational conflicts, and moral failures arose within the churches—as seen in Corinth, Galatia, and elsewhere—God continued to sanctify His people, urging them to return to the simplicity and power of the gospel, a gospel expressed not just in creed, but in lives marked by faith, hope, and love.

These three virtues—faith, hope, and love—are spiritual gifts, not natural inclinations. They are imparted to every believer through the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. Yet like muscles, they must be exercised to grow. Many believers possess faith but live with very little hope. Others profess love but have no firm foundation in truth. Still others believe in God's promises but struggle to express it through sacrificial love.

This chapter is a call to align all three. To check the alignment of your faith, hope, and love. Are they working in harmony? Or are they stifled by fear, doubt, or self-reliance?

Abraham's story is your story. You have heard the call. You have received the promise. You are walking by faith. But are your eyes fixed on the hope that lies ahead? Are your steps marked by the kind of love that flows from full assurance?

Hebrews 11 reminds us of those who lived by faith. Abraham. Sarah. Moses. Rahab. David. And many more. They didn't receive the fullness of the promise in their lifetimes, but they believed. They saw it from a distance and welcomed it. And they lived in such a way that their hope became visible through their actions.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Jesus is the ultimate example. He believed the Father's Word. He hoped in the joy set before Him. And He laid down His life in love.

As we bring this study to a close, we do so with a fresh appreciation for these three virtues. Faith, hope, and love are not optional. They are essential. They are gifts, but they are also responsibilities. They define the Christian life.

Faith anchors us to God's truth. Hope lifts our eyes to His future. Love reveals His heart through our hands.

And though these three remain, the greatest of these is love—because love is what the world sees. It is the tangible expression of faith and the living proof of hope. Let us press on to be people of faith, confident in God's Word; people of hope, unwavering in our outlook; and people of love, reflecting the very character of Christ.

For in the end, these three remain. Faith. Hope. And Love. And the greatest of these is love.



Appendix A: Abraham's Timeline and the Harmony of Faith and Works

Two Apostles, Two Perspectives, One Gospel

At first glance, the words of Paul and James about Abraham seem contradictory. Paul says that Abraham was "justified by faith" (Romans 4:1–25), while James insists he was "justified by works, and not by faith alone" (James 2:14–24). Some critics highlight this supposed discrepancy as evidence of internal conflict within the Bible. Even sincere Christians may struggle to understand how these two teachings can both be true.

But there is no contradiction. These two apostles were chosen by the same Lord, writing under the same divine inspiration, proclaiming the same gospel. What appears to be tension disappears when we consider context. Paul and James were addressing different issues, different audiences, and different types of justification. When we turn to the life of Abraham and place their statements along a timeline, the harmony becomes beautifully clear.

In this appendix, we will walk through Abraham's life and trace how both Paul and James can affirm that he was justified—by faith, and also by works—without undermining each other. Instead of competing, their voices converge into a rich and complete picture of saving faith.

2. Paul's Focus: Justification Before God

Paul's message in Romans and Galatians is a clear and powerful defense of salvation by grace through faith alone, apart from works. Writing to both Jews and Gentiles, Paul is confronting the false belief that keeping the Mosaic Law, or performing any good works, could earn justification before God. Against this, he appeals to Abraham as the prototype of justification by faith:

"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (Romans 4:3).

This event occurs in Genesis 15:6, when God makes a promise to Abraham—then childless and aging—that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. Abraham believed God, and that faith was counted as righteousness. Paul emphasizes that this took place before the Law, before circumcision, and long before any notable works.

Paul's point is theological: justification before God is a divine declaration based on faith alone. Nothing we do earns this standing. It is not achieved, it is received. This is the heart of the gospel.

3. James's Focus: Justification Before Men

James, on the other hand, addresses a different problem: empty profession of faith. Writing to Jewish believers under pressure and persecution, James is concerned that some claim to believe in Christ, but their lives show no evidence of change.

He challenges this idea:

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?”
(James 2:14)

James isn't contradicting Paul; he's clarifying the nature of true, saving faith. He uses Abraham as an example, but references a different point in Abraham's life: the near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22, which occurred decades after the event Paul references in Genesis 15.

“Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ... You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did” (James 2:21–22).

James's concern is practical and pastoral: genuine faith will always produce works. If it doesn't, it's not real. His use of “justified” refers not to the initial declaration of righteousness by God, but to the visible proof of faith seen in action.

4. Abraham's Timeline: Faith First, Works Later

When we lay out Abraham's life chronologically, the harmony between Paul and James becomes undeniable.

Key Events in Abraham's Life:

- **Age 75:** Abraham leaves Haran in obedience to God's call (Genesis 12:4)
- **Age >75:** Separates from Lot (Genesis 13:8–9)
- **Age ~85:** God promises a son; Abraham believes and is declared righteous (Genesis 15:6)
- **Age 86:** Ishmael is born (Genesis 16:16)
- **Age 99:** God establishes circumcision as a sign of the covenant (Genesis 17:24)
- **Age 100:** Isaac is born (Genesis 21:5)
- **Age ~110+:** Abraham offers Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:1–19)

There is a span of 30 to 35 years between Abraham's justification by faith and the work that James highlights. In Genesis 15, Abraham is declared righteous because he believed God's promise. In Genesis 22, that same faith—matured and tested—is proven through action.

Paul refers to the root of justification: faith alone. James refers to the fruit of justification: works that flow from genuine faith.

Understanding this sequence resolves any perceived contradiction. Abraham's faith was real. It justified him before God immediately. But that same faith later manifested itself through obedience, confirming its reality for all to see.

5. Two Sides of One Coin: Faith and Works Together

When understood in sequence and context, Paul and James are not presenting rival theologies but complementary truths. Justification before God is entirely by faith, apart from works. But justification before others—the public demonstration of our faith—is evidenced by our works.

God sees the heart. He declares a person righteous the moment they trust in Him. But fellow humans cannot see the heart. They can only observe actions. This is why works matter—not to earn salvation, but to reveal its presence.

A fruitless faith is no faith at all. As Jesus said, “By their fruit you will recognize them” (Matthew 7:20). Faith is the root of our salvation; works are the fruit. The two must be kept in order, but both are essential to the full picture of the Christian life.

6. Church History and Theological Insight

The church fathers, and later Protestant reformers, never viewed Paul and James as being in theological conflict. Instead, they saw two apostles addressing different errors.

- Paul confronted those who wanted to add works to faith as a basis for justification.
- James corrected those who thought they could have faith without works and still be saved.

Martin Luther, though initially troubled by James, came to understand and teach that “we are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.”

Dispensational scholars have also affirmed that these writings reflect different stewardship roles and audiences, but both ultimately affirm the same gospel. Paul's epistles build foundational doctrine; James provides a pastoral exhortation for living it out.

If we emphasize Paul to the exclusion of James, we risk antinomianism—living as though holiness doesn't matter. If we elevate James and forget Paul, we fall into legalism—trying to earn what God has already given. In harmony, these two voices uphold the full counsel of God.

7. Final Thoughts

Faith is not a mere mental agreement—it is a living trust in the Living God. That kind of trust will always grow, stretch, and ultimately act.

When Abraham believed God in Genesis 15, his faith was real. God saw it. God credited righteousness to his account. But the world saw the evidence decades later—when Abraham laid his son on the altar, trusting that God would provide.

The call to every believer is the same. Trust God, and let that trust bear fruit. As the apostle Paul wrote, “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Galatians 5:6).

James does not challenge the sufficiency of faith. He challenges the authenticity of faith that never expresses itself.

In the end, Paul and James proclaim the same Christ, the same gospel, and the same call:

- Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.
- Live out that salvation through love, obedience, and service.

Faith is the root. Works are the fruit. And God is the gardener who cultivates both in the life of every true believer.

Let us, then, be both grounded in faith and rich in good works, as we walk in the grace and truth of the One who justifies the ungodly and transforms them into vessels of His glory.



Appendix B: The Abrahamic Covenant

Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who rely on faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

...

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ.

...

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:7-29).

Part 1: The Giving of the Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant marks a pivotal moment in biblical history. It is not merely a transaction or an isolated promise—it is a divine declaration that establishes the foundation for God’s plan of redemption, His dealings with the nation of Israel, and His blessings to all humanity through faith. The covenant is introduced, expanded, and reaffirmed across several chapters of Genesis, and its importance echoes throughout the entire Bible.

The story begins in Genesis 12, where God makes His first covenantal statement to Abram:

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you’” (Genesis 12:1–3).

This call is remarkable. At a time when the nations had just been scattered due to the Tower of Babel incident (Genesis 11), God singles out a man named Abram, living in the idolatrous city of Ur (Joshua 24:2), and invites him into a relationship of faith. This is the genesis of the Abrahamic Covenant, and it contains the essential elements that will be repeated and expanded upon: land, seed (descendants), and blessing.

Genesis 12 marks the beginning, but the formal ratification of the covenant takes place in Genesis 15. In one of the most solemn and dramatic scenes in all of Scripture, God instructs Abram to prepare a covenant ceremony using specific animals: a heifer, a goat, a ram, a dove, and a pigeon. Abram cuts the animals in half and lays the pieces opposite each other. This act reflects an ancient Near Eastern practice where both parties of a covenant would walk between the severed pieces, symbolizing mutual agreement—essentially declaring, “May this happen to me if I break the terms of the covenant.”

But what happens next is extraordinary:

*“As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him... When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces”
(Genesis 15:12, 17).*

Abram never walked between the pieces. Only God did. The imagery of the smoking firepot and torch is a theophany—a manifestation of God’s presence. This act was God’s way of declaring that the fulfillment of the covenant rested solely on Him. It was unilateral and unconditional. Abram, the recipient, was not required to meet any conditions for the covenant to be upheld. God Himself guaranteed it.

In Genesis 15:18, we read:

“On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.’”

This delineates the geographical scope of the promise—a vast territory far larger than Israel has ever fully occupied to this day—pointing forward to a future fulfillment under Messiah's reign.

Genesis 17 adds another dimension. Here, God reiterates the covenant, changes Abram's name to Abraham ("father of many nations"), and Sarai's to Sarah. He also introduces circumcision as the outward sign of the covenant for Abraham's descendants. Most significantly, God clarifies that the covenant would not pass through Ishmael, but through a son yet to be born—Isaac:

"Then God said, 'Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him'" (Genesis 17:19).

Later, in Genesis 22, after Abraham demonstrates his willingness to offer Isaac in obedience to God's command, God confirms the covenant with an oath:

"I swear by myself," declares the Lord, "that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore... and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Genesis 22:16–18).

This moment not only reaffirms the original promise but also connects it directly with a future blessing to all nations through a singular "offspring"—ultimately fulfilled in Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Throughout the remainder of Genesis, the Abrahamic Covenant is restated and confirmed to Isaac (Genesis 26:3–4) and then to Jacob (Genesis 28:13–15), affirming that it applies through the specific line God has chosen. The promises remain consistent: land, numerous descendants, and worldwide blessing.

This covenantal theme continues through Israel's national history. The psalmist later writes:

“He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit’” (Psalm 105:8–11).

The New Testament affirms the same truth. The writer of Hebrews states:

“When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself” (Hebrews 6:13).

This divine oath underscores the unchangeable nature of the promise. It is rooted in God's character, not man's performance. It cannot be broken. And so, the Abrahamic Covenant becomes a cornerstone of both Jewish identity and Christian theology.

The giving of the covenant is more than a historical record. It is a profound revelation of God's unmerited grace, His sovereign plan, and His enduring faithfulness. In a world of shifting alliances and

broken promises, here stands a divine promise that cannot fail—upheld by the God who does not lie and who never changes.

This foundational covenant sets the stage for understanding redemptive history. It is not merely a promise to a man, but the backbone of God's dealings with both Israel and the nations—a covenant that threads its way through Scripture and finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Part 2: The Covenant and God's Redemptive Plan

The Abrahamic Covenant stands as one of the most significant and enduring revelations in all of Scripture. Its implications stretch far beyond the life of Abraham and his immediate descendants. In fact, this covenant lies at the very heart of God's unfolding plan of redemption. It serves as a theological cornerstone upon which much of dispensational truth is built, revealing God's sovereign purpose to bless the world through the nation of Israel and, ultimately, through Jesus Christ.

From the beginning, God's redemptive plan has always been a story of grace. Mankind, having fallen in Adam, needed salvation that could not come through personal merit or adherence to law. Instead, it had to come through the gracious intervention of God Himself. The Abrahamic Covenant is the clearest early expression of that grace. It is unconditional, everlasting, and guaranteed by God alone, as seen when He passed through the animal pieces by Himself in Genesis 15. This one-sided act demonstrated that the fulfillment of the covenant depended solely upon God's faithfulness—not Abraham's

performance. That singular truth continues to echo throughout every dispensation.

The Abrahamic Covenant intersects each stage of dispensational history. In the Age of Promise (the dispensation immediately following the Flood), the covenant was introduced. God called one man—Abram—from a world of idolatry and made him the vehicle of blessing to all the families of the earth. “I will make you into a great nation...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2–3). It is here that God narrowed His redemptive program to focus on one family line through which the Messiah would come.

Later, in the Dispensation of Law, the Abrahamic Covenant continued to function as the foundational promise to Israel, even as the Mosaic Covenant introduced specific stipulations for life under the law. Paul makes it clear that “the law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise” (Galatians 3:17). The law was added for a specific purpose—to expose sin and act as a guardian until Christ came—but it never annulled the Abrahamic promise.

With the coming of Christ and the beginning of the present Dispensation of Grace (or the Church Age), the Abrahamic Covenant reaches a partial fulfillment in the spiritual blessings made available to all people—Jews and Gentiles alike—through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul emphasizes this point in Romans 4, explaining that Abraham is “the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised... and also... the father of the circumcised who... follow in the footsteps of the faith” (Romans 4:11–12).

The covenant's ultimate fulfillment awaits the future Dispensation of the Kingdom. The land promises, which were never fully realized in Israel's past, will be fulfilled during the Millennial reign of Christ. At that time, the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob will dwell securely in the land from the Nile to the Euphrates. "The LORD appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land'" (Genesis 12:7). Ezekiel and other prophets speak of this future restoration in detail (Ezekiel 37:21–28).

Lewis Sperry Chafer, in his seminal work *Systematic Theology*, wrote:

"The Abrahamic Covenant is the foundation for all subsequent covenants and dispensations in Scripture. It is the divine declaration that God's redemptive purpose for the world is to be realized through grace and through the calling out of a special people, Israel. All the plans and dealings of God with man must be traced back to this one covenant if they are to be understood rightly" (*Systematic Theology*, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dallas Seminary Press, 1947).

Chafer's insight underscores the need to understand this covenant not just as a historical agreement with an ancient patriarch, but as a linchpin in God's eternal purpose. From the Abrahamic Covenant flows the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7), the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31), and the full scope of redemptive history. It explains Israel's origin, mission, and destiny. It clarifies the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan, and it upholds the character of God as a faithful and promise-keeping Lord.

Importantly, dispensational theology does not spiritualize the Abrahamic Covenant. The land promises, national promises, and global blessings are taken literally. The Church does not replace Israel but shares in the spiritual blessings promised to Abraham while Israel awaits the national and physical fulfillment of God's promises.

Dispensational theology holds a high view of the Abrahamic Covenant, taking its promises at face value and maintaining a consistent, literal interpretation of Scripture. At the core of this approach is the clear distinction between Israel and the Church—two entities that are central to God's redemptive plan, but with separate origins, missions, and destinies. This distinction is essential to rightly understanding how the Abrahamic Covenant continues to shape God's dealings with humanity.

The covenant made with Abraham contains three key components: land, seed, and blessing. These promises were given to Abraham and his physical descendants and were confirmed through Isaac and Jacob, forming the foundation for the nation of Israel. The promises were unconditional and everlasting, grounded in God's faithfulness rather than human obedience (Genesis 15:18; Genesis 17:7). Though Israel disobeyed God repeatedly throughout their history, these covenantal promises remain intact, awaiting future fulfillment.

The Church, however, did not exist in the Old Testament and was a "mystery" revealed in the New Testament (Ephesians 3:4–6). It was born at Pentecost (Acts 2), formed through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and is composed of both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ. While the Church shares in the spiritual blessings of

the Abrahamic Covenant—particularly the blessing of justification by faith (Galatians 3:8–9, 14)—it does not inherit the physical land or national promises given to Israel.

Charles C. Ryrie, in his book *Dispensationalism*, emphasized this distinction clearly:

"The Church is not fulfilling Israel's promises, nor is it Israel. The promises to Israel await their literal fulfillment in the future kingdom age. The Church participates in the spiritual blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, but it is not the heir to the land or national promises" (*Dispensationalism*, Charles C. Ryrie, Moody Publishers, 1995).

To blur the distinction between Israel and the Church is to undermine the integrity of God's Word. Paul warns against this in Romans 11, using the image of the olive tree. The natural branches (Israel) were broken off because of unbelief, and wild branches (Gentiles) were grafted in. But Paul also says the natural branches will be grafted in again, pointing to a future national restoration of Israel. "And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob'" (Romans 11:26).

This future restoration corresponds with the Millennial Kingdom, during which the promises made to Abraham—including the land promise—will be fulfilled in full. The Abrahamic Covenant remains the foundation for Israel's national destiny. God has not replaced Israel with the Church. Rather, He has temporarily set Israel aside during the Church Age (Romans 11:25), only to resume His dealings with them at the end of this age.

Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary and a foundational voice in dispensationalism, observed:

"The error of substituting the Church for Israel and assuming the fulfillment of Israel's promises by the Church has wrought confusion in every branch of theology and has not a single line of Scripture to support it" (*Systematic Theology*, Lewis Sperry Chafer).

Israel is the physical nation descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were chosen by God, entrusted with the Law, and promised a land and kingdom. Their purpose is national and earthly, with a future role in God's kingdom plan centered in Jerusalem.

The Church, in contrast, is a spiritual body made up of all believers in Christ. Its purpose is heavenly, and its blessings are primarily spiritual. The Church is called to proclaim the gospel and reflect Christ to the world, not to inherit land or govern a theocratic kingdom.

Though distinct, Israel and the Church are both beneficiaries of the Abrahamic Covenant. Israel awaits the full, literal fulfillment of the land and kingdom promises. The Church rejoices in the spiritual blessings of salvation through the promised Seed—Jesus Christ.

Understanding this distinction brings clarity to Scripture and safeguards the doctrine of God's unchanging faithfulness. It assures us that every promise He has made will be fulfilled exactly as He intended—both to the nation of Israel and to the Body of Christ. God does not conflate the two, and neither should we.

Paul beautifully harmonizes these themes when he writes: “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). The believer in this present age stands in continuity with God’s eternal purpose, grafted into the spiritual blessings promised to Abraham through the seed—Jesus Christ.

Thus, the Abrahamic Covenant is not merely an Old Testament relic—it is the living thread that weaves God’s redemptive plan across dispensations. It magnifies God’s grace, reveals His faithfulness, and assures us that His promises, once made, are never revoked. As we will now explore in the final section, this covenant has deeply personal implications for believers today.

Part 3: The Abrahamic Covenant and Believers Today

The Abrahamic Covenant may have been given to a man over four thousand years ago, but it continues to shape the identity, assurance, and mission of every believer today. It is not just a theological framework—it’s a living inheritance. Understanding this covenant gives us a clearer picture of who we are in Christ, what we’ve been given by grace, and how we are to live in response.

Paul said it plainly: “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). This verse ties the believer’s identity directly to Abraham—not by physical descent, but by faith. Those who trust in the gospel are included in the spiritual line of blessing that began with Abraham and culminates in Jesus Christ.

This connection reorients our understanding of the Christian life. It tells us that we are not isolated or aimless, but part of a long-standing plan rooted in divine promise. Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness (Romans 4:3), and so is ours. We share in the same covenantal principle: justification by faith apart from works. As Paul explains further, Abraham is the father of all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile: "He is the father of us all" (Romans 4:16).

It also means that the believer shares in Abraham's calling. Abraham was chosen not merely to be blessed, but to be a blessing (Genesis 12:2). That mission has not changed. The Church, made up of both Jews and Gentiles, now carries the light of God's promise into a dark world. We are heirs of the same grace and stewards of the same purpose—to reflect God's character and extend His invitation of salvation to others. As spiritual descendants of Abraham, we are called to live by faith, preach the gospel, and embody the love and mercy of God in every context (Matthew 5:14–16).

The covenant also gives us unshakable assurance. Just as Abraham's covenant depended solely on God's faithfulness, so does our salvation. "God is not human, that he should lie... Does he speak and then not act?" (Numbers 23:19). The covenant was ratified by God alone when He passed between the pieces in Genesis 15. In the same way, the new covenant in Christ's blood is guaranteed by God Himself. This gives us peace: "If we are faithless, he remains faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13). Our salvation is not maintained by human strength, but by divine promise.

Moreover, the Abrahamic Covenant shapes our hope. Abraham looked forward to "the city with foundations, whose architect and

builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). We also await a future kingdom, when Christ will reign and the promises to Israel will be fully realized. The Church does not replace Israel, but we do share in the spiritual blessings of the covenant, and we await the day when every promise will be fulfilled in Christ. The full scope of the covenant—including land, peace, and glory—will be consummated during Christ’s millennial reign (Revelation 20:4–6; Isaiah 2:2–4; Zechariah 14:9).

This perspective also shapes our walk. Just as Abraham’s faith moved him to obey—even when he didn’t understand (Hebrews 11:8)—our faith should result in obedience. We are called to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7), to trust God’s promises even when they are yet unseen. Abraham’s obedience, though imperfect at times, reveals a pattern of growing trust. Our lives should mirror that same trajectory: a faith that matures into deeper surrender and greater dependence.

And finally, this covenant gives us a legacy. “Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7). We are part of a family of faith. We are not alone in our journey. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who lived by faith, anchored their hope in God’s promises, and loved with a love that flowed from grace. Abraham’s life is recorded not just as a history lesson but as a model for all who follow Christ.

Being part of Abraham’s spiritual lineage also reminds us that faith, hope, and love are interconnected in the life of the believer. Abraham believed God’s Word, hoped in what was yet to come, and loved through obedience and sacrifice. These same virtues are essential for us today. Paul tells the Thessalonians, “We remember before our

God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope” (1 Thessalonians 1:3). This triad reflects the heartbeat of Abraham's walk and should define our lives as well.

To be a child of Abraham is to walk in the rhythm of God's eternal plan. It is to receive by faith what God has freely given. It is to look forward with hope to what He will yet do. And it is to live in love as a reflection of the One who called us. We are to be imitators of Abraham, not only in belief but in a lifestyle of expectation and surrender.

The Abrahamic Covenant anchors us. It lifts our eyes. It moves our hearts. It defines our story. It clarifies our mission. And it calls us to live as heirs—not just of blessing, but of promise, purpose, and praise.

We are not adrift in history. We are bound to a covenant that cannot fail. The same God who called Abraham calls us. The same promise that assured him now steadies us. And the same hope that led him to look toward a heavenly city now draws our gaze to the return of Christ. Let us then, as children of Abraham, walk by faith, rejoice in hope, and abound in love—until the day we inherit, in full, all that God has promised.



Glossary

This word index contains commentary primarily to aid the reader in understanding the usage of these words within the scope of this work. It may double as a reference guide to any Bible Study.

[\(A-L\)](#) [\(M-Z\)](#)

A

Abel - A son of Adam and Eve who was murdered by his brother Cain. Abel brought an appropriate sacrifice to the Lord which infuriated Cain who refused to comply to God's requirements. Abel's story is told in Genesis 4 but is also mentioned in the New Testament, "By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead" (Hebrews 11:4).

Abraham (aka Abram) - The man God chose to be the progenitor (father) of the Israelites. This particular line would come through his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. Jacob's name was subsequently changed to Israel. The Twelve Tribes proceeded from Jacob's sons and became the Jewish Nation. Familiarity with the life and career of Abraham is critical to understanding the Bible. See Appendix "B" for reference. God told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore (Genesis 22:17-18). The former may represent his spiritual lineage while the former may represent his natural lineage. "If you belong to

Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

Abyss - A place where certain demons are held in bondage until released. "And they [many demons] begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss" (Luke 8:31).

Adam - The seminal work of God in creating mankind. From Adam's side Eve was formed, and from his posterity emerged everyone who has ever existed with one exception, Jesus Christ. Adam was formed from the dust of the earth. God breathed life into him, and Adam became a fascinating union of body and soul complete with intellect, conscience, free will, and accountability. Adam's sin had the effect of death on all mankind. Christ has been described as the Last Adam as he had a similar yet opposite effect by redeeming us from death. "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19).

Advocate - One who speaks for another in an official capacity much like a lawyer does for a client. Christ is presently fulfilling this role for sinning believers as he defends them against Satan. He would defend them by the mention of His own blood which was presented to forgive all sin (Revelation 12:9-11). The Holy Spirit is also described as our advocate as He knows our hearts and intercedes accordingly, expressing things we would not be able to put into words (Romans 8:26-27). He also teaches us the things of God as we need to know them. "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come

from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for 'Who has known the mind of the Lord, so as to instruct him?' But we [believers] have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:14-16).

Angels - An innumerable army of spirit beings who possess supernatural abilities. Apparently divided into ranks with various capabilities and authority, they perform duties as assigned by God. Satan was originally a high ranking angel and sinned. This rebellion resulted in a judgment which included a number of minions usually now described as demons. Angels do not propagate or die. The Lake of Fire was prepared for the Devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Angels are normally mentioned as being in the presence of God and assisting in a wide array of tasks. "I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man [Jesus] will also acknowledge before the angels of God ... " (Luke 12:8).

Antichrist - A man who will emerge as the leader of the world. Satan will indwell this man and will manipulate world events to accommodate his rise to power. His popularity, authority, and purported peace are the culmination of the counterfeit kingdom of Christ. After promising peace, the antichrist will demand worship at a temple in Jerusalem.

"For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back [The Holy Spirit] will

continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness” (2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). See also Revelation chapters 19-22.

Apostle - One who is chosen to be sent with the authority of the one who sent them. After Jesus’ death, certain men were recognized as Apostles. The most well known of them would be Peter, James, John and Paul. These and others established doctrines which have been recorded in their writings. Apostleship denotes leadership and authority whereas discipleship refers to a follower or student (Matthew 5:1-2). The original Apostles have died but the message must continue to be told. Therefore, the term now also includes those who have received a spiritual gift which enables them to identify and communicate the untainted message established by the original Apostles. Subsequently the Holy Spirit illuminates truth to believers validated by the full testimony of Scripture. “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship,

to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles (Acts 2:42-43).

Apostolic - Of or relating to the work or office of Apostle. The Apostles were given authority to establish and lead the early church. God has communicated to man in various ways such as through creation, through the prophets and His Son. However, nothing has been as explicit as the Holy Spirit working through an Apostle resulting in an inspired written explanation of God's previous methods of communication. While the previous methods may be correctly or incorrectly interpreted by some of us, the recorded teachings of the Apostles formulate sound doctrine. Their writings are contained within the canon of the New Testament. They will prove to be the only reliable conclusions for those who seek a proper understanding of God's Message to mankind. "Consequently, you [believers] are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Ark - A boat which was constructed by Noah according to God's specifications. "Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark" (Genesis 7:23).

Ascension - The movement of Christ from earth to heaven. This was a literal event where he visibly rose into the clouds and out of sight (Acts 1:10-11), but it also includes all that was implied including the fact that He was seated on the Throne of God. It denotes the distinguished honor bestowed on the Risen Christ by God the Father. Christ is now serving as High Priest, Advocate, and Mediator (Hebrews 10:5-10). At a time appointed by God, He will return and establish a Kingdom on Earth for 1000 years (Revelation 19:11- 20:15). The Ascension of Christ is a pillar of Christian doctrine. "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

Atonement - An act that negates the effect of sin for one party by the imputation of sin and its effect to another party. God used various animal sacrifices to teach mankind the concept of substitutionary sacrifice and then sent Christ as the ultimate sacrifice as He died in place of mankind. The Divine atonement formula revealed to man is that sin requires the substitutionary death of a qualified candidate. Guilt is subsequently removed once the process of imputation and atonement is accomplished. "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (John 19:30).

B

Baptism - A public act performed to signify identification to Christ, and consequently to others who have done the same. Believers are either immersed under water or have water

applied to them shortly after they announce their belief in Christ. The Apostle Paul taught that in a spiritual sense, believers were baptized into death with Christ. This spiritual act identifies our choice to die to self and to live as Christ (Philippians 1:21). Additionally, believers are also described as being baptized with the Holy Spirit. "In him [Christ] you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:11-12).

Belief - Denotes an informed, contemplated conclusion. The decision to believe or reject the gospel is the decision that will precede our eternal destiny.

"Then they [representatives from a unbelieving crowd] asked him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?'

Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent' (John 6:28-29).

Bible - God's revealed Word recorded and preserved in written form. A collection of 66 books (Genesis to Revelation) and broken down into two sections, the Old Testament and New Testament. Approximately 40 authors contributed over a span of about 1500 years. The subject matter ranges from the creation of the world to the destruction of the world and the next life. It covers activities of God, angels, Satan, and man. It

speaks authoritatively on all subjects as the authors miraculously worked under the guidance of the Holy Spirit resulting in an inspired text. Its contents include history, science, poetry, allegory, parables, and many other literary devices to convey its message. It expands our minds by revealing God's attributes, purposes, and glory. The Bible magnificently frames Jesus Christ as the Savior of the World. He is essentially concealed and anticipated in the Old Testament, revealed in the New Testament, and worshipped by all who believe. "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

C

Called-out Ones - A term used when God called out someone to be set apart or Holy. God called the Nation Israel to be set apart from the other nations. He calls believers individually to be set apart from sinners. The term may be used to signify any or all believers as they were each called and responded accordingly. "Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our

knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:2-3).

Chosen Ones - The Bible teaches us that God chose certain individuals for salvation before the creation of the world. Every believer is chosen by God before we chose Him. There is no hindrance for any man to choose to believe except for his own will to reject the Gospel. “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:11-12).

Christ - (Messiah or Anointed One) God's chosen one. His mission was to deliver the human race from the law of sin and death. Famously anticipated by the Israelites, God's Messiah would redeem not just their one nation, but the world. Additionally, He will rule over the world as God's Representative on Earth assuming the role originally assigned to Adam. Christ is a title; Jesus is a given name. “Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth” (Revelation 1:4-6).

Christ the King - Jesus Christ fulfils many roles. He is the Eternal Second Person of the Trinity; He is the Creator; He is Savior; He is High Priest; and He will reign as King over the earth upon His Second Coming[^]. While He is presently seated on God's Throne and is the recipient of much honor and glory,

that is still technically the Throne of God the Father. He will receive the Throne of David as promised and reign as King of Jerusalem and the entire world. His role as High Priest and the duties of Advocate and Mediator are the priority of Christ at this time. Upon His second coming, he will return in power, defeat Satan, bind him in the abyss, and then rule the earth as King. "Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. 'He will rule them with an iron scepter.' He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords" (Revelation 19:15-16).

Christmas - A day that commemorates the Birth of Christ, the Son of God. The significance is that God became man so he could die as a Substitutionary sacrifice for mankind. "She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Colossians - A book of the Bible which was originally a letter from the Apostle Paul. He wrote to the church in Colossae and included in-depth spiritual instruction. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace and peace to you from God our Father" (Colossians 1:1-2).

Communion - A healthy relationship between oneself and God. Sin inhibits this relationship for believers, but confession of sin restores it. At regular intervals, the Church celebrates the

Lord's Supper at which time the bread and wine (or grape juice) is shared which remind us of the life and death of Christ, the forgiveness of sin which we received, and the importance of maintaining fellowship. This ordinance, by its very nature, encourages the confession of known sins and also the fact of our sinful nature. The Church will continue this practice until Christ returns to establish His earthly Kingdom. "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Condemnation - The Divine judicial ruling of all who reject God's provision for sin. "For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord (Jude 1:4).

Conscience - Knowledge of good and evil. Care must be exercised because we may be so conditioned to evil that we may consider the evil within us to be good. We must trust God's principles to guide us. "If anyone, then, knows the good

they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them" (James 4:17).

Corinthians - Recipients of two letters from Paul, 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul apparently contacted them by letter other times as well, but these two were included in the canon (Bible) while the others were not. "Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:1-3).

Creation - All material things known to man including planets, stars, animals, plants, and mankind. "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe" (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Creator - Refers specifically to Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Godhead. "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:15-17).

Cross - The Cross that Christ was nailed to as He died carries with it the implication of all that was accomplished in His life, death, and resurrection. "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:13-15).

D

Daniel - A prophet of God and the author of the Old Testament Book of Daniel. "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge" (Daniel 12:2-4).

Death - Death represents a separation. Physical death is a separation of man's body and spirit. Spiritual death is a separation between man and God. When a person dies, the body deteriorates and returns to dust while the spirit is contained at a place determined by God until the resurrection of the dead at which point body and spirit will be reunited for eternity. "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before

the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done” (Revelation 20:12-13).

Demerit - Denotes evil behavior. Christians normally refer to this as sin where others refer to the same thing as demerit. Both believers and unbelievers mistakenly think that merit (or good works) can make up for demerit. The Bible teaches that man is evil and no good can come from him. Only once we are made into a new creation can anything Holy be accomplished in our life, and that by the Holy Spirit. “He [Jesus] went on: ‘What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person” (Mark 7:20-23).

Demons - Fallen angels. (See Satan.) “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1 Timothy 4:1).

Devil - For all intents and purposes, used synonymously with Satan. “You [unbelieving Jews] belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

Disciples - Followers of Christ. Jesus chose 12 men to teach and travel with as He presented Himself as King to the Jewish Nation during His earthly ministry. Of this group, Peter, James, and John gained special access and instruction. After the death of Christ, certain disciples became known as Apostles and provided leadership to the growing group of disciples. “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

Dispensation - A biblical dispensation refers to a revelation from God that forms a standard for a segment of mankind during their time. The seven dispensations together span the timeline of the created world. These periods are not divided equally, nor is time the important issue as the emphasis is on the results of the portion of mankind who are under observation. Their stewardship (management) of the responsibility God entrusted to them will determine whether or not they meet His standard. The conclusion in each dispensation is that man fails to meet God’s standard. God uses these dispensations to teach us a series of lessons about ourselves, and Himself. “Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my [The Apostle Paul’s] gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith — to the only

wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen”
(Romans 16:25-27).

Divine - Refers to God’s handiwork or God’s enablement. “For though we [believers] live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

Divine Solution - God has a Glorious remedy for all man’s problems. It starts with our awareness of our sinfulness and moves on to our belief in the Gospel. To validate this solution, he sent Christ to be a substitutionary sacrifice for mankind. Christ was followed by the Holy Spirit who instructs us on sin, judgment, and righteousness. The final phase of God’s solution is the destruction of the created heavens and earth, mankind, and all that was cursed by Adam’s sin. Salvation from this destruction is a ministry of God for mankind. All other solutions will prove to be invalid. “Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things” (1 Peter 1:10-12).

Doctrine - A teaching or truth which serves as a pillar to an organization. False doctrine will displace true doctrine in the Church, and in the end the church will fail. “As I [Paul] urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God’s work—which is by faith” (1 Timothy 1:3-4).

E

Easter - The day Christians traditionally celebrate the Resurrection of Christ. “And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Ecclesiastes - An Old Testament book of the Bible written by Solomon. He observed that life is seemingly meaningless with endless cycles of nature including death. He spent much time and effort exploring various life choices. Solomon was renowned for his great wisdom and he instructed leaders from all around the world. “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Enoch - A descendant of Seth. Seth was a direct son of Adam who established a godly line of descendants. Enoch is said to have walked with the Lord for 300 years and was taken away without dying. “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied

about them [false teachers]: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 1:14-15).

Eternal Kingdom - The Kingdom of God in Eternity Future. At that time Christ will present the purified kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). “Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10-11).

Eternal Life - Technically begins with belief of the gospel in this world, but the thrust of the usage means life in heaven for eternity as opposed to the eternal existence in the lake of fire. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Eternity - Where time doesn’t exist. Time is apparently a mechanical system incorporated into our creation and marks the progress towards the ultimate destruction of all things that fell under the curse resulting from Adam’s sin. Eternity past marks all things before the fall of man and eternity future begins (for us) with the destruction of the present heavens and earth. “In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality

and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7).

Eve - The first woman formed by God from some flesh and bone taken from Adam. She became one with Adam through marriage and went on to be the mother of all the living. Though Eve ate the forbidden fruit first, her condemnation came because of Adam’s disobedience to the direct command of God. Adam received God’s command before Eve was formed. “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.’ The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’” (Genesis 2:16-18).

F

Futility - The lack of purpose or meaning to life since we have been infected by sin and death. This observation is magnificently presented in the Book of Ecclesiastes written by King Solomon. “‘Meaningless! Meaningless!’ says the Teacher. ‘Everything is meaningless!’” (Ecclesiastes 12:8).

Faith - The Bible speaks of a faith that is abandoned, and a faith for healing, and saving faith. Saving faith is what is referred to in this work and the explanation can be found under the glossary entry for Belief. “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith (Romans 3:25).

False Church - The one-world church that will emerge under the antichrist. The world will believe that it is the true church and that peace has been finally accomplished. Movement is already underway to this end though it is impossible to predict how near it will manifest itself in full. "The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?" (Revelation 13:3-4).

False Religion - False religion is any and all religious systems that do not rest on faith in the gospel alone as the sole source of salvation. Most religions emphasize either totally false doctrines or perhaps faith-plus-works in a way that denies the efficacy of Christ's death and resurrection to some degree. False religion often puts the emphasis on man and enslaves the follower to an impossible set of standards. The gospel frees a person from sin and guilt and the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in believers who invariably serve others. "Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:26-27).

False Teacher - A leader in a church or some religious group that projects himself as knowledgeable in the things of God but rather leads his followers away from the truth of the Gospel.

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them —bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping (2 Peter 2:1-3).

Fire - Often used biblically as a symbol for divine judgment. “By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly (2 Peter 3:7).

Flesh - The body our spirit resides in during our life on earth. Our bodies in this life are under the curse of sin and death and the sinful nature contained within will lure us to sin even after we are believers of the gospel. “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13).

Flood - The Divine Judgment which wiped out all mankind except for Noah, his sons and their wives, eight people in all. God warned Noah of the flood, gave him instructions on how to build the ark, and allowed time for its completion. Students of the Bible see many similarities between the flood and God’s final judgment of mankind. He has warned us, given instructions on what to believe, and allowed time for the gospel to be preached to every people group. At a time appointed by

God He will destroy the world again, except for those who believe the gospel. "But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly (2 Peter 3:5-7).

Free Will - The ability human beings have to make choices culminating in the choice to believe the gospel or reject it. Free will exists alongside predestination which means God set a plan in motion in which He controlled all things including our will. Obviously the logistics of such plan rises above human comprehension. The fact remains that we are able to choose, we will be held responsible for our choice, and God's plan will be fulfilled down to the last detail. "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son (John 3:18).

Fruit - As a tree bears fruit which removes all possible doubt as to what type of tree it is, so also humans bear fruit, so to speak. We either bear the fruit of our sinful nature or we bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. "So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. For when we were in the realm of the

flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death (Romans 7:4-5).

G

Garden of Eden - The beautiful abode of Adam and Eve prior to their sin. The exact location is unknown. "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die'" (Genesis 2:15-17).

Genesis - The first book of the Old Testament authored by Moses the Prophet. Its content includes creation, the flood of Noah, and the story of the Israelites as they sought comfort in Egypt. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

Gentile - A person from any race or background other than an Israelite. All Israelites practiced Judaism and were called to be Holy or set apart from the rest of the world. So according to the Israelites there were Jews, and there was everyone else, or Gentiles. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).

Glorification - Describes the death of our physical body of sin and signifies our presence in Heaven where the power and presence of sin is gone. We will receive new bodies in the order of the Risen Christ. Glorification denotes the same state

as Ultimate Sanctification. “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

God - The Supreme Being who for man’s benefit has created our universe and all things contained within including the earth, plants, animals, and mankind. He has progressively revealed Himself to us as One God but revealed in Three Persons; The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. While this concept rises above human comprehension it remains logical since God is, by nature, above human comprehension. God is Eternal, Righteous, Holy, and Sovereign. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent. God became flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ and Jesus died as payment for man’s sin. God’s plan for creation was determined before the creation was started, and nothing that happens will surprise or disappoint God. He has brilliantly orchestrated all things to accomplish His Will. As the concept of God is contemplated, consideration must be given to the Greatness of our God and Creator. “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it’” (Isaiah 55:8-11).

God's Right Hand - The Highest Place of Honor. God (the Father) is Spirit but is often personified to poetically illustrate a point. "It [Spiritual Baptism] saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand —with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him" (1 Peter 3:21-22).

God's Word - Used to emphasize that the Bible is authoritative since it originated from God and was miraculously provided to us through Inspiration. "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Gospel - Good News, specifically the proclamation that Jesus Christ bore the sin of the world in his body as he died on the cross and rose again to declare justification to all who believe. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).

H

Headship - A designation of authority where the submission is voluntary and mutually beneficial. Christ is the Head of the Church. A husband is the head of his wife. Citizens should submit to the authorities. Children should submit to their parents. Everyone has a role and should accept the responsibility of that role. Even within the Godhead where the Father, Son, and Spirit are equal and considered One, the Son

submits to the Father and the Spirit submits to both the Son and the Father. The Father sent the Son and the Son fulfilled the Father's will and sent the Spirit who is now working with believers. A willing submission is Christlike, mutually beneficial, and efficient. "But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Heal - To change from a condition of illness or sickness back to healthy and normal. Many miracles included healing of various ailments including physical death. These infirmities are symptoms of our real problem which is sin. Jesus heals us from sin based on His sacrifice which paid the penalty for sin, and His work as High Priest where he continually cleanses us from the filth of sin as we journey through this life. The penalty for sin is death. Jesus took our medicine but we were healed. "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

Heaven - A place that exists in the spiritual realm but is usually spoken of in human terms in reference to the place where God dwells with all His Holy ones. The Apostle Paul spoke of it as the third heaven. The first heaven would be the sky and atmosphere which surrounds planet earth. The second heaven would be outer space where all the stars and planets and physical universe is. The third heaven would be where God dwells. "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out

of the body I do not know—God knows—was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

Heir - One who qualifies for a share of an inheritance. “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs —heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Romans 8:16-17).

Holy - People, places, and things set apart from ordinary use for special purposes may all be considered to be Holy or sanctified. God is Holy as He is set apart from man or angels. Heavenly Angels are set apart from fallen angels. God established Israel as a Holy Nation as they were set apart from the nations of the world. Believers (saints) are set apart from sinners. Objects may be set apart (sanctified) for Holy purposes. God may set man apart to be Holy and man may set God apart to be Holy. “They [believers] are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified” (John 17:16-19).

I

Imputation - Primarily used in accounting, the concept of imputing means to credit or debit someone's account. A change to the record may be necessary because of the direct action of the account owner or someone acting on their behalf. The meaning of imputation has expanded over time to include more

than just its use in ledgers. Honor, shame, legal judgments and other traits are often considered to be imputed or attributed to someone because of the actions of another. In this work, various forms of 'imputation' are incorporated to describe how sin and righteousness are attributed to individuals by God. "Since we [believers] have now been justified [declared to be righteous] by his [Jesus'] blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies [declared to be sinners], we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (Romans 8:9-10).

Indwell - The Holy Spirit literally lives within a believer. He is a deposit against our full inheritance. "You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9).

Ishmael - Abraham's son born to Hagar. This was the result of a human solution to the problem of Sarah's inability to bear children. "So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived" (Genesis 16:3-4).

Inspiration - The miracle of chosen men recording God's message through the Work of the Holy Spirit. All sixty-six books of the Bible are considered to be a complete collection of God's Written Word. "We also have the prophetic message as

something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Iron Scepter - A scepter is a rod used as a symbol of power and authority by a king and an iron scepter denotes that his authority will be established by force. He will demand compliance by any and all means necessary! "Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. 'He will rule them with an iron scepter.' He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Revelation 19:15-16).

Isaac - The promised son of Abraham. Spared from being sacrificed by his father, he went on to marry Rebekah who gave birth to twins Esau and Jacob. God revealed to Rebekah as she was still pregnant that the older son would serve the younger, indicating God's Sovereign choice of the line that would eventually lead to Jesus. "Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not

by works but by him who calls—she was told, ‘The older will serve the younger’” (Romans 9:10-12).

Isaiah - A prophet from the 8th century b.c. who authored the Book of Isaiah. “The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (Isaiah 1:1).

Israel - The name given to Jacob but normally used to refer to the Nation of Israel, also known as Israelites (Jews[^]). They descended from Abraham as a fulfillment of God’s Promise, were redeemed by Moses, and later dispersed throughout the world by God. Israel will eventually be regathered and exalted above all nations of the world during the Millennial Kingdom. “For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen” (Romans 9:3-5).

J

Jacob - The grandson of Abraham and son of Isaac. After wrestling with God, his name was changed to Israel. The Jewish Nation emerged from his posterity. As the reigning patriarch, he decided to seek comfort in Egypt instead of the land God provided. This decision eventually led to slavery for his posterity until Moses arrived and redeemed them by a

mighty display of the Power of God. "Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our ancestors died" (Acts 7:15).

Jesus - God in the flesh, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born to a virgin, living, eating, breathing, and dying as any human being. The only human who ever existed that didn't originate from Adam. Jesus is the Creator, Savior, High Priest, King, and Judge of mankind. He is the Eternal Second Person of the Godhead and was sent by the Father to be the Lamb of God to bear the sin of the world. Upon dying, He sent the Holy Spirit to instruct the world regarding sin, judgment, and righteousness. Of the offices listed above, King and Judge are awaiting the advancement of time. The office of Creator and Savior are history, and the office of High Priest is ongoing in the True Tabernacle of God (in heaven). Though seated on God's Throne, Jesus will return to earth at an appointed time, and reign from David's throne for 1000 years followed by the judgment the world. See Hebrews Chapters 7-10 for a synopsis His Ministry to mankind. "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Jew - One who practices the religion of Judaism. These are descendants of Abraham and/or converts. Also known as Israelites, and includes various sects such as Pharisee, Sadducee, and others. They accept the Old Testament Scriptures but reject Jesus Christ as the Messiah. They are mistakenly still waiting for the messiah to arrive. They will experience reconciliation with God after the Rapture. “Then I (John) heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel” (Revelation 7:4).

John - Originally one of the twelve Disciples and later an Apostle. He authored the Gospel of John, three New Testament Letters, and the Book of Revelation. “The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1-2).

Jude - Short for Judas, a son of Joseph and Mary and half brother of Christ (Joseph wasn't involved in the conception of Jesus). Author of the New Testament Book of Jude which strongly warns us about the infiltration of false teachers in the Church. See Matthew 13 for validation of his warning as well as his identification as a brother of Christ. “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: Mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance” (Jude 1:1-2).

Judgment - A disciplinary action of God because of sin. God has used a series of minor and/or major judgments for mankind, nations, groups, and individuals since the Garden of Eden, but the end will culminate with a final judgment of man and creation. "In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 1:7).

Just - An attribute of God consistent with Righteousness. Fair when considering perspectives of all parties concerned. "And I heard the altar respond: 'Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.'" (Revelation 16:7)

Justice - Divine righteousness. Signifies the truthfulness, righteousness, and sovereignty of God in all matters. Humans may be just in a limited capacity or promote justice, however nothing compares to the perfect justice of God. "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom" (Psalm 45:6).

Justification - The act of God declaring a sinner to be righteous. Justification is awarded by grace through faith which means the justified one didn't deserve or earn it but rather believed in the Person and Work of Christ, the Righteous One. Faith in the gospel results in imputed righteousness which is followed simultaneously with justification. Only God can justify someone and His judgments are always right and true. Once justified, there is no way to lose that standing. Subsequent sin is dealt with in a Father/son type relationship as opposed to a

Judge/defendant relationship. Christ serves believers as an advocate and answers all accusations with the power of His cleansing blood which ends any or all accusations. “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died —more than that, who was raised to life —is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:33-34).

K

Kingdom of God, Everlasting - God is the Ruler of all things from everlasting to everlasting. At one point He decided to initiate a plan which included the creation of our universe. This plan included things like sin, redemption, salvation, and glorification of those He chose for salvation. While God is altogether Holy and ruler of this world, He allows sin, evil, sickness, and injustice to achieve His purpose for the created world, which is to honor His Son Jesus Christ. So it's important to understand that God is the Ruler of all things including our rebellious creation. “David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, ‘Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give

strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name” (I Chronicles 29:10-13).

Kingdom of God, Proffered - Jesus Christ began His public ministry by offering Himself as King to the Nation of Israel. They rejected Christ and crucified their King so that kingdom didn't ever materialize. “These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ‘Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near’” (Matthew 10:5-7).

Kingdom of God, Spiritual - Believers of the gospel experience a spiritual Kingdom of God. They are no longer of this world but have become a new creation and are alive spiritually. They receive spiritual food, spiritual gifts, and maintain a spiritual faith and hope. Christ is King in their hearts and minds but is not ruling the physical world they live in. “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval” (Romans 14:17-18). “Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place’” (John 18:36).

Kingdom of God, Millennial - Upon the second coming of Christ, He will establish an earthly Kingdom for 1000 years, the millennial kingdom. He will be present physically and will reign from Jerusalem with an iron scepter. At the end of the 1000

years, there will be an attempt to overthrow Him and He will execute the judgment of the Great White Throne. The heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire. “Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6).

Kingdom of God, Eternal - Once the cursed world and all wickedness has been purified by fire, all that will remain is what Christ made new: a new heaven, new earth, new glorified mankind and so on. He will then hand the purified kingdom over to His Father and His Kingdom will last forever. The eternal kingdom will (in a sense) merge back in with the everlasting kingdom but with several new features. “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he ‘has put everything under his feet.’ Now when it says that ‘everything’ has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

L

Lamb of God - Animal sacrifices were established by God to teach man the concept of substitutionary sacrifice. The most famous of these lessons was the passover lamb which

happened when the Israelites were serving as slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. The last of the ten plagues would be the death of the firstborn. God was preparing to kill the first born son of each family and the first born cattle from their herd. The Israelites were instructed ahead of time to sacrifice a lamb and put some of its blood on the door of their home. When the Lord came, he would pass over the homes with the required blood markings. In so doing, the Israelites were spared the death of their first born sons and animals. (See Exodus 11:1 - 12:30)

Later, Jesus was described as the Lamb of God indicating that his blood would save man from death if applied as instructed (spiritually). The implication is that Jesus is God's Sacrifice for the sin of man. "The next day John [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

Lake of Fire - The future eternal abode of Satan, his demons, and all those who rejected God's Provision for sin. Fire often is used by the Holy Spirit to refer to judgment. Probably not a literal lake of fire, existence will invoke the knowledge of God's wrath and judgment. "In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 1:7).

Language - A way humans communicate with one another. The various languages used throughout the world are a result of one of God's judgments on mankind. These different languages led to nations who went to battle with other nations

and we still are suffering from the effects of that judgment to this day. "That is why it was called Babel —because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:9).

Law, Law Code - God's revealed Law given through Moses which includes the 10 commandments and much more. This Law was intended for the Israelites alone to teach them principles needed for sinful man to approach a Holy God and to set them apart from the other nations. This aspect of the Law ended with the death of Christ, however many of the moral principles have always and will always be in effect. For example, it was always wrong to murder, covet, and engage in idolatry. The Law wasn't given to make men righteous but rather to demonstrate that they aren't. Christ was perfect as the law demanded, and he also suffered the penalty of death the law required. By meeting the full requirements of the Law, Christ put mankind under grace instead of law. Grace requires nothing more than faith, and that is within reach of all mankind. "Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4).

Law of Sin and Death - A divine law established by God which states that sin will result in death. Because of Adam's sin, all men are now under the law of sin and death. Freedom from this law is available to those who believe the gospel. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who

gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death”
(Romans 8:1-2).

Leviticus - The Third Book of the Old Testament authored by Moses. It details many of the rituals required by the Law which emphasize how sinful man can approach Holy God. "These are the commands the Lord gave Moses at Mount Sinai for the Israelites" (Leviticus 27:34).

Life (New Life) - Denotes the newness of life experienced by a believer when the gospel is accepted through faith. Sin is acknowledged to be forgiven and removed, purpose and meaning in our human existence is heightened because of our newly acquired spiritual gifts, and communion with Christ is experienced in this new life. "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

Light to the World (Israel) - Israel was chosen to be light to the Gentiles. God's light would culminate in illuminating the truth of the gospel, however Israel failed to complete their mission. They isolated themselves from the world and became full of pride and selfishness thereby hiding their light. "[Jesus saying] You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

Light of the World - Jesus became the Light of the World since Israel had neglected to fulfill that role. " [Jesus saying]

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (John 9:5).

Lord’s Supper - An ordinance begun just before Jesus was crucified and will continue until He returns in Glory. (See Communion)

M

Man, Mankind - A creation of God for the special purpose of revealing the depth of His love. To this end, God created man knowing he would sin and require grace, forgiveness, and redemption. The glory of God is manifested in Jesus Christ, the Man from Heaven, who gave Himself over to death to redeem mankind. Humanity has been equalized by the imputed sin of Adam so the individual depth or extent of any one isn’t significant. We’ve all sinned; we’ve all received forgiveness for sin. We must believe the Gospel to be reconciled with God. “Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:18-19).

Man from Heaven - Natural man came from Adam who was formed from the dust of the earth. Jesus Christ is distinguished from all other men by the fact that He came from heaven. He was miraculously born to a virgin and is fully man and fully God. "The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47).

Mediator - One who serves as a link or bridge between two parties. Jesus Christ is serving as High Priest for mankind and one of the responsibilities of that role is to be a mediator between God and man. Even believers retain their sinful nature and require a mediator. It's important to note that we don't work through angels or saints to communicate with God, but through Christ. "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people" (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Merit, Meritorious - The perceived good that comes from within man through training and good choices. While some men are obviously better than others by comparison, all are sinful and the Bible teaches that no good can come from within man. Only when we believe the gospel and receive the Holy Spirit can any good be accomplished through us and that by the Holy Spirit who provides spiritual gifts, guidance, and enablement for good works. False gospels promote merit and meritorious works. "What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone [Jesus Christ]" (Romans 9:30-32).

Moses - Chosen by God to serve as redeemer for the Israelites from Egypt. He went on to be a great prophet of God as he received the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Law Code

for Israel. He authored the first five books of the Old Testament. His story begins in Exodus 4 but his tenure is closely tied to God's Law which extends into the New Testament. "Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?" (2 Corinthians 3:7-8).

Mount Sinai - The place where Moses received the Ten Commandments. "On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt —on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain" (Exodus 19:1-2).

N

New Creation, man - Natural man is made into a new creation upon belief of the gospel. The new creation follows the pattern of the Risen Christ (the Last Adam) rather than Adam. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

New Earth - The present earth will be destroyed by fire and a new earth will be made. "Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea" (Revelation 21:1).

New Heaven - Outer Space, or the universe that exists outside of the earth's atmosphere will be destroyed by fire and a new

heaven will be made. “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea” (Revelation 21:1).

New Jerusalem - The present city of Jerusalem will be destroyed with the present earth. A New Jerusalem will be the eternal abode of believers. “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Revelation 21:2).

New Song - A song of praise to Christ as we will have a greater understanding of His Greatness once we are in heaven. “And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9).

NIV - The New International Version (NIV) is a completely original translation of the Bible developed by more than one hundred scholars working from the best available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.

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Noah - A descendant of Seth and noted to be a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). Noah and his family were saved from the flood that destroyed the rest of mankind. “This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man,

blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God” (Genesis 6:9).

O

Omnipotence - An attribute of God which speaks of His Mighty Power. He is all-powerful. This is a conclusion drawn from the full counsel of Scripture and no particular passage sums up the concept adequately.

Omnipresence - An attribute of God which speaks of His simultaneous presence everywhere. He is all-present. This is a conclusion drawn from the full counsel of Scripture and no particular passage sums up the concept adequately.

Omniscience - An attribute of God which speaks of His Mighty Wisdom. He is all-knowing. This is a conclusion drawn from the full counsel of Scripture and no particular passage sums up the concept adequately.

P

Paul - An Apostle of Jesus Christ who was uniquely instructed by the Risen Christ (Galatians 1:11-12). Embarking on several missionary trips he gained the title as the Apostle to the Gentiles though he sought converts from the Jewish community first wherever he traveled. He preached of justification by grace through faith and referred to this core doctrine as “my gospel” to set it apart from the many perverted and twisted versions of the gospel which was apparently as common then as they are today. Paul’s story is told in Acts and bits and pieces are scattered throughout his writings in the New Testament which

includes Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. “Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith — to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen” (Romans 16:25-27).

Perfection - An attribute of God which emphasizes His Pure, Holy Nature. When used in this context, nothing compares to God’s Perfection. One exception is made as a believer is made into a new creation and imputed with God’s righteousness. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Person and Work of Jesus Christ - Denotes that God has been revealed to us as One God, in Three Persons (The Trinity). God the Father is the First Person, Jesus Christ the Son is the Second Person, The Holy Spirit is the Third Person. The work of Christ was to become man, live a sinless life, offer Himself as a sacrifice for the human race, and rise again to proclaim justification for all who believe the gospel. “He [Jesus Christ] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

Pharaoh - A title used for whichever individual was presently King of Egypt. "Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt" (Genesis 41:46).

Posterity - The descendants of a person. Children's children encompassing all subsequent generations. "Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!" (Psalm 22:30-31).

Predestination - God initiated a marvelous plan for creation knowing all the details of how it would progress and end up. Mankind is included in this plan and we have free will. We don't understand how these two coexist but we know them to be factual as revealed in God's Word. Those who choose to believe the gospel realize that God chose them first. "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:11-12).

Priest, High Priest - Under the Law of Moses the High Priest would make a special annual sacrifice for the Nation of Israel on the Day of Atonement. The writer of Hebrews compares and contrasts Jesus to that office of High Priest. He concludes that Jesus is superior for several reasons. The main point of the explanation is that there is no longer any need for sacrifice

because sin is now forgiven by the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. (See Hebrews 6:13 - 10:18)

Prodigal Son - Jesus told a parable about a young man who demanded his inheritance early and wasted it. Upon returning home, he was welcomed back by his father. God will accept anyone who seeks Him and will rejoice when they arrive no matter what the circumstances. (See Luke 15:11-32)

Prophecy - The Divine gift to identify and communicate spiritual truth. This may involve interpreting Scripture accurately, advising wisely, or predicting the future with certainty. "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:27-31).

Prophet - A person designated by God as one who would reveal God's truth to man. Often thought of as one who predicts future events, it also includes those who properly interpret past events and/or truth concerning the present. The world abounds with false prophets and caution must be exercised when weighing what is communicated. False prophets will be proven false when what they say turns out to be false. "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether

they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

Propitiation - A way or means to satisfy God. In regard to the sin of man, there would be two ways to provide atonement. The first would be the eternal death of the race; the second would be by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:25-26).

Purified Kingdom - At the end of the Millennial Kingdom there will be a rebellion against Christ the King. Christ will end this rebellion by destroying the world as we know it and judging all the wicked of all time and binding them to the lake of fire for eternity (Revelation 20). This act will purify the remaining features of the kingdom at which time He will hand over the kingdom to His Father. “Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he ‘has put everything under his feet.’ Now when it says that ‘everything’ has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son

himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

Q,R

Rapture - Denotes the removal of the Church (also known as the Body and Bride of Christ) from the earth as the Tribulation Period begins. This includes a resurrection of the dead as well as the removal of the living believers. This event precedes the Second Coming of Christ to earth by seven years. At the Rapture we rise to meet the Lord in the air. At the second coming, Christ establishes a kingdom on earth beginning with an unmistakable entrance (Zechariah 14:4; Revelation 19:11-21). The end times sequentially is as follows: Rapture; Tribulation; Second Coming; Millennial Kingdom; Destruction of Heavens and Earth; Eternal Kingdom. “According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (I Thessalonians 4:15-17).

Reconciliation (with God) - When Adam sinned mankind suffered a fall. The only way we can be reconciled to God is to believe that He has provided an adequate substitutionary sacrifice for us. God didn’t move, we did. God initiated the

sacrifice before the world was created. He accomplished it as Christ died on the cross. Our choice to believe or reject the gospel will determine if we are reconciled or not. "We (Apostles and all believers) are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

Red Sea - A body of water that parted for the Nation of Israel to pass through but then closed up and wiped out Pharaoh's Army. "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left" (Exodus 14:21-22).

Redemption - Adam (and all mankind) sinned and fell under the Divine judgment of physical and spiritual death. God's revealed law allows for substitutionary sacrifice where one must take the place of another. Christ became man to redeem mankind from the bondage of sin and death by offering Himself as a pure and blameless sacrifice. God showed His approval of this substitutionary sacrifice by raising Jesus from the dead and awarding Him the highest place of honor on God's throne.

An example of the redemption process can be seen in the redemption of Israel from Egypt. Jacob and his family entered Egypt as a clan of about 75 and after approximately 400 years developed into a nation of over 600,000 men plus women and

children. You might say the nation was formed, or born in Egypt. Israel may be used to represent mankind, and Egypt may be compared to our cursed and sinful world. Pharaoh may be used to represent Satan. Moses may be used to represent Christ as redeemer. God sent Moses and by a mighty demonstration of the power of God, Pharaoh was defeated and the Nation of Israel was redeemed from slavery. Subsequently, they chose to submit themselves to God's Law received at Mount Sinai and began a journey to their promised land.

In a similar way, mankind is born into sin and held in bondage to death by Satan. God sent Christ and by a mighty demonstration of the Power of God, Satan was defeated at the cross and mankind was redeemed from death. Though this happened as an event in time, it was an eternal certainty which God preordained. Therefore each man is presented with a choice to believe the gospel or reject it. Those who believe God will begin a journey to their promised abode in the New Jerusalem. Those who fail to believe will begin a journey to their promised abode in the lake of fire. The contrast is stark enough to be compared to life versus death. Just as Adam had a choice before he sinned, we each have a choice to obey God. Obedience to God is demonstrated by belief in the gospel. Disobedience of God is demonstrated by a rejection of the gospel.

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God — the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy

Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:1-6).

Remnant - A small portion of the whole. There is an ongoing theme throughout the Bible of a remnant of believers over against the larger whole of mankind. "[Jesus emphasizing the point of a parable] 'For many are invited, but few are chosen'" (Matthew 22:14).

Revelation (66th Book) - The last book of the Bible which wraps up all the loose ends. This prophetic book was written by John the Apostle in his old age. "I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 1:9).

Righteousness - Perfection; as in no failure, blemish or shortcoming. Only God is righteous. Also used in a human sense where we are sometimes proven to be righteous though always qualified and limited to a certain act or duration. Man may gain a righteous standing with God by having God's righteousness imputed to us. Our standing is much different than our state. A believer may have a righteous standing by believing the gospel but simultaneously be in a sinful state by

committing some type of sin or sinful practice. The context must qualify the intended meaning. The believer begins immediately with imputed righteousness and continues the process of sanctification where righteousness is imparted or learned as the Holy Spirit is given control of one's will. "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26).

Romans - A letter from Paul written to a group of believers in Rome. He contacted them in advance of his first visit to clarify his doctrinal teachings. "I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil" (Romans 16:17-19).

S

Sacrifice - See **Substitutionary Sacrifice**.

Salvation - An all encompassing word which describes the work of God for sinful mankind. The death and resurrection of

Christ is the only basis for the salvation of mankind. It includes redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation, propitiation[^], imputation, justification, sanctification, and glorification. “Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him” (2 Peter 3:15).

Sanctification - A process which takes one from a sinful standing and state to a Holy standing and state. The new standing, often referred to as positional sanctification, happens instantaneously with belief of the gospel. Following this initial act, a lifetime program of learning and practicing Holiness is instituted and guided by the Holy Spirit and this is referred to as experiential sanctification. Experiential sanctification occurs while we battle against and often succumb to our sinful flesh in this life. Finally as we cross over from this world and into the next we experience ultimate sanctification where we are removed from the power and presence of sin for eternity. So we are Holy and are being made Holy simultaneously. All this depends on the Divine work of God on our behalf. “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects

this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

Satan - The adversary of God and accuser of believers.

Originally a Holy angel who rebelled and suffered a Divine judgment. Though retaining some of his original attributes, he is awaiting his certain destiny in the lake of fire. He is often mistakenly thought of in connection with heinous acts of immorality but these are merely the fruit of man’s sinful nature. Satan’s goal was, and is, to be like the Most High God and is manipulating world events to that end (up to the extent that God allows). His present work involves arranging a counterfeit to Christ’s Kingdom on earth in which he will deceptively offer world peace but will end up demanding worship. He showed his hand in the temptation of Christ where he offered all he possessed, the kingdoms of the world, in exchange for worship (Luke 4:5-8). Jesus declined, but the nations of the world will rally around the antichrist hoping for solutions to the world problems and Satan will receive the worship he so strongly craves. He is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. He works through men and women who fit in as fine upstanding members of society and churches. He would have his minions in all walks of life even promoting high morals, church attendance, and preaching and serving. However, he would stop just short of faith in the gospel, the key to salvation. He has an innumerable host of fallen angels, also known as demons, to assist with his worldwide manipulation. With many years of collective experience with a rather predictable mark, mankind, Satan is very adept at his art of deception. Satan doesn’t need to tempt

man any longer as that was taken care of in the Garden of Eden. The sinful nature from within lures us into sin now. He is referred to as the prince of the power of the air, the god of this age, and is obviously powerful. Angels and fallen angels are able to perform supernatural acts and they seem to be organized in ranks with various abilities and authority. If size equated to power and an average man was six feet tall, an average angel may be say ... ten feet tall to represent the greater powers they possess. Some angels that are more powerful or would possess greater authority may be much larger. In this hypothetical analogy, Satan would probably be as big as planet earth. The exaggeration is to suggest that we probably underestimate the power and authority of Satan much more than we should. "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:1-2, 6:12; John 12:31).

Scapegoat - While Israel was following the Law of Moses, two goats were chosen on the Day of Atonement. The sin of the people was ritually transferred to these animals and one was killed to demonstrate the penalty of sin which is death. The other was led out to the desert never to return again demonstrating that as sin is paid for it is also removed. The goat led to the desert was known as the scapegoat (Leviticus 16).

Scripture - The Bible contains a complete library of sixty-six books which form the whole counsel of the Word of God. "All

Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Second Coming - The first coming of Christ was when He was born in a manger and later died on the cross. The Second Coming is when He will establish an earthly kingdom and reign for 1000 years in the same place He was rejected. “Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: king of kings and lord of lords” (Revelation 19:15-16).

Second Death - A description of a conscious eternal existence in the lake of fire. The term death represents the contrast to second life which is for believers in the New Jerusalem serving the Lord with purpose, meaning, worship, and communion with all the Saints forever. Fire often is used by the Holy Spirit to refer to judgment. Probably not a literal lake of fire, the existence will invoke weeping, gnashing of teeth, and the knowledge of God’s wrath and judgment (Revelation 20).

Second Life - Life in heaven after we experience glorification. Second life technically begins when we are born again in this life by believing the gospel but effectively starts when our resurrected body is reunited with our spirit. Used as an intentional antonym for the second death. “Then death and

Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death” (Revelation 20:14).

Sin - Anything done by man that falls short of the perfection of God. Adam sinned first and the guilt of that one sin is imputed to all mankind. Simultaneously Adam earned a sinful nature which was transmitted to the entire race. The sinful nature manifests itself in various ways and to varying degrees. Sin may be an action such as lying or stealing, an inaction such as failing to care for the helpless, or an internal desire such as lust or pride. God established the standard that sin must be paid for by death to teach us of His perfect righteousness. “Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires” (Romans 6:12).

Sinful Nature - The innate desire to sin. The sinful nature signifies our separation from God and has been judged at the cross but not eradicated from existence. We must choose to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit bearing spiritual fruit rather than following our sinful desires bearing sin and consequences (Galatians 5:13-26).

Solomon - The King of Israel during its greatest historical expansion. He was granted great wisdom by God and was also blessed with wealth and fame. He authored much of the Book of Proverbs in addition to Ecclesiastes and a couple of Psalms. A synopsis of Solomon can be found in 1 Kings 3:5-28.

Spirit - The immaterial part of man. God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed life into him. The former speaks of the body and the latter speaks of the spirit. The body will die

and return to the earth while the spirit will continue on. While there may be a difference between soul and spirit in certain scriptural texts, it does not seem to be consistent enough to draw definitive conclusions. The material and immaterial parts of man will be reunited in eternity. “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

Spiritual Baptism - Believers have been baptized with Christ into death and raised with Christ to newness of life. This isn't something we experience but rather we accept it by faith (Romans 6:1-14).

Spiritually Blinded - The inability to see the truth no matter how clear it may be. This condition is more likely after a period of willful rejection or rebellion. “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Standing (Sin or Righteousness) - God maintains an official standing for each individual at any given time. We are born in the standing of sin and move to a standing of righteousness when we believe the gospel. This may be in contrast to a person's present state. For example, a believer may have a righteous standing but be caught up in a sinful practice. We must remember that we are saved initially though we don't deserve it (because of sin) and we are kept safe though we

don't deserve it (because of sin). "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Substitutionary Sacrifice - God's revealed law states that sin requires death. In order to allow the guilty one to live, a substitute for death is required. The qualification is that the substitute must be blameless. In the Old Testament times, animals were used as innocent substitutes for man's sin. Ultimately, Jesus Christ became the substitute for the human race. "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood —to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished — he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26).

T

Thessalonians - Recipients of two letters from the Apostle Paul. These two letters became two books of the New Testament.

Temple - The place where God met mankind during the Old Testament era. This was originally a traveling tent or tabernacle and later became a more permanent structure. Over the years the temples were destroyed, rebuilt, and changed in various ways as noted in both the Old and New Testament. Presently one does not exist but after the Rapture, one will be

established and sacrifices will resume (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

Temple Veil - A curtain within the Temple that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. This curtain was torn as Christ died which indicated that access to God was available to all through Christ, not through the old way of the Law established by Moses. "The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38).

Temptation in the Desert - Satan tempted Jesus in the desert. Jesus resisted and never sinned there or anywhere. The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at His Right Hand validates the fact that Jesus had been a pure and blameless Sacrifice. "Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God" (1 Peter 1:21).

Timothy - A missionary companion of Paul. He is the recipient of two letters from Paul known as 1 and 2 Timothy. "But as for you [Timothy], continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

Tower of Babel - The descendants of Noah foolishly disobeyed God and erected a tower. As punishment, God confused their languages (Genesis 11:1-9).

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil - One of the two special trees in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve ate the fruit of this tree and gained Knowledge of Good and Evil. This sinful act resulted in a pattern of sin that will continue until the end of the world (Genesis 2:9).

Tree of Life - One of the two special trees in the Garden of Eden. Apparently Adam had access to it until he sinned. Theoretically, if he had eaten from the Tree of Life, there would be no death and consequently no deterioration of the body (Genesis 2:9).

Trespass - Another term for sin which refers to the willful disobedience of an established command. "But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!" (Romans 5:15).

Tribulation - A seven year period which includes many things including a severe judgment of the present world. The details are revealed in the Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets, and Seven Bowls which span a large portion of the book of Revelation. (Revelation 6 - 19:10)

True Church - Authentic believers of the gospel as opposed to fake believers. Fake believers exist for several reasons including financial gain, social relationships, intentional deception instigated by Satan, and a delusion from God. "For this reason God sends them [those who pretend to believe] a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all

will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

True Tabernacle of God - The writer of Hebrews compared the earthly Tabernacle and Temple used by the Israelites to a Heavenly Tabernacle where God really resides (Hebrews 8:1-2). The emphasis was on the superiority of Jesus as He took His own blood to the True Tabernacle and not the earthly facsimile. The earthly tabernacle was used to instruct sinful man how to properly approach The Holy God. Since Jesus’ Sacrifice, the only way is through Jesus. “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6).

U

Universe - All of creation including man, animals, planets, stars, and suns. “In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

V, W

World (sinful) - On planet earth, where man resides, everything has fallen under the curse of sin. Satan is the ruler of this world and manipulates events under the permissive will of God. The system that Satan rules through his network of demons and men is considered the world. Believers are in the world but not of it. “I have come into the world as a light, so that

no one who believes in me should stay in darkness” (John 12:46).

X, Y, Z

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About the Author

Born the son of a pastor, I was raised in a strong Christian home where faith was central to our lives. Now at 60 years old, I continue to live out my faith actively alongside my wife, two married daughters, and five wonderful grandchildren. Throughout my life, I have made my living working with my hands, yet my greatest growth has come through studying the Word of God. I have a deep appreciation for scholars like Walvoord, Ryrie, Chafer, and Scofield, whose works have greatly shaped my understanding of Scripture.

I completed the Scofield Correspondence Courses administered through Moody Bible Institute. This comprehensive training, which provided a full survey of both the Old and New Testaments, greatly enhanced my biblical knowledge. However, I still consider myself an ordinary working man—just like the disciples, who were fishermen and laborers called by Christ to follow Him. As it is written: “When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

In addition to my books, I host a Bible-themed blog, The Grace and Knowledge Series Blog, which covers a wide range of Bible themes and topics. You can visit it at woody-brohm.online. My hope is that both the books and the blog will inspire others to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dispensationalism: The Key to Understanding the Bible

If there is one thing I have come to see clearly throughout my study, it is that dispensationalism provides the most consistent and clear framework for understanding the Bible.

This perspective has personally transformed my study and teaching of Scripture. Once I understood dispensationalism, it brought clarity and passion that I long to share with others through Bible studies, books, my blog, and conversations. It is my hope that this book has brought that same clarity and passion to you.

Check out my entire Series of Books on Amazon, or find hundreds of Bible Themed Essays on my Blog:

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Note: Faith, Hope and Love was originally published in 2013 and expanded in 2025. The revised and expanded manuscript provides more doctrinal depth and commentary. An emphasis on staying grounded in Scripture has been maintained in the expansion while an attempt was made to make the narrative and application more engaging.