

**BRACE FOR
IMPACT**
PREPARE YOUR SOUL

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BRACE FOR IMPACT

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1 - IT IS TIME TO PREPARE

There are times in life when we feel overwhelmed with problems, challenges, confusion and hardships. During these times we may find it hard to understand why life is so painful. It is difficult to trust God, and impossible to pray with any hope or confidence while being soundly defeated in everything we do. So we know from experience that the time to prepare the soul for war is not in the midst of these battles of life. Preparation for war must be done in times of peace, just like planting seeds for the fall harvest must be done in the spring.

By preparing our souls with an understanding of God's promises and taking the time to study God's ways today, we can brace ourselves for the impact we will face when the negative situations of this fallen world arise in our personal lives, at work, in our relationships, in our finances, or in our health. With our souls sown with the seed of God's word we will be ready to reap a harvest of peace and rest when it is needed. If we have preemptively fortified ourselves with understanding ahead of time, we will be able to maintain confidence and trust in God when an invasion of the world's problems comes to overwhelm us.

Preparation for battle is necessary not only because of our various personal problems, but is also and increasingly needed as our culture, our nation, and our world move further away from the truth of God's Word and enthusiastically celebrate choices that rebel against God's created reality. As this societal and cultural decline continues, life will become more difficult for many people because our culture is becoming more antagonistic toward the ways of God.



In our post-Christian Western world we may see professing Christians in situations that parallel those of David when pursued by Saul, Shadrach in Nebuchadnezzar's fire, Daniel facing the lions of Darius, Jesus before Pilate, Paul testifying in the imperial court of Nero, and John, who was exiled to Patmos by Domitian.

When this begins to happen we will need souls already fortified with an understanding of God's promises and God's ways.

In our post-Christian Western world we may see professing Christians in situations that will require their souls already be fortified with an understanding of God's promises and God's ways.

We need to learn how to enter daily into the place that God has prepared for our souls to rest, because we can remain at rest in God's promises by maintaining our focus on those promises. As we continually call to mind the promises God has spoken to us and keep our thoughts on God's ways, our souls will be enabled to maintain the rest of God, even while chaos and trouble swirl around us.

The first step for the believer to enter this place of rest is being taught and encouraged with the Word of God. Then, the believer himself must intentionally enter that rest and stubbornly refuse to give up the hope they have from knowing the ways of the Lord and the confidence they have from understanding the promises he has given. No matter what storm or disaster swirls around the believer their soul can remain anchored in God's rest, protected by the fortress of God and his Word.

This is the confidence David, Shadrach, Daniel, Paul, and John had as they stared down the fire, the lions, and the emperors - all while testifying to the glory, the ways, and the faithfulness of their God. The Word that they had is the same Word that is available to us today. Just as their Lord and God was faithful and true, so will yours be.

It is time to prepare your soul and brace for impact!



2 - THEOLOGY OF THE SHATTERED WINDSHIELD

Paul writes to the Ephesians:

"I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them."

- Ephesians 4:17

Believers are to live life focusing on the truth and the reality of God. A believer needs to hold tight to the knowledge that God is the creator and sustainer of our lives, that God is supreme and his wisdom surpasses our understanding, and that his standard of righteousness is absolute and unchanging throughout all generations.

A believer must live in this world - but never allow the things or the ways of the world to distract them from what is truly important. A good picture of this way of living is driving a car. When a person drives a car they stay focused on the road and what is going on around the car. The driver looks through the windshield, not at the windshield. A driver cannot look around inside the car for very long without having major problems outside the car.

So it is also in the life of the believer. A believer resides in the world but must focus on the big picture of life through the windshield of



God's revelation, which has been given to us in the Scriptures.

Paul says we must *"no longer live as the Gentiles do"* - as those who have no view outside the windshield. They spend their entire lives trying to find direction and avoid accidents, but they never look outside the car. Their focus is exclusively on the interior of the car as they speed through life. They have no perspective of God, eternity, truth, or reality. Thus they live in *"the futility of their thinking."* It is easy to understand why, though. They have never seen or believed anything else. It is as if they are driving at night with the dome light on and the headlights off.

This command from Paul is important to believers for a couple reasons. Although we have accepted the reality of God and have - at least for a moment - looked up through the windshield long enough to realize we are speeding through life on a very busy spiritual highway, we often continue to *"live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking."* We, too, spend the majority of our lives focused on the inside of the car and not on the highway. We are not looking through the windshield at the more serious issues or at what is happening around us.

Paul urges us to live our lives while looking through the windshield as we make decisions and evaluations. In fact, doing this is so important that he adds he must *"insist on it in the Lord."*

Still, the reality is that even sincere believers who obediently live their lives looking at God through the windshield will face occasional challenges. These times can be likened to something striking our windshield, causing it to shatter. A disaster, a situation, a trial unexpected and undeserved comes from outside the car. It hits our windshield then disappears, but leaves behind it a fragmented, shattered windshield filled with distracting lines and cracks. This presents a whole new challenge for the believer, who until now, has

been looking through a clean and clear windshield at God.

Up until this point, the only challenge was deciding whether to look through the windshield or look around inside the car. But suddenly, there is a new challenge - one that forces the believer to either focus on the shattered windshield, or continue to look through the fragmented pieces of the windshield at God.

Or, another way to think of it, is that this new challenge forces us to realize - and to know by faith alone - that the shattering of the windshield has not changed anything outside the car. The only thing that has changed is our ability to see clearly, having lost the advantage of a crystal-clear windshield. A crack in the windshield does not mean there is also a crack in the kingdom of God. In fact, far from being a true representation of everything outside the car, a shattered windshield causes a distortion in our view of reality. A broken windshield is simply a distraction from the reality that still exists outside of your car - a reality that is so much bigger than your life. Do not allow a shattered windshield to pull your attention back inside the car, forcing you once again to live in the futility of your own thinking.

3 - FAITH

To have faith in something you first need to have some information about the thing in which you want to have faith. For example, in order to believe a medication can help you, you will need to know that particular medication exists. You will also need to know generally what it has done for others in the past. Finally, you will need to trust the doctor who is prescribing the medication. The same is true about God and what the Almighty is doing in history and in your life.

This information is available in the Bible. And in order to learn anything meaningful from the Bible, you must first establish what you think of the Bible.

Do you know it is the actual revealed Word of God? Or, do you believe, as some do, that it is fiction - nothing more than legends and myths written by elite priests and royalty to manipulate masses of people? If you do not believe the Bible you will not be able to believe the God of the Bible.

Obviously, if you do not trust the Bible you will need to get information about God from some other source. Where would you go? Many look to other religions. But if you do, you have to ask yourself what the source of authority is in that religion. Is it trustworthy? Is it more trustworthy than the Bible?

Alternatively, instead of going to the Bible for information about God, you could “trust your gut.” Sadly, many try this method. They look solely to their own judgment and come up with their own

opinion about God based on nothing more than personal thoughts and experience.

But before going too far down this dubious road of deciding what is eternally true in realms in which you have never ventured, you should first admit how limited your knowledge is in realms in which you venture every day. How much do you really know about even the simple things you use on a daily basis, such as automobiles, electronic devices, plumbing systems and air conditioning?

If any of these things were to break down would you simply fix it because you know how? Or would you call someone for help? Or what about political situations in your city, your nation and countries around the world? Do you know when they began and what they involve, or who is pulling the strings? What are the details of their various treaties, and where exactly are their borders? Can you diagnose your own blood condition, translate any foreign brochure into your own language, plant and harvest all the crops for your own food supply, or read all the books written in just the last 12 months? (Not to mention all the books humanity has written in the 6,000 years we have been writing.) We would live miserably and perish quickly if each of us as individuals had to stake our lives on our understanding of all these normal earthly things.

If we are this limited in our knowledge of the natural things that are available to us every day of our lives, imagine how hopelessly impossible it is for us to describe spiritual reality with any degree of accuracy using only our imagination and unauthenticated knowledge. We cannot create our own medical reality, food system, government, language, or history. Neither can we create truth about God by our own wisdom. This kind of truth must be revealed to us.

If I were to make up my own reality that did not correspond to true science, nutrition, language, history, etc, I would perish miserably

and quickly. If I create my own personal “truth” about “god” I will likewise perish.

God reveals himself to us so that we will be able to trust him - and have confidence in him, his ways, and his purpose. God does not come to us to be used by us, but to guide, encourage, and empower us. The Creator reveals himself to assist us in fulfilling our purpose, but never to be manipulated or ruled by us.

There are many truths that God has revealed to mankind that, when understood and believed, will provide a fortification for the soul. These come as revelations of God’s character, ways, purposes, and promises. Knowledge of these truths will be the sure foundation for a faith that will stabilize the soul.

Knowledge of these truths will be the sure foundation for a faith that will stabilize the soul.

4 - THE MERIBAH EXPERIENCE

In Exodus chapters 7 through 13 Moses appears before Pharaoh. He performs many signs and calls down ten plagues to motivate Pharaoh to release the Hebrews. Before standing before Pharaoh, he had to return to Egypt from Midian. And after leaving Pharaoh's presence, he led the Hebrews out of Egypt to the Red Sea. All of these events together took a year or less.

Thus began the fulfillment of a long-awaited promise given by the Lord to their forefather Abraham around 2000 BC. The promise included the fact that they would be given the land of Canaan in the future:

*Then the Lord said to Abram,
"Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants
will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will
be enslaved and mistreated there. But I will punish the nation
they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great
possessions. You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be
buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants
will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached
its full measure."*

- Genesis 15:13-16

When the Lord appeared to Moses at the burning bush in Midian around 1446 BC, he restated this promise and told Moses it was finally time for it to come to pass:

*Then the Lord said,
“I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt
and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their
sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand
of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good
and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place
of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the
Hivites, and the Jebusites.”*

- Exodus 3:7-8

When Moses arrived in Egypt a couple weeks later, he spoke to the Hebrews and their elders and told them what the Lord had revealed to him - that it was time for the Lord to fulfill his promise:

*Say therefore to the people of Israel,
“I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens
of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and
I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of
judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God,
and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought
you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you
into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to
Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord.”*

- Exodus 6:6-8

Moses shared these promises with the Hebrew people before he had spoken to Pharaoh and before the plagues had begun. But, because of years of oppression and the constant bombardment of Egypt's cultural influence, the Hebrew people could not understand what he was saying, or trust the Word of God.

The very next verse tells us that when Moses spoke these promises to the people they would not even listen because of damage their spirits had sustained.

*“Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to
Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery.”*

- Exodus 6:9

The people's minds had been overrun and taken captive by Egyptian ways of thinking. The fortress of their soul had become a stronghold of the world, and they were unable to receive the knowledge of God.

Their minds had been overrun and taken captive by Egyptian ways of thinking. The fortress of their soul had become a stronghold of the world instead of a fortification against the world.

The next seven chapters (Exodus 7-13) cover a period of approximately five to twelve months and describe the Lord's mighty works in Egypt for his broken and faithless people. Moses speaks to Pharaoh, performs signs, and calls down ten plagues that negate Pharaoh's power, shut down Egyptian society, and prepare God's people for deliverance.

The night of the final plague, right before Pharaoh released the Hebrews, Moses instituted the Passover meal and reiterated the ancient promises once again to the Hebrew people who had now seen firsthand the works of the Lord on their behalf:

*Then Moses said to the people,
“Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the
house of slavery,
for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place. No
leavened bread shall be eaten.
Today, in the month of Abib, you are going out. And when the
Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the
Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your
fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall
keep this service in this month.”*

- Exodus 13:3-5

That same night Pharaoh relents, the Exodus occurs, and the Lord begins to lead his people through the wilderness toward the Promised Land. Constantly and undeniably with them, God guides them with his presence as a visible pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. The Hebrews had seen with their own eyes the works of God and his faithfulness to his Word.

Immediately in the next chapter (Exodus 14) the Hebrews find themselves trapped at the edge of the Red Sea - and Pharaoh has organized his military forces to pursue them. In another display of power, the Lord parts the waters of the Red Sea so his people can escape before the sea returns to drown the Egyptian forces as they try to follow. Another mighty work has been seen and experienced by the Hebrew congregation.

Supernatural signs, miracles, community gatherings, song services and potluck meals do not communicate the knowledge of God that fortifies the soul. Our soul is fortified by knowing the Word of God and the ways of God.

Safe on the other side, the community celebrates with a time of fellowship and a song service which is recorded in the next chapter. Following this praise and worship comes the account in chapter 16 of the Lord providing supernatural food (manna) for the Hebrew community in what would otherwise be a barren wilderness without sustenance. As they partake of this community fellowship meal, all is good with the people of the Lord.

All is good, that is, until chapter 17 where it becomes apparent that even though the Israelites have seen God's faithful works as he led them out in fulfillment of the promises in his Word, they do not yet know his ways, nor do they really have faith in him. Though they see God's works, they do not know, understand, or trust the Lord's ways - thus proving that experiencing supernatural signs and miracles does not guarantee a strong faith. In the same way, community gatherings, song services, and potluck meals do not by themselves

communicate the knowledge of God in a way that builds faith in the believer.

Exodus 17:1-7 describes the situation.

It was around 1445 BC. Israel had just miraculously escaped Egypt and annihilation by Pharaoh's forces at the Red Sea. They make camp at Rephidim, but find no water to drink. The biblical text says, "the people quarreled with Moses and said, 'Give us water to drink.'"

Therefore the people quarreled (rib = "strive", "contend") with Moses and said,

"Give us water to drink."

And Moses said to them,

"Why do you quarrel (rib = "strive", "contend") with me?

Why do you test (nasab = "to test", "to try") the Lord?"

But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said,

"Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

The word "quarrel" is the word rib in the Hebrew. This word describes an ordinary argument, but it can also be used to refer to a legal lawsuit being filed (such as in Dt. 25:1). This "quarreling" with Moses may have been the record of a pretrial motion against Moses, which was a well-documented practice in the Ancient Near East during this time period. If Moses, the accused in this developing courtroom battle, failed to meet the legal demand - in this instance, "Give us water to drink" - he would be taken to trial before the judicial elders of the people. Moses is being legally accused of breaching his agreement with the people he promised to lead through the wilderness to the Promised Land. The charges brought before the Hebrew elders might even involve attempted murder:

“Why did you bring us up out of Egypt? To kill us?”
- Exodus 17:3

Moses countered the legal threat by asking them, “Why do you test the Lord?” It was not Moses who made the promise to Abraham in 2000 BC, and it was not Moses on his own authority who came to Egypt with ten plagues promising to fulfill that promise. The originator and fulfiller of the promises was the Lord. So in reality, the people were putting the Lord on trial. The Hebrews were “testing” or “trying” the Lord in their own legal case.

In the end, the Lord makes the case moot by commanding Moses to provide water while the potential jury, the judicial elders, stand right up front to witness the evidence of the Lord’s faithfulness to his promises.

So Moses cried to the Lord,
“What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.”
And the Lord said to Moses,
“Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.
Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.”
And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.
- Exodus 17:5-6

Afterward, Moses named the place “Massah” and “Meribah” to commemorate both the people’s foolishness and the Lord’s goodness.

(Moses) called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”
- Exodus 17:7

It is important to note that the words - *Massah* and *Meribah* - have significant and very relevant meanings.

Massah comes from the Hebrew word *nash*, which means “to test” or “to try”. At *Massah* during their first year in the wilderness the Israelites “tested” the Lord’s faithfulness and put God on “trial” for breaking his covenant with them.

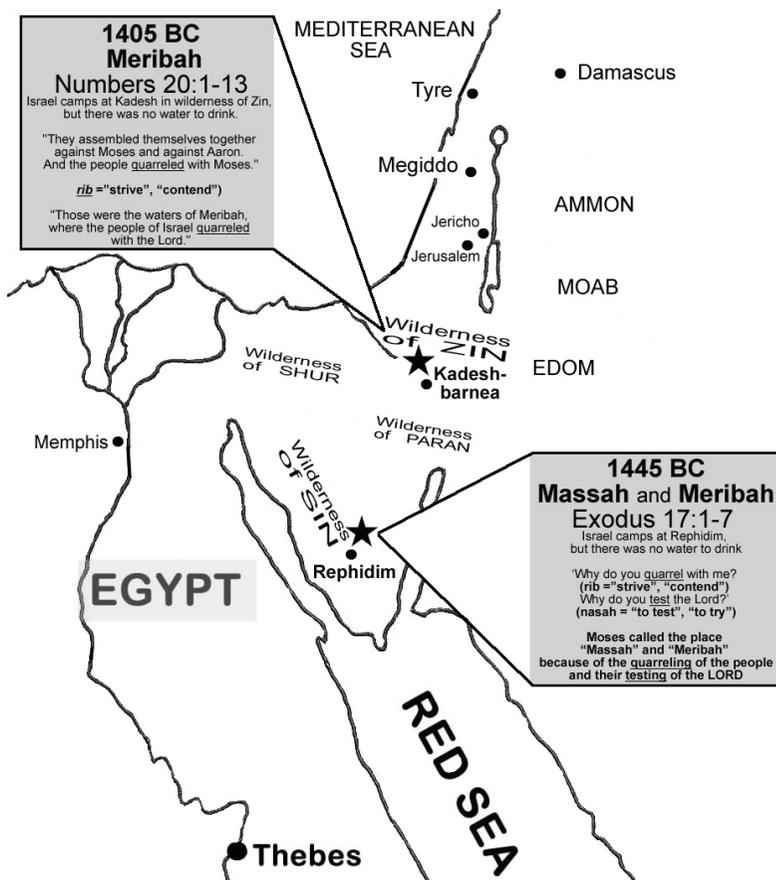
Meribah means “place of strife”. It comes from the Hebrew word *rib* which, as was mentioned above, means “to strive” and “to contend”. It is a technical legal term. Thus this place would always be remembered as the place where the Israelites began legal proceedings against Moses, the Lord’s chosen leader.

However, the trial ended before it even got started when the Lord proved his faithfulness by having Moses strike a rock to bring forth water. Note that Moses used the same staff he had used to strike the Nile, turning it to blood and death (Exodus 7:20). This is significant. The Lord had Moses use the staff of judgment to strike the rock upon which the Lord was standing to provide water for the covenant people to drink.

And the Lord said to Moses...
“Take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink.”
And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.
-Exodus 17:6

Exodus 17:1-7 - After leaving the Desert of Sin the Israelites were camped at Rephidim, but they had no water for 3 days. Moses

called the place Massah and Meribah. Here Moses was told to strike the rock.



The miraculous water at Meribah was just the beginning. Over the next forty years as they were led by the Lord and traveled in the wilderness, the Israelites' needs were provided, and they were delivered from every difficulty and conflict.

During this forty-year wilderness experience, the Israelites saw daily the mighty works of the Lord. But at the same time they were also taught the knowledge of God - also on a daily basis.

The fact that for 40 years Moses continually taught the wilderness generation the Word of God is detailed in many verses: Exodus 20:9, Leviticus 1:1; 4:1; 11:1; 12:1; 13:1; 15:1; 18:1; 19:1; 20:1; 23:1; 24:1; 25:1; 27:1, Numbers 5:1, 5, 11; 6:1, 11:24; 14:39; 15:1; 15:37; 17:1; 19:1.

During those 40 years, Moses covered a vast number of topics in his instruction. They include the nature of God, the plans of God, the moral code of God, sins against God, sacrifices to restore fellowship with God, the governmental laws for the nation of God, the priestly rituals that would daily remind the people of the ways of God, and the festivals that would encourage the people with reminders of their future with God. All this and much more knowledge of God was faithfully communicated to Israel's wilderness generation.

A great illustration of the extensiveness of Moses teaching is recorded after that first generation - the wilderness generation - had all died. Moses held one last nationwide teaching session for the younger second generation in the year 1405 BC. This historic lecture is recorded in Deuteronomy 31:19-32:47. The notes for this class were set to music and sung by Moses to his students so that they might more easily remember them and teach them to their children.

And the Lord said to Moses,...
"Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel."

For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant.”

– Deuteronomy 31:19-20

Sadly though, as the Lord pointed out, despite the fact that Moses had spent forty years teaching the wilderness generation, they still did not learn or understand the knowledge of God. Their hearts were hard and rebellious. They did not inhale the words of God, so they could not exhale faith in God.

And so, when they were given the same “No Water” test in 1405 BC that they had been given forty years earlier in 1445 BC they again failed miserably with the same hardness of heart and bitterness toward Moses and God.

In fact, their statements at the time indicate their minds were hopelessly deluded with the kind of worldly thinking that suppressed the knowledge of God and misrepresented the facts of reality. While remembering Egypt - the land of their oppression, abuse and slavery - as good, they described their resting place with the Lord as “this evil place”. They remembered the land of their slavery as a kind of paradise with grain, figs, vines, pomegranates and water, but the wilderness, where the Lord had daily manifested his works, Words, and ways as evil. They were calling evil good and good evil. The account of this event is recorded in Numbers 20:1-13:

*And the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh...
Now there was no water for the congregation.
And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against*

*Aaron. And the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into this wilderness, that we should die here, both we and our cattle?
And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place?*

It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.”

Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting and fell on their faces.

And the glory of the Lord appeared to them...

Numbers 20:1-13 occurs 40 years later. This Meribah is different from the “Massah Meribah” of Exodus 17, which was just a few days outside of Egypt. Numbers 20 took place in the Desert of Zin while Israel was staying at Kadesh. There, Moses was told to speak to the rock, but instead he struck the rock. This was called the waters of Meribah because Israel quarreled with the Lord.

Based on their history, the Israelite believers should have faced their “no water” problem by resting in faith and believing that the Lord had a plan, a purpose and a provision. They should have gained confidence over the last forty years by having seen and heard the Lord’s works, words and ways. But there had been no imbibing of these truths into their disillusioned souls. After forty years of instruction and experience this generation should have been able to exhale faith in God from souls having inhaled truth, while resting peacefully in the knowledge of God. But they had failed. Because of their unbelief it was impossible for them to enter into God’s rest. It was not that God was forbidding them to enter - but that they had allowed themselves to become incapable of it.

Looking back, David would write 400 years later from Jerusalem inside the Promised Land to warn his own generation to avoid the same mistake and not miss out on the Lord's rest. In his warning, David quotes the Lord's words that explain the wilderness generation's situation: *"they have not known my ways, therefore I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest'"* (Psalm 95:10-11).

Once again it is clear that God was not punishing them by keeping them out, but giving up on them after forty years of trying to get them into his rest. The fact that they could not enter God's rest was the simple result of their refusal to learn the ways of the Lord. Since they refused to learn for forty long years, the opportunity was taken away. It was over. They died and fell in the wilderness, having never learned to trust their Creator, Deliverer and Provider. They missed out on the chance to live their lives in God's rest - and, it appears, they missed the chance to enter an eternal life of rest with the Lord, as well.

In 63 AD, a New Testament letter addressing believers in the Jerusalem church used the example of the wilderness generation and David's advice to his own generation as a platform to call them to secure their souls in the rest of God. These believers had faced persecution from unbelieving Jews and were about 36 months away from their nation starting a war with the Roman Empire that would result in the total devastation of their culture, land and holy city.

Considering their present suffering and the great turmoil to come, these believers needed more than just a vague religious concept of a home in heaven someday - they needed a living faith that not only guaranteed eternal life in the future but also secured their souls today, as they lived in union with their Savior God through daily struggles, cultural oppression, and eventual national overthrow. They may have had hope in Christ for eternity, but what about

hope for today? Would they collapse and put God on trial the moment they faced hardship, persecution, and the loss of everything they had?

A true faith is enduring in life and in eternity. If your faith collapses in life, it is possible you do not really have faith for eternity. If the wilderness generation could not trust the Lord for water after they had seen him deliver them from Egypt, it is possible for us also to reject the Lord in life even though we claim to have recognized his deliverance from sin and death. If the Lord has delivered you from sin and death to bring you into his eternal kingdom, then he also has a plan and purpose for everything you face in your life - both good and bad.

If you cannot handle life, then you need to learn God's ways and make every effort to enter his rest. Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. Hear his Word and learn his ways. Prepare your soul for life today.

Prepare your soul today by learning God's ways and making every effort to enter his rest.

The New Testament letter referenced above is the Book of Hebrews. It was written to believers in Jerusalem around 63 AD using David's words from 1000 BC when he addressed the failure of the wilderness generation, who lived during the years of 1445-1405 BC. He writes:

*Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,
"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion
("Rebellion" from Ps. 95:8 Hebrew "Meribah" from "rib" meaning
"argument" or "lawsuit"),
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
("testing" from Ps. 95:8 Hebrew "massah" meaning "trial", "test")
where your fathers put me to the test
("test" from Ps. 95:9 Hebrew "nasah" meaning "to test", "to try")*

*and saw my works for forty years.
Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, 'They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.'
As I swore in my wrath,
'They shall not enter my rest.'"*

*Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.
But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.
As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?
And with whom was he provoked for forty years?
Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?
So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.*

*Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.
For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.
For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,'" although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.
For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works."
And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest."*

*Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."
For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.
So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.
Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."*

Hebrews 3:7-4:13

Interestingly, the admonition, "strive to enter that rest" can sound contradictory. The word translated "strive" in Hebrews 4:11 (Greek *spoudazo*) means "to make haste, to give diligence to, and to be swift". It is sometimes translated as "make every effort".

The author was therefore admonishing his readers to swiftly be diligent to make haste to "enter that rest"!

He is therefore also telling us that as long as today is called "today" we are to make every effort to enter God's rest. And since from the beginning, every day has been called "today", the Lord has offered this rest to every generation in history. We enter God's rest when we hear, understand, and continually trust the Word of God, which reveals the ways, the plans, and the purpose of the Lord. The Word

of God gives us a solid foundation of the knowledge of God that we can hold in our minds to keep our souls at rest. This rest is the peace that passes understanding.

But, entering this rest is not automatic for a believer in Christ. Entering God's rest is not instantaneous, it is not an emotion, and it is never separated from a knowledge of the truth. This rest is constantly under assault and can be destroyed by the worry, panic, and fear that come when our souls begin to focus on the "wisdom of this age" and the deceitful scheming of this world. The truth of the Word of God in our soul can be replaced with lies and deception. We need to make every effort to enter that rest and maintain that rest in our souls by concentrating on the knowledge of God that empowers us.

Do not let the pressures and the afflictions of this world cause you to retreat out of the strong tower built in your soul. It is in this strong tower, filled with the knowledge of God, that the believer can rest in the promises, plans, and purposes revealed in the Word of God.

5 - FAITH REST

In at least five places in Scripture people are invited to enter a place of rest for their souls by trusting the plan and promises of the Lord:

1. The Exodus Generation from 1445-1405 BC
2. David's Generation in 1000 BC
3. Jeremiah's Generation from 620-586 BC
4. Jesus' Generation in 30 AD
5. Believers in Jerusalem in 63-66 AD

The Exodus Generation - 1445-1405 BC

- Exodus 33:14 – And he said "My presence will go with you, and I will give you *rest*."
- Joshua 1:13 – Remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, "The Lord your God is providing you a place of *rest* and will give you this land."

David's Generation - 1000 BC

- Psalm 95:11 – Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my *rest*."

Both Jesus and Jeremiah spoke of this place of rest for a person's soul if that person could hear the words of God and learn God's ways:

Jeremiah - 620-586 BC

- Jeremiah 6:16 – Thus says the Lord: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and

walk in it, and find *rest* for our souls.” But they said, “We will not walk in it.”

Jesus - 30 AD

- Matthew 11:28-29 – [Jesus said] “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find *rest* for your souls.”

Just like in Jeremiah’s day, the people of Jesus’ day would end up rejecting the Lord’s offer of rest for their souls:

- Matthew 12:6-8, 14 – I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath... But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

Believers in Jerusalem - 63-66 AD

- Hebrews 3:18 – And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his *rest*, but to those who were disobedient?
- Hebrews 4:1 – Therefore, while the promise of entering his *rest* still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.
- Hebrews 4:3 – For we who have believed enter that *rest*, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my *rest*” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.
- Hebrews 4:8 – For if Joshua had given them *rest*, God would not have spoken of another day later on.
- Hebrews 4:9 – So then, there remains a Sabbath *rest* for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s *rest* has also rested from his works as God did from his.

- Hebrews 4:11 – Let us therefore strive to enter that *rest*, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

This rest for the soul happens when we are confident in God’s plan. God’s rest is not found in external circumstances or achieved with internal distractions. The rest that the Lord invites us to is obtained and maintained only by believing the promises of the Lord.

Rest for the soul happens when we are confident in God’s plan.

In 1445 BC the people were promised that the Lord would lead them through the wilderness to the land promised to their forefathers. In 1000 BC David spoke of trusting the Creator God to be the sustainer and provider of his people throughout time. Between 620 and 586 BC Jeremiah encouraged his generation to return to the established truth revealed to his people by God through the prophets and the writings of Moses. In 30 AD Jesus, the Living Word, invited the people to come to him and learn from him. In 63 AD the author of the book of Hebrews spoke to those who had heard and trusted in the promises of Jesus Christ. Each of these generations had people who secured their souls by trusting the Word of the Lord, but they also had large numbers who refused to listen, refused to understand and refused to believe the clear teaching they heard.

Those who believed and maintained their confidence in the promises of God despite the particular opposition each faced (e.g., perils of the wilderness, fears of life and persecution for believing the truth) prepared their souls for rest. Those who understood and trusted the Word of God were able to stabilize themselves in the midst of confusion, problems, and persecution. They grew stronger. They matured to produce fruit. And, their understanding and faith increased.

Those who understood and trusted the Word of God were able to stabilize themselves in the midst of confusion, problems, and persecution.

Those who refused to believe or could not maintain their confidence in the Lord during times of confusion, problems, or persecution were either eternally lost or could not grow into mature believers. They either perished for all eternity or lived fruitless lives in this age before their Lord.

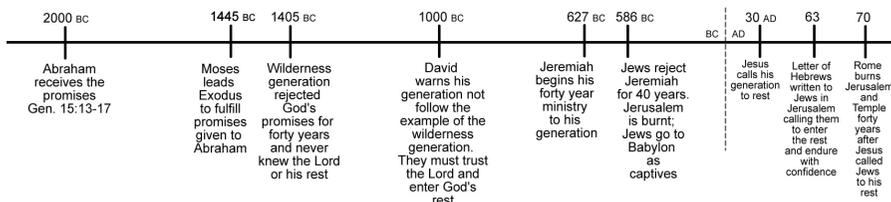
Hear and understand the promises of the Lord *today* so that you may enter his rest.

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

- Isaiah 26:3

*Have you not known?
Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.
Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;
but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint.*

- Isaiah 40:28-31



6 - GOD'S WAYS AND PROMISES (PREPARING YOUR SOUL)

Believers today have been given God's Word and heard his voice in our lives just as they did in the Exodus generation in 1445 BC, David's generation in 1000 BC, Jeremiah's generation in 600 BC, Jesus' generation in 30 AD and the people living in Jerusalem who received the New Testament letter of Hebrews in 63 AD.

Like them, we have a choice to either receive or reject the Lord's invitation into his rest. If we can understand God's Words and trust his ways as revealed in these promises, we will be able to stabilize our souls for rest and prepare our minds for action - not only in the good times, but even in the worst times. We will be fruitful in season and out of season because we will have entered into and remained in God's rest. Doing so is absolutely necessary because the day of evil comes to each one of us individually - and will come to us as a nation. We must prepare our souls now.

To do this we must first hear the promises and understand the ways of God. Today we have an opportunity to inhale the doctrines of truth. If we do this, we can live daily in God's rest exhaling both the character of the Lord and the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

If you know the character of the Lord and the fruit of the Spirit, you also know that much more is involved than just joy and peace, because not every situation in life demands joy or peace. Sometimes in this fallen world, living among those in rebellion to God, we will also need to be faithful, just, humble and good.

We will need to be faithful to the Lord - even while everyone else is

We will need to be faithful to the Lord – even while everyone else is compromising.

compromising God's Word and twisting his created order. We will need to remain in God's rest while we think and speak faithfully of his ways - even while being mocked for not compromising, and being identified as evil for not twisting the reality of his created order. These will not be easy fruits of the Spirit to produce if you have lost confidence in God and left his place of rest.

We will need to be just and seek justice – even when our culture is oppressive.

We will need to be just and seek justice - even when our culture is oppressive. We will need to be just and fair - even when a bribe determines innocence or guilt. We will need to speak fairly, honestly, and justly - even when the path to survival requires lies, compromise, and betrayal.

Are churches today preparing our souls for situations like this?

God's Word does. And he defends his Word with his very nature, and backs it up with a promise. You can remain committed to justice in the midst of a society bent on compromise and still maintain your place in the rest of God.

We will need to “walk humbly before our God” – even when doing so is identified as arrogant and uncooperative by men who demand we bow before them.

We will need to “walk humbly before our God” - even when doing so is identified as arrogant and uncooperative by men who demand we bow before them (instead of before God). The humble cannot be weak. There is a time when humility before the Lord will require you to rise up as mighty in the face of rebellious men. You will be in God's rest, but this will not be tolerated by those who do not understand that their momentary greatness in this age was given to them by the Lord - or that it is already passing away.

Stay humble, my friend, and do not fear the lions!
We will need to be good even when men declare that “good is



evil”, and identify “light as darkness”. These will be difficult times for us. But know also that they will not be spiritually productive days for the “Christian” who has compromised his testimony to tolerate wickedness, cooperate with evil, live patiently in sin, and make peace with the unrighteous.

We will need to be good - even when men declare that “good is evil”, and identify “light as darkness”.

A good man in these days will have to be a strong, confrontational man willing to live independently in the rest of his God - more a battle-hardened warrior than a religious social organizer.



7 - ZEPHANIAH 2:1-3 - PERHAPS YOU WILL BE HIDDEN

*Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation, before the decree takes effect before the day passes away like chaff, before there comes upon you the burning anger of the Lord, before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the Lord. **Seek the Lord**, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; **seek righteousness; seek humility**; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.*

- Zephaniah 2:1-3

Zephaniah prophesied to Judah and Jerusalem at the same time that Jeremiah was preaching - around 618 BC. This was 9 years before King Josiah's death in battle, 13 years before Nebuchadnezzar's first captivity of Judah (which included taking Daniel to Babylon), and 32 years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC.

Zephaniah did not cry out telling the people to repent. Nor did he encourage the people to turn back to the Lord. Instead, Zephaniah spoke only the Lord's message to the people of Judah and Jerusalem - that the day of their judgment and overthrow was set. There would be no national revival because God's patience had been exhausted. Judah had already been marked for slaughter. As the Lord said through Zephaniah:

*I will utterly sweep away everything... (1:2)
I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem... (1:4)*

Be silent before the Lord God!

(Indicating that the people were powerless to defend their actions or even their thoughts before the Lord, so they could not possibly have anything to say. Judgment is coming. Do not petition the Lord for mercy or seek forgiveness! Only be silent in the face of the Lord's accusations!)

For the day of the Lord is near; the Lord has prepared a sacrifice

(The sacrifice was to be the nation of Judah.)

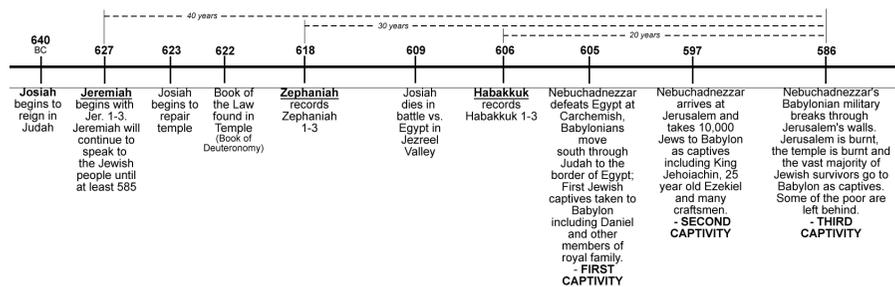
and consecrated his guests ... 1:7

(The Babylonians, who were going to destroy Judah and Jerusalem, were the consecrated guests who would offer the sacrifice. This is similar to Jeremiah's prophecy in Jeremiah 46:1-10, warning that Egypt would be offered as a sacrifice by the Babylonians in 605 BC at the battle of Carchemish. It is also similar to Ezekiel 39:17.)

The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there... 1:14

Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation... 2:1

Jerusalem would be conquered and burnt by Babylon 32 years later in 586 BC.



The only encouragement or guidance the Lord gave the believers in Judah and Jerusalem (which would have included Jeremiah, Habakkuk, King Josiah, and a very young Daniel) was to prepare their souls. In fact, in Zephaniah 2:1-3 even the faithful (*“all you humble of the land who do his just commands”*) are specifically included in the list of those living in that “shameful nation” that would be punished.

Accordingly, the true believers were told to strengthen the fortress of their soul with the knowledge of God in order to be in the place of God's rest during the days and years leading up to the destruction and judgment which was guaranteed to come. They were told by Zephaniah to seek the Lord, to seek righteousness, and to seek humility. They were to prepare themselves for impact - brace themselves for national judgment. They were to seek the Lord and enter his rest.

This is the same rest the wilderness generation and David's generation were invited to enter. If these believers in 618 BC would humbly seek the knowledge of the Lord, their souls could remain at rest during the disasters that would take place over the next 32 years and during all the events that would follow.

Nine years after Zephaniah's prophecy, King Josiah would die in battle with Egypt. Then, the first Babylonian captivity would take place in 605 BC. This first captivity consisted of the members of the royal family (Daniel included) being taken into Babylon for training. In 597 BC, 21 years after the prophecy, King Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, and skilled craftsmen would be taken captive to Babylon. And, finally, after 20 years of Babylonian oppression (605-586 BC), Judah would fall and Jerusalem would be destroyed.

Zephaniah called the believers in Judah to prepare their souls because there was a chance they would be hidden in God's rest

during those 32 turbulent years. The availability of this rest to each individual would depend on whether or not their soul had been fortified with truth and reality.

It is important that we realize they were not promised supernatural deliverance or protection from the negative effects caused by cultural oppression, famine, the Babylonian siege, mass starvation, the invasion of the city, the destruction of homes, or deportation to Babylon. Instead, they were told that if they sought the Lord, obeyed his commands, lived in righteousness, and embraced humility then “*perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord*”.

Hidden from what?
The Babylonians?

No, because many of the righteous were taken away in the various captivities (605, 597 and 586 BC). These godly captives included Daniel in 605 BC and Ezekiel in 597 BC.

Would they be hidden from the famine and starvation?

No, because even Jeremiah suffered through times where bread was lacking, including the famine of 598 and the siege of 588-586.

Would they be hidden in battle fighting for the righteous cause of the Lord?

No, because even Josiah, the righteous king, was killed in battle in the Jezreel Valley by Egyptian Pharaoh Neco on his way to help the fleeing, splintered Assyrian governmental forces in their final stand against the rising power of General Nebechadnezzar and his father Nabopolassar (the king of Babylon) in 609 BC.

So, what did Zephaniah mean when he said that the believers in Jerusalem “perhaps may be hidden” on the day of the anger of the Lord?

The phrase “perhaps may be” in the ESV translation comes from the Hebrew word *‘u-lay*, which literally means “it may be that”. This is not a promise that they “would be” hidden, but is a conditional promise based on each individual’s level of success in five areas described in the same verse:

1. Seeking the Lord
2. Being humble
3. Doing what the Lord commands
4. Seeking righteousness
5. Seeking humility

These are five characteristics of a person who is renewing their mind with the truth of God’s words, and transforming their soul into the image of Christ. These people were the ones who would understand God’s promises and be empowered by his truth. They would have the capacity in their souls to trust God’s ways, even in times of distress and confusion. Those who seek the Lord will learn from him. Those who humble themselves will lay down their false ideas and corrupted worldviews and accept God’s truth. With their mind on Christ they will be able to enter into God’s rest, continuing to be righteous in deed and humble before the Lord. They will be able to hold on to the promises of God because they know God’s ways, God’s character, and their own role in preparing for the coming eternal Kingdom. They will not faint. They will not give up. They will stand strong on the day of evil. And, when they have done all to stand, they will continue to stand. (Eph. 6:13-14)

So, there was a chance that the believers facing these evil days could do so successfully with a soul fully at rest in God and fortified with faith in the knowledge of God. These believers would have prepared their souls to face the evil day, and would be ready

for either deliverance or for death without losing their faith or their confidence. They would remain steadfast in the rest of their souls. They would maintain the peace that passes understanding.

However, if they did not seek the Lord or know his Word and his Ways, they would be like seeds sown along the side of the road or in the weeds. And as in Jesus' parable in Matthew 13:20-23, they would not be able to produce the fruits of righteousness because of one of two problems:

The first potential problem is that their roots are too shallow and when the sun rises the plant is scorched (13:5-6). According to Jesus this means that "he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, but when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away."

The believer at rest, having trusted the promises and knowing the ways of the Lord, will not alter their confidence or confession in the midst of hardships or when being persecuted because of their confidence. The believer with no rest and no understanding of the Bible will quickly fold - not only in the face of persecution, but even in the midst of nothing more than a storm. Their house (soul, mind) should be built on the rock - hearing Jesus' words and doing them (Matt. 7:24-25), but instead it is built on sand. This kind of believer is the one "who hears these words of mine and does not do them" (Matt. 7:26-27).

The second potential problem is that the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of riches are the weeds that grow in soil intended to grow instead the seeds of the Word of God.

A mind overwhelmed with worry or over-confident of its temporal control will also prevent the production of righteous fruit by choking out the truth (Matt. 13:7, 22). Being overly concerned

about worldly problems and overly confident of worldly power will absorb the resources in the soul that are intended to be given to the Word of God. Without truth, a person cannot enter God's rest because their thinking will be empty. In vanity, they will continue to worry about things they cannot control, or in their vain imagination they will trust in false beliefs that merely create the illusion of being in control. Both worldly fears and confidence will choke your soul by preventing you from inhaling the promises of God. This, like having no root, will keep you from entering into God's rest.

The ignorant believer will be scorched with heat like a plant with shallow roots in gravel. The believer focused on either the troubles of this age or the powers of this age will stop inhaling truth, and will choke like a plant trying to survive surrounded by weeds.

On the other hand, the believer who knows, understands, and trusts the Word of God will produce God's rest in their soul (Matt. 13:8-9, 23). They will be "like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers..." (Psalm 1:3).

Today is the day to prepare your soul.

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

Hebrews 3:15

While the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

Hebrews 4:1

The believer at rest, having trusted the promises and knowing the ways of the Lord, will not alter their confidence or confession in the midst of hardship or persecution.

*Let us therefore strive to enter that rest,
So that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.
For the word of God is living and active*

Hebrews 4:11-12

If you do not hear the Word of God, you will not know the Word of God.

If you do not know the Word of God, you cannot know God's ways.

If you do not know God's ways, you will easily and quickly decide the world's ways are the best ways, but they are the ways of the false god or idol you have set up in your soul in the place of the Lord.

8 - TWO GREAT PROMISES

The Bible teaches that God's "eternal power and divine nature" are clearly understood by everyone, since they are revealed in creation itself. Our own selves and the world we live in reveal God's power and character. But, those of us educated by and conformed to modern Western culture may have a hard time accepting the fact that this evidence exists in nature, because we think as secular humanists. Yet it is true. Creation itself testifies not only to the existence of God, but also to his eternal power, and it provides details of God's personal character - that he is organized, creative, well planned, caring, providing, personal, eternal, transcendent, and more.

There is also detailed revelation that has been recorded from the beginning of time in written form and collected in what we call the Word of God, or the Bible. In the text of Scripture the plan of God and greater detail regarding his eternal character are revealed. This revealed information can all be classified as promises of God. Keep in mind however, that not every "promise" in the Word of God is something we would desire or find pleasant in our fallen human state. The natural man might not consider many of God's promises to be positive things.

Some of the promises in the Bible can be likened to things we might use our three wishes from a genie in a bottle on. They are things we would not hesitate to call blessings. These promises guarantee what God is going to do for us. They may manifest in our temporal lives by being fulfilled in a moment, or in days, or months, or even years.

Many of the promises of God come with qualifying conditions - akin to "wait for it" - and require us to possess certain character traits such as endurance, patience, faithfulness, and confidence. Some of these promises are given along with phrases such as "in that day", "in due season", "do not give up", and even "these died in faith not having received the things promised but having seen them and greeted them from afar."

I will identify a few of the promises we have available to us in the Word of God here in the next few chapters. I would like to begin with two overall summary statements. The first is:

1. GOD IS GOOD

This is a foundational insight and it is always true. This fact is independent of our feelings, opinions, situations or environments. The bedrock truth that God is good is confirmed several places in the Bible:

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!
- 1 Chronicles 16:34

...giving thanks to the Lord: For He is good"
- Ezra 3:11

Good and upright is the Lord.
- Psalm 25:8

No one is good but One, that is, God
- Jesus quoted in Mark 10:18

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.
- James 1:17

Understanding and trusting the fact that our Lord, the Creator God, is absolutely good is absolutely necessary for a person to enter into the rest of God. In spite of all the evil in the world and the sin in our own hearts, the eternal character of God's goodness is active in our world and in our lives. We must come to grips with the fact that light, truth and life can exist simultaneously in a temporal world where darkness, deception and death also exist.

The presence of darkness does not prove that light does not exist, because the existence of light is the only possible way for darkness to be defined. Light is a thing. Darkness is a non-thing. Darkness is nothing more than the absence of light. You have a light switch to turn on the light - but you do not turn on the dark with a dark switch.

In the same way, if there were no truth, deception would not be deceitful, because deception is nothing more than truth perverted. And, something cannot be said to be dead unless what you mean is that its life has been taken away. Darkness, deception and death are non-things. They only exist when you have removed light, truth and life.

By the same reasoning, there is actually no mystery to the concept that God is eternally good even when we experience bad in life. In fact, a large portion of God's promises involve him defeating evil, destroying death, and bringing about the utter annihilation of anything that stands in rebellion to his good nature. God wages battle by being good and for the sake of good.

To have faith in God and to enter into his rest your soul will have to hear, understand, and believe that God is good. If you cannot accept this promise, then you cannot have faith in the true God - and you will never enter his rest.

Darkness is nothing more than the absence of light. Deception is nothing more than truth perverted. Death only means life has been removed. Darkness, deception and death are non-things. They only exist when you have removed light, truth or life.



Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

– Hebrews 11:6

The second truth we need to understand and believe to begin entering into God's rest is this:

2. IF YOU SEEK GOD, YOU WILL FIND GOD

The Bible teaches that if we seek to understand God, he will reveal himself to us - that if you decide to seek the Lord, you will find him. God is not hiding. If anyone is hiding it is mankind. In the Garden of Eden it was Adam who hid himself from God, because Adam knew the truth about his own sinfulness and God's righteousness. Adam knew he had sinned, so he hid.

The opposite of seeking the truth is suppressing the truth. As we have seen, the fact that God is driving out sin, evil, darkness, and death is a basic truth revealed to all mankind through creation itself. But all humans - just like Adam - are afraid of this truth because man is by nature in rebellion against God. In fear then, men suppress the truth to help them maintain their sanity, because they know God is bringing wrath and judgment on their evil and sin.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

– Romans 1:18

So, what may be known about God is revealed and available for those who want to seek and find the Lord. This second promise is a great promise. Not only is God good, but if you want to find this good God he promises that you *will* find him.

I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.
– Proverbs 8:17

From there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.

– Deuteronomy 4:29

You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.
– Jeremiah 29:13

Jesus said: "I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."

– Luke 11:9-10

These, then, are the first two great promises declared by both the Word of God and by creation itself:

1. **God is good**
2. **If you seek God, you will find him**

You can begin preparing your soul to enter the rest of God by hearing, knowing, and trusting these two promises. They will fortify your mind during times of trouble and confusion, and they will prevent the invasion of lies, deceit and corrupted ideologies that contradict the nature of God and his availability.

Remember, these promises are true. God's very Word and his reputation stand behind them. No matter what the world tells you or what deception tries to convince you of, the Word of God is living

and active, standing eternal over all creation with God himself.

*For the word of God is living and active,
sharper than any two-edged sword,
piercing to the division of soul and of spirit,
of joints and of marrow,
and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
And no creature is hidden from his sight,
but all are naked and exposed
to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

– Hebrews 4:11-12

Begin to know these promises and remember them. Concentrate on them, because they will stabilize your soul in good times and bad, in life or death, and in the light or in darkness.

There are many more promises with even more detail revealed in Scripture. We will now take a look at more of God's promises that teach the ways of the Lord that will help us anchor our souls and maintain our place in the rest of God.

9 - THE PROMISES: KNOWING GOD'S WAYS

Some promises include temporal blessings and daily provisions for life.

Other promises include a call to service, endurance, and the sacrifice of temporal blessings in order to achieve God's plan for us as we run the race of life marked out for us.

The first kind of promise is about blessings to be enjoyed with thanksgiving in this lifetime. The second kind normally pertains to blessings and provisions for the future.

These two types of promises are distinguished in Hebrews 11 where a rather extensive list of believers, leading all the way up to the time of Jesus Christ are commended. Some of these believers had faith to trust God for temporal blessings and daily deliverance. Others were denied temporal blessings, and endured hardships in order to fulfill God's plan for them in history.

The writer of Hebrews identifies 10 situations where believers received deliverance or provision, and took leadership to accomplish God's temporal plan. In Hebrews 11:33-35 these heroes of faith accomplished these things and received these blessings during their lives in this world:

1. Conquered kingdoms
2. Enforced justice
3. Obtained promises
4. Stopped mouths of lions
5. Quenched the power of fire
6. Escaped the edge of the sword
7. Made strong out of weakness
8. Became mighty in war
9. Put foreign armies to flight
10. Received dead back to life

These believers knew God's promises and understood God's ways. They did not compromise God's truth or the reality God had created. They were faithful, endured much, and received deliverance and provision in this world.

These events and provisions really happened centuries ago, and similar things continue to happen today. God is good and he promises to lead us, provide for us, protect us, and empower us to fulfill our purposes. Our responsibility is to know God's promises, know God's ways, trust him, and endure until he manifests his power and his purpose. All of these things are accomplished by God as we hold onto his promises by faith and trust in him.

After the author of Hebrews identifies these 10 glorious accomplishments, he immediately continues with another list of 15 events in Hebrews 11:36-38. In these examples, the believers were not delivered, they were not "blessed" with temporal glories, and they lived subpar to normal lives (by human standards). But because they also knew God's promises, understood God's ways, and were willing to endure temporal defeats in order to remain faithful to God's purpose for their lives, they stood firm. These believers faced these trials with great endurance, patience, and faith because they had no doubt that the good God had called them to them:

1. Tortured
2. Refused release
3. Suffered mocking
4. Suffered flogging
5. Chains
6. Imprisonment
7. Stoned
8. Sawn in two
9. Killed with the sword
10. Went about wearing the skins of sheep and goats
11. Destitute
12. Afflicted
13. Mistreated
14. Wandering in deserts and mountains
15. Dwelt in dens and caves

Despite the grimness of this list, far from being spiritual losers, these believers were actually victorious overcomers who knew the promises of God and knew God's ways. They were unwilling to compromise their faith in the truth or their knowledge of God's reality. But, instead of delivering them from suffering in this world, God allowed them to manifest their faith in the midst of hardship. God called these believers to testify to his absolute truth without denying him. They all suffered and perished in this age without compromising their knowledge, their understanding, or their faith in their good God.

Troubles and suffering like these still occur today. But still, God is good and he promises to lead us, provide for us, protect us, and empower us while we endure mistreatment. Our responsibility is to know God's promises, know God's ways, trust God, and steadfastly endure until he manifests his power and his purpose. Great things are accomplished by God when we have faith in him. And great will be your reward in eternity.

10 - PROMISES OF EMPOWERMENT IN SUFFERING, DELIVERANCE AND PROVISION

#1 – FUTURE GLORY (Romans 8:18-19)

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

In 57 AD, Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, assuring them that our sufferings in this life are not comparable to the glory we will experience in the age to come. Just as we experience suffering within ourselves now, Paul says the coming glory also “will be revealed in us.”

But the glory will not be manifested in us alone. It will also be seen throughout creation itself, as Paul declares: “creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.” This statement makes it clear that the coming glory is not merely an escape plan for us alone or some kind of eternal spiritual bliss we will experience individually. It will be instead the victorious return of the physically resurrected children of God into a renewed creation - ruling here in glory and victory.

However, Paul makes it explicitly clear that this is a future state, and our current reality is very different. Right now we experience “sufferings”. We are not given a promise, but a perspective. We are not told that if we pray and have faith, these sufferings will be removed in this present age.

We were not given a promise, but a perspective.

Instead, we are given a perspective that we can use to anchor our souls. We are commanded to never imagine that what we suffer now could possibly outweigh the blessings we will receive in time to come. We must remember that “our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory” promised for our future.

So, what kind of sufferings might Paul be referring to when he talks about things we will face in the present age, that are completely insignificant in light of God’s plans and purpose for us? He provides a few examples from his own life and from those he ministered to.

With far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

- 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

[Paul and Barnabus] returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

- Acts 14:21-22

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;

we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Romans 8:37-39

These passages list some of the sufferings Paul and others faced, and also reveal his attitude toward those sufferings, based on his confidence in the security in God’s rest. In his soul, Paul knew both that he was serving the Lord now and that he would be rewarded in eternity when the Lord’s glory was manifested in him.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

- 2 Timothy 4:6-8

I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

- 2 Timothy 1:12

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

#2 – STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- 2 Corinthians 12:8-10

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians about a specific affliction. It could have been physical, mental, or emotional. It could have involved opposition from unbelievers, Satan, or his own sin nature. Three times Paul went to the Lord in prayer and made the same request. Three times the Lord said something to the effect of, “No”. However, the Lord also graciously explained that, “My grace is sufficient.”

There was no need to resolve Paul’s present affliction or weakness, since God was manifesting his divine power in that situation - instead of letting him rely on his own limited human power.

There is human strength that can manifest as:

- power of the will, such as determination
- physical strength such as endurance running
- power of the intellect, such as unraveling the mysteries of chemistry

We would all like to excel in these and similar areas of strength for several reasons - our own benefit, service to others, and even to fulfill the Lord’s purpose for our lives. So it is natural that when we lose the power of our will, our physical strength, or our intellect we will seek the Lord to have our human power restored. If we desire greater self-determination, physical power, or intelligence we

definitely should seek God’s help. And we are right to do so, since we are told in Scripture to bring all of our needs and requests to the Lord:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

- Philippians 4:6

Despite this command, sometimes the Lord’s plan is not to give you greater human strength, but to give you instead confidence that he is working alongside your limited human ability to achieve his purpose. I suppose it would be much like standing trapped against the Red Sea with the Egyptian army rushing out to destroy you - and all you have is a staff. In Moses’ case, the staff was not nearly sufficient to do what was needed, so the Lord came alongside him and his staff and parted the Red Sea.

It is very important for us to consciously realize that the very next verse - Philippians 4:7 - does not say, “And, behold, the Lord shall pour out all the things you asked for and fulfill every request you made.”

Philippians 4:7 promises instead that in response to you making your requests known to God, “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” In other words, go to the Lord in prayer in your time of need, trust him, and refuse to leave the stronghold of God’s rest that is identified here as “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding”. This place of “faith rest” or “peace that passes understanding” will guard your soul from being conquered by the fears of this life.

Remember, God’s power is made perfect in your weakness. The Greek word for “perfect” is a form of the word *teleo* which means

“to bring to an end”, “to complete”, “to fulfill”. God’s power is fulfilled and completed in our weakness.

It is no wonder that Paul rushes to rejoice in that place of rest when he celebrates God’s provision saying: “I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (2 Cor 12:9). Paul was secure in the strong tower of his soul in God’s rest.

#3 – EVERYTHING LEADS YOU TO GOD’S GOODNESS (Romans 8:28)

We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

- Romans 8:28

As has often been pointed out, this verse does not say “all things are good.” Paul is saying instead that “God is working for the good in all things” and he is doing this for those who love him and are in line with his plans and purposes. To benefit from God’s working for good in all things we must love God and be able to process things according to his purpose. We are going to have to remain in the place of faith rest while trusting God’s promise that he is good and will work out all things for good. “All things” would include even things that we consider to be bad or we know to be evil. In all things God is working for the good of those who love him.

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

-Romans 8:37

This promise is one of the foundation stones of the fortress of your faith rest tower. Independent of whether things are good or bad -

and independent of whether or not you have perfect understanding of a situation - you can know for certain that God is currently active to use this very moment in your life for your good. This fact needs to be solidly established in your soul before the storm of life hits. Then, when the various storms of life do strike, you will be able to stay in God’s rest while looking out the window of your strong fortress at the winds and the waves - all the while knowing that even in the midst of this turmoil the Lord is working for your good as his plans and purposes move closer and closer to completion.

There is, though, a clear condition in this verse. A person is disqualified from the benefits of God’s good work in all things if that person does not love God, or if that person’s will is not in line with God’s calling and purpose.

#4 – RESCUED FROM EVERY EVIL ATTACK (2 Timothy 4:17-18)

*The Lord stood at my side and gave me strength,
so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all
the Gentiles might hear it.*

And I was delivered from the lion’s mouth.

*The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me
safely to his heavenly kingdom.*

To him be glory for ever and ever.

- 2 Timothy 4:17-18

Paul wrote this verse in 67 AD when he was an old man and a prisoner of the Roman Empire, being held in the Mamertine Prison in the city of Rome. The Mamertine Prison was originally dug as a cistern around 625 BC to access a spring of water. By Paul’s time it had been converted into a dungeon where prisoners were held or detained until their court case was finalized.

This was not the same detention that Paul suffered in Rome during 60-62 AD. At that time, Paul was detained under a much more comfortable house arrest and stayed in his own rented house.

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him.

- Acts 28:30

Paul records in 2 Timothy that in 67 AD he had already appeared before Nero's imperial court to present his case:

At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

- 2 Timothy 4:16-17

Paul was detained in the filthy Mamertine dungeon, where he would have been lowered in through an opening above. There were surely other prisoners being detained there. All waste, sewage, and the corpses of prisoners who died inside would have been washed from this dungeon through the sewer system of Rome (called the Cloaca Maxima) that connected the Mamertine dungeon to the Tiber River about a quarter mile away.

Paul was confident that he would be sentenced to be executed when he appeared before Nero's court to hear the verdict of his case. He writes to Timothy:

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

- 2 Timothy 4:6

Since Paul was a Roman citizen his execution would have been by



decapitation in a place about 5 miles south of the Mamertine prison, outside the city limits on the Via Ostia. Based on early church history, tradition and archaeology, after the execution, Paul's body was taken about 1.5 miles back toward the city and buried in an above ground cemetery on property belonging to Lucina, the woman who buried him.

Since Paul wrote "the time of my departure has come" - and we know that Paul was executed sometime between the fall of 67 AD and the spring of 68 AD - we can be quite certain that Paul was not anticipating physical deliverance from Nero when he wrote:

I was delivered from the lion's mouth.

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.

- 2 Timothy 4:18

A casual reading of this verse could lead a person to assume that Paul was referring to physical deliverance from persecution, or any other form of evil intended by Nero. But, Paul was not referring to physical deliverance in this text. Obviously, Paul's goal in life was not to escape death. No one escapes death. Paul's goal in life was to fulfill the Lord's plans and purpose for his life, which had long been clearly identified for Paul. The Lord had told Ananias:

This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.

- Acts 9:15

And, according to Paul's own account given in 59 AD in Caesarea to Governor Festus and King Herod Agrippa II, it was the Lord who told Paul that he was being sent to the Gentiles to preach the Gospel to them:



I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

- Acts 26:17-18

Paul's mission was to reach the Gentiles with the Word of God. Paul was appointed and empowered to do this by God, but Satan, the lion, would attack all of Paul's efforts. Just as the birds in the parable of the sower came immediately to steal the seed of the Word that was scattered on the road (Matt. 13:4, 19), so Satan would try to destroy, intimidate, censor, discourage, and stifle the seeds of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. Paul had plenty to fear in the natural world - including confinement in the Mamertine Prison, intimidation in the presence of Emperor Nero's court, execution, and much more.

All of these evil attacks were real and designed by the prowling lion, Satan, to make Paul quit proclaiming the message of salvation to the Gentile world. Paul was a strong-willed man before he became a believer and remained so after he placed faith in Christ. But Paul's human strength and determination by themselves would collapse under the pressure of the spiritual forces of evil. Paul needed a place of protection and support. Paul needed to abide in God's rest.

In this place of rest, the fortress of Paul's soul would be unconquerable no matter what kind of evil attack he was subjected to. And, from that same place of rest, Paul would be able to launch a counter attack by fully proclaiming to everyone in Nero's court the knowledge of God.

In this way Paul would be tearing down strongholds in the minds of the Gentiles who heard his words. The arguments and high

thoughts of evil that stood opposed to the knowledge of God would begin to crumble. The Lord stood by Paul's side and delivered Paul from every evil attack by giving him confidence, endurance, and fearlessness in the face of evil. Because of this, the Lord's message was fully proclaimed to begin tearing down the strong towers of false philosophies and corrupt realities that evil had built in the souls of the Gentiles.

#5 – ENDURANCE (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Hebrews 12:1-2

Each of us is called by the Lord to “run...the race that is set before us”. Jeremiah's ministry was compared to a race (Jer. 12:5), and Jesus himself had a race to run that included going to the Cross. Before Jesus went to his Cross he had told his disciples, “*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me*” (Matt. 16:24).

To successfully “run..the race marked out for us”, and to “take up our cross” we will need endurance. Even Jesus is said to have “endured the cross.” We will also have to endure, so that we might take up our own cross and finish our race.

The word used twice in Hebrews 12:1-2 for “endurance” (“run with endurance”) and “endured” (“endured the cross”) is *hupomone* in the Greek. The word *hupomone* means “a remaining behind” and “a patient endurance.” The idea of this word is to hold your ground

even when everyone else retreats - and to continue under the load, continuing the work until it is finished.

While running the race of faith, opposition and struggles to overcome are guaranteed. To finish his work of the Cross, we are told that Jesus had to “despise the shame” of the temporal situation that was crushing in on the strong tower in his soul. Jesus endured the shame of the Cross because in the fortress of his soul he had the knowledge of God that continually revealed to him the fullness of joy that awaited him on the other side.

We are told to consider Jesus as we struggle to endure the race set before us, because Jesus is an example of how to face difficulties and endure to the end by understanding the promise of future joy and glory. There are two additional pieces of knowledge in Christ that will empower us to secure our place in God’s rest while we endure and finish our race.

The first is that Jesus is the “founder” of our faith. The word “founder” comes from the Greek word *archegos* meaning “originator”, “author”, or “leader”. The word *archegos* is a compound word in the Greek made from two words: *arxe* meaning “the first” and *ago* meaning “to lead”. Together *arxe-ago* literally means “the first to lead”. This word identifies the first in a long line of followers. The *archegos* is the person who begins the trail or the movement. Jesus is the one who established the race we are running and is the one who set us on the race course. He himself has already run the course, cleared the path, and won the race. Now we are following his path, and it is one that leads us also to victory - but only if we endure, stay on course, and finish the race.

The second is the second word used to describe Jesus, identifying him as the “perfecter” of our faith. The Greek word for “perfecter” is *teleiotes* meaning “a completer” and “a finisher”. Jesus has victoriously

completed the race, and he reaches back to empower us to do likewise. To access the power he offers us, we need to continue to endure.

So, we see that Jesus has established the course, cleared the way, endured the shame, finished the race, and now holds the key to victory. And having done it himself, he now sets us on that same course and has empowered us to finish for the same victory. We only need to endure - which means we need to continue running even when others stop. We must remain at work and carry the load until the job is finished.

Endurance is not listed specifically as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, but it is something we can attain in the place of rest as we trust the knowledge of God. Just as you can increase your physical running endurance with training, running races and testing your progress, so steadfastly running “with endurance the race marked out for us” in God’s plan and purpose will continue to produce more and more spiritual endurance (*hupomone*) in us. Endurance is the ability to maintain concentration and remain in God’s rest as we continually trust him. This is exactly what James says:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness (Greek: hupomone).

- James 1:2-3

As you remain at rest, trusting the Lord, the testing of your faith will produce more and more endurance, which will then enable you to continue to wait in faith for the Lord even more. Not only does the testing of your faith increase your ability to use your faith, it also proves the genuineness of your faith, as Peter writes:

Now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- 1 Peter 1:6-7

So continue to endure and remain in the rest of God as you trust his word, because when Jesus Christ returns and is fully revealed in the reality of his creation, you will receive praise, glory and honor from the Lord himself.

#6 – THE APPOINTED TIME...WAIT FOR IT (Habakkuk 2:3)

*The vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.*

*If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.*

- Habakkuk 2:3

*At the set time that I appoint
I will judge with equity.*

- Psalm 75:2

He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead.

- Acts 17:31

Justice is part of God's good character. Judgment of rebellion, sin, and evil is the logical result of the Goodness of God. The challenging part of this logic is that some judgment will take place in time, but other judgment is reserved for a future day. Paul makes this clear in his first letter to Timothy:



The sins of some are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.

In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever.

- 1 Timothy 5:24-25

And we know that rewards and promises work in a similar way. Some promises and blessings occur in this life, while other promises and rewards are reserved for later when God's plan and purpose have been fulfilled.

Since this is true concerning both the judgment of evil and the fulfillment of God's promises, we are told in the Bible to "wait for it."

*If it seems slow, wait for it;
It will surely come; it will not delay.*

- Habakkuk 2:3

The Lord will judge good and evil with equity, but this will not take place fully until "the set time" (Ps. 75:2). Remain in God's rest knowing all will be judged and all will be fair, and that we are all waiting for the "appointed time" (Hab. 2:3), for he "has set a day" (Acts 17:31) - a day on which he "will judge with equity" (Ps 75:2) and "will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). Even while waiting, we must not become bitter or skeptical. We must understand that "the vision awaits its appointed time."

We are all waiting for fulfilled promises and rewards, just as we are all waiting for judgment and a personal evaluation in the future. Today we can remain in God's rest knowing that "it will surely come; it will not delay." But, for now we are told to "wait for it."



#7 – GOD CONTROLS GOVERNMENT AND NATIONS (John 19:11)

You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.

- Jesus to Pilate in John 19:11

There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

- Romans 13:1

The concept that God controls governments, nations and all the leaders of those nations may be the most relevant promise for our generation.

The concept that God controls governments, nations and all the leaders of those nations may be the most relevant promise for our generation. Of course, all of God's promises are important and beneficial for establishing the fortress of rest in our soul. But right now - as we transition into a dramatic phase of our postmodern and post-Christian Western World culture - we need to process this truth in a way we have not needed to before. Recognizing and keeping hold of truth must become a part of the daily maintenance of our faith rest life.

God established the institution of government (Gen. 9:5-6) and the institution of nations (Gen. 11:1-9) for the wellbeing of mankind on earth. Through these and the other institutions he has established, God provides order and structure for mankind on earth, and at the right time he will use them to bring history to its ultimate fulfillment - the Kingdom of God on earth under the leadership of the man the Lord Jesus Christ.

God will raise up the right leaders and nations to bring about his plans.

The main point for us is that we know and understand the promise that the Lord is ultimately in control of leaders and nations. God is using everything for his good purpose. All leaders and nations will be held accountable before God when he is finished using them

for his purpose. These leaders and nations may or may not know the Lord. They may or may not intentionally serve the Lord. But, the truth of the matter is that they are serving him - intentionally or not - and they will all stand before him for judgment at the appointed time. With this in mind, David writes advice to the rulers of the world - for both those in his day and for every king in every nation that would follow after him:

*Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.*

*Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

- Psalm 2:10-12

Indeed, the anger of the Son of God can flare up quickly, and those in rebellion to the Lord can perish as quickly as burning grass. History is riddled with instances of "the most powerful man in the world" falling from power in a moment. All leaders are serving God, but only those who take refuge in him will be blessed for their service. The others will vanish like vapor into eternity.

Psalm 2:10-12 should be engraved in the stone, hung in the hallways, and printed on the letterhead of the United Nations as an act of mercy to the kings and leaders of the nations today, because one day they will stand before the Son for evaluation and judgment.

Of course, there are several examples of this reality in Scripture, such as those below. In the first, Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar in 603 BC that it was the Lord who brought him to power and caused nations to submit to him.

*Your Majesty, you are the king of kings.
The God of heaven **has given you dominion and power and
might and glory; in your hands he has placed all mankind and
the beasts of the field and the birds in the sky. Wherever they live,
he has made you ruler over them all.
You are that head of gold.***

- Daniel 2:37-38

Jeremiah tells Nebuchadnezzar the same thing, but adds the duration of his time of dominion. It was to be limited by the Lord to three generations: Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC), Amel-Marduk (560-556 BC), and Nabonidus (556-539 BC).

*It is I (the Lord) who by my great power and my outstretched arm have made the earth, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I (the Lord) give it to whomever it seems right to me. Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him.
All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, until the time of his own land comes. Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave.*

- Jeremiah 27:5-7

Following those three generations, and after the Lord had punished Israel with 70 years of captivity in Babylon, the empire of Babylon itself would be punished for their iniquity.

Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land an everlasting waste. I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah proph-

esied against all the nations.

For many nations and great kings shall make slaves even of them, and I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.

- Jeremiah 25:12-14

Today's leaders, governments and nations are likewise serving the Lord. When the Lord has used them for his purpose, they will be removed. Some may receive reward from the Lord, but many more will suffer temporal and eternal destruction.

*He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings;
he gives wisdom to the wise
and knowledge to those who have understanding.*

- Daniel 2:21

We can understand this. The fact is the Lord is using leaders, governments, and nations for his purpose. We must trust in the goodness of God and know that some things are being set in motion, while other things had already been established long before we came on the scene. Some events and leaders have already been determined. When the Lord causes commotion, confusion, or chaos political opponents cry out against each other, "Conspiracy! Conspiracy!"

But, Isaiah is told that even if these social and political events look like the conspiracies of man, they are not. Often, the chaos and injustice that men may call "a conspiracy" are actually the judgments of God coming down on the people, leaders, and culture of a nation that God is punishing.

It is time to take this truth also into the strong tower of God's rest in your soul. The Lord told Isaiah to avoid walking in the way of man, and warned him, "Do not call conspiracy all that this people

calls conspiracy.” It is the Lord you are to fear, not the so-called “conspiracies” of one political ideology against another. Honor the Lord as holy, fear him, and keep yourself in his place of rest.

For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying:

“Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread.

But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy.

Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread....”

- Isaiah 8:11-3

#8 – UNDERSTANDING: THE ONE WHO HAS, WILL BE GIVEN MORE (Matthew 13:12)

To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

- Matthew 13:11-13

If you have embraced the truth that has been revealed to you, then you are in a position to use your understanding to gain even more details about that truth. It is similar to learning the secrets of math.

If a student understands first grade math, then the second grade teacher can build on that knowledge to provide that student with more understanding. This process continues for as long as that student continues to add to his knowledge of mathematics. Eventually, the student will be able to use their understanding to resolve story problems, do equations, and even apply their math knowl-

edge to other fields of study, such as chemistry, economics, and statistical analysis.

However, as often happens, the first grade student who doesn't know their numbers from 1 to 100 will soon begin to struggle with even basic introductory math lessons. If the student fails to catch up academically and so never masters basic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division there is very little hope of ever being able to process something as complex as a story problem. And as an adult that student may not even be able to understand their basic personal finances.

In Matthew 13:11-13, Jesus is saying that if you have received basic instruction concerning the kingdom of Heaven, then you have the foundation to hear and receive the “mysteries” or “secrets” of the kingdom of heaven as well. If you believe there is a God and you understand that God is good, you are ready to receive the next level of insight that God is revealing. You will then learn to see God in creation and in the written text of Scripture.

When Jesus spoke of these things he was building on the principles of theology that had already been built into the understanding of the Jewish people. Within that framework of understanding was the promise that the Messiah would come to Israel and to all mankind to deliver them. And Jesus was that Messiah.

If the people who heard Jesus speak understood his teaching about himself, they would be able to connect that knowledge to their previous understanding. They would then be ready to receive the next level of insight and be able to apply their new learning to their lives.

But, if they instead rejected it as false, then even the understanding they had would stop increasing, grow stagnant, and eventually become useless. And worse, their misunderstanding would be misap-

plied to their theology and then to their lives. Ultimately, even the lowest introductory levels of insight they had would be lost.

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

- Hebrews 5:12

Even today these truths remain relevant. If we embrace them we will be able to add to our learning. If we have received the promises of God and entered God's rest by trusting the knowledge of God, then in this place of peace and trust we will be given more. We will find ourselves in a position to process "complicated equations" and apply the principles of faith-rest to all areas of our lives. Just like math is used in daily life and applied to multiple fields of study, so will our ever-growing understanding of God be applied in our daily lives in a multitude of ways.

If a person rejects the knowledge of God at the very beginning, or at any point along the path of growth, the process of applying God's rest to life begins to unravel. Soon, even the little peace of mind that person has in Christ and the faith-rest in their

**To keep growing,
you need to
keep hearing.**

soul will be gone.

To keep growing, you need to keep hearing.

#9 – WISDOM (James 1:5)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

- James 1:5

Discernment is one of the necessities of life. Everyday we have to evaluate situations, relationships, products and information (including the mainstream media's non-stop news). There is a difference between knowing the hard facts and applying them. Life is not as easy as a true/false quiz. Life is more like a long rambling story problem in math class. In life, an answer to the question merely opens up the next level of the never-ending story problem. Still, there certainly are some absolute true or false answers in life, because truth, reality, and God are all absolutes. But if you can't pass the true/false quiz of God's reality then you are not going to be able to pass the test of life either. To pass the test of life you will need wisdom to apply your true/false answers correctly.

Even when we know the right answers, sometimes the application of what is right involves a variety of variables such as timing, presentation, intensity, personality, situation, background, experience, and so on. This is definitely not justification for the false theories of situational ethics or moral relativism, but is instead an appeal for wisdom when applying absolutes.

This wisdom is available to the child of God who is abiding in the place of God's rest. From this place of confidence, a believer can go to the Lord and ask God for wisdom and insight related to various situations, timing, personalities, options, etc. James tell us:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God.

- James 1:5

Of course, James is assuming you already know the Lord and understand truth - and that what you are lacking is clear discernment in how to use that knowledge. What you need is wisdom.

Once again God is not hiding. In fact, Solomon wrote:

*Wisdom cries aloud in the street,
in the markets she raises her voice;
at the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks.*

- Proverbs 1:20-21

If you need to understand reality, study Creation. If you need to understand reality, study Creation.
If you need to know truth, study the Scriptures. If you need to know truth, study the Scriptures.
If you need wisdom, ask God. If you need wisdom, ask God.

God's voice is in the streets, and his Spirit is in your heart.

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

- 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

10 – EMPOWERED IN CONTENTMENT: THE QUADRANTS OF LIFE

(Philippians 4:11-13)

*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.
I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.
I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation,
whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.
I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

- Philippians 4:11-13 (NIV)

Throughout the Scriptures we are told that God is good. Our definition of “good” could include synonyms like pleasant, pleasing, desirable, pain-free, or sought-after. However, when we study the verses that proclaim God as “good”, we see that part of God’s “good” activity toward us does not fall within our “pleasant and pleasing” definition. Things like testing, trying, examining, and sacrificing are also part of the goodness of God.

In Psalm 107, which begins and ends with statements attesting to the “goodness” of God, forty-three verses are laced with real life situations where the goodness of God has been manifested to people. Some of these people were lost and wandering, some had been subjected to bitter labor by God, others were caught in a storm sent by God, and some of them were suffering divine discipline for their rebellion against God. Although each group was in a different situation, and there for different reasons - some had rebelled, some had obeyed, some were guilty, some were innocent - they were all still living within the goodness of God.

The obvious truth is that God is doing something in our lives with the aim of changing us - and this is one of the things we must be taught. We were all at one time rebels and enemies of God, but were then saved by grace. Now that we have been delivered from death and sin, given eternal life, and seated in Christ in heavenly places, we are purposefully being transformed into his image.

The change is more than drastic. In fact, the radical nature of this change we are undergoing cannot be understated. We began as rebels against God who existed in a state of death - but are now being transformed into obedient sons who have been seated with Christ in constant fellowship with a holy God. A great transformation has begun, but it is far from over. We are all being changed even now.

In Philippians 4:12-13, Paul says he has “learned the secret of being content in any and every situation.” The phrase “learned the secret” is a technical term in Greek that refers to the process of initiation that would include more than merely attaining knowledge - it would also involve a sequence of life experiences.

The various situations of life are then listed by Paul, and form a quadrant. Paul says he has learned to be content when:

- “well fed”
- “hungry”
- “in plenty”
- “in want”

These four may seem redundant as translated in our English Bibles - as if saying “prosperity or poverty” twice over. But the tenses of the Greek verbs Paul uses in the text develop these pairs into quadrants that can categorize every situation in life.

The first prosperity phrase (“**well fed**”) is passive. This means Paul was the recipient, but not the doer of the verb. In other words he did not cause it to happen. This is also true for the poverty of the last phrase (“**in want**”), which is also in the passive, indicating that there were times Paul was in need that were out of his control. Paul did not deserve or cause the lack in this situation - it was given to him.

The other two phrases (“**hungry**” and “**plenty**”) are verbs in the active tense, meaning Paul did or created both of these situations in his life at some point in time.

All four of these words serve a purpose and demonstrate the manifestation of the goodness of God in our lives. You may be **suffering undeservedly** like Joseph - or **deservedly** like Samson. You may be **prospering undeservedly** like Solomon - or **deservedly** like Abraham.

But no matter which situation you are in now, one thing is true - God’s goodness will eventually take you to and through all four quadrants as part of his process of initiation, which includes both knowledge and experience. And in his strength, you can be content in any of them.

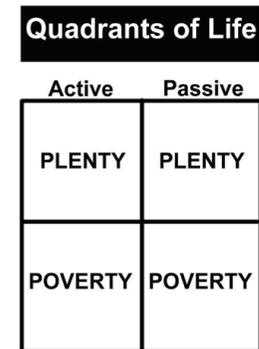
Once initiated (or once you have “learned the secret”), these truths can be applied to your own life. In whatever circumstances you find yourself, you will be able to do all things through Christ who strengthens you!

This verse teaches us that after we have learned the secret of being content we will be able to manifest God’s purpose for us in any and every situation, regardless of what we have or do not have. If we do the work and accept what we are given, we will succeed. This is one of the ultimate and most advanced stages of God’s rest.

In contrast, this verse does not contain any humanistic meaning such as, “Whatever I set my mind to do I can do.” The power of Christ will not help you achieve anything your human will desires. The verse does not say, “The power of Christ is available for you to use however you want.” If God has not planned or purposed your intention, your human effort will not accomplish it. And even if you do achieve that goal, you will not find contentment in it, and the things you did to accomplish it may well destroy you.

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.

- Hebrews 13:5



God's goodness will never take us to one quadrant and keep us there. Life is about changing us.

Philippians 4:12-13, Learn the secret of being content.

No matter what situation you find yourself in you can remain at rest in your soul knowing that the Lord will never leave you.

No matter what situation you find yourself in you can remain at rest in your soul knowing that the Lord will never leave you. You can do all things in any situation through Christ who strengthens you - independent of the resources or the position you have.

Here are some more promises of God's ways to fortify your soul:

Knowing and trusting these promises will allow the believer to remain calm and confident in God's rest.

Isaiah 41:10 – *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isaiah 41:13 – *For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you.*

Isaiah 43:2 – *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.*

Isaiah 54:17 – *No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.*

Psalms 32:8 – *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*

Psalms 37:23-24 – *The steps of a man are established by the Lord, when he delights in his way; though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the Lord upholds his hand.*

Exodus 14:14 – *The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.*

Joshua 1:9 – *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*

Philippians 4:19 – *My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

Psalms 27:1 – *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

Psalms 34:17 – *When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.*

Psalms 37:4 – *Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

Psalms 50:15 – *Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.*

Psalms 9:9-10 – *The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.*

Psalms 103:2-5 – *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

James 5:14-15 – *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

Matthew 6:31-33 – *Therefore do not be anxious, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Romans 8:31-35 – *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?*

2 Peter 1:3-4 – *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*

Psalms 91:1-2 – *He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”*

11 - PRAYER AND ASKING GOD

It is good and right for us to go to God to request the things we desire, and to seek his intervention in our lives. Going to God is not a weakness, and it is not self-centered or greedy. Seeking God’s provision, guidance, and involvement in our lives is something the Bible tells us to do. It is faith alone that enables our souls to even consider the possibility that the Almighty Creator of the universe and Judge of all mankind would hear and care about our prayers. It is obedient to ask God for help.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- Philippians 4:6-7

Knowing that God will respond to our requests will anchor our souls in his rest. When we bring our concerns to our Lord, as Paul proclaims in the verse above, “the peace of God...will guard your hearts and minds” (or, “guard your souls”). Knowing God is going to respond to our prayers will secure our soul (heart and mind). We do not pray because we are too weak to face reality. We pray because we want our Creator and Savior involved in situations and with people that are important to us. In my life I want the Almighty Creator active in the reality he has designed.

Knowing that God will respond to our requests will anchor our souls in his rest.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Hebrews 4:16

God's nature is to respond to our requests. It is impossible for God not to respond with some form of reply. Jesus understood this and taught it when he said:

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.

- Matthew 7:7-8

We are held back when we do not seek, or we do not ask, or we do not knock.



It is possible that when we ask, seek, or knock we are only willing to accept one particular answer from the Eternal Almighty God. This is foolishness. Imagine a three-year-old asking for and accepting only a peanut butter sandwich when their parent is a gourmet chef. The meal options this child has are fantastic! Their parent has dedicated their life to honing the skill of preparing incredible meals. But how shallow is that child's appreciation of their parent's skill. As the child grows and matures they will hopefully develop the ability and palate to accept and appreciate more than a peanut butter sandwich for lunch.

A similar example could be made of a three-year-old wanting only a bowl of sugary cereal for breakfast when their parent is a nutritionist. The three-year-old's constant demand for the unhealthy cereal, if given in to, would result in all kinds of weakness, malnutrition, underdevelopment, and anemic behavior. The list of deficiencies in that kind of poor diet is endless and would affect the child's life for years to come. But the good parent - who also has



the knowledge and wisdom of a nutritionist - would provide instead a healthy meal with correct nutrition, while also making the meal pleasant and desirable for a three-year-old. Still, all the good nutrition in the world would avail the child nothing if they did not trust their parent enough to taste the food.

The child who has a parent who is a chef or a nutritionist needs to learn that there are better options for a meal than sugary cereal and peanut butter sandwiches. Likewise, a believer who is asking the Creator of the universe ... who is seeking intervention from the Eternal God Almighty ... and who is knocking for help from the Lord and King Jesus Christ (who, remember, was willing crucified to deliver us from sin, death and damnation) ... also has something better on their menu than anything our limited "spiritual three-year-old" minds could ever comprehend.

We have all been three-year-olds, and we have all been around three-year-olds. So we can all understand how a child could develop a narrow list of "acceptable" foods. In real life, the three-year-old grows up, and their feelings about food change and develop. In the same way, it is also necessary for us to grow up spiritually and be willing to look at the larger and healthier menu the Lord has prepared for us.

So go to God. Know he will respond. And trust his answer to your prayers and requests, whatever it may be.

With this in mind, I invite you to meditate on this verse:

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

- Mark 11:24



12 - THOUGHTS AND TRUTH

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

– 2 Corinthians 10:2-6

The twin phrases “We walk in the flesh” and “We live in this world” both mean that believers are living their natural lives, as all people do, within the confines of history. We are in the world, experiencing both the limitations and advantages of being mortal humans. We are limited in that we grow old and die, but we also get to enjoy the blessings of enjoying life and impacting history.

In this world, we are responsible for all things pertaining to this life and are subject to the laws and limitations of nature. We, as everyone else, are expected to meet obligations, accept responsibility, and participate in the institutions of this age such as marriage, family, government, and national citizenship.

While it is true that believers are not to live their lives based on the fallen standards of this world, that does not change the fact that we still live the entirety of our lives in this world.

The difference between the believer’s experience and the unbeliever’s occurs in the soul - what we know, what we think, what we believe,

The difference between the believer's experience and the unbeliever's occurs in the soul. and what we accept as reality and truth. The difference is that even though the believer is in the world, they are not of this world.

One example of this difference is that while we live in this world, we do not teach or convince others about truth and reality like the world does. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 10:4 that “we are not waging war according to the flesh” - meaning, “we do not wage war as the world does”. The word “war” (which is *strateuometha* in the Greek and comes from *strateuo*) means “to be a soldier” or “to serve as a soldier”. This word often includes the connotation of serving as a soldier at one’s own expense.

In the context of 1 Corinthians 10 Paul is referring to his own ministry, activities, and the various struggles related to his calling as an apostle and his efforts to advance the understanding of the Gospel among the Gentiles. But when we apply this same concept to ourselves, we receive guidance for how we approach all areas of our lives - personal, family, work, social and church.

The phrase translated “weapons of our warfare” (“weapons we fight with”) is formed as follows:

The word “warfare” is *strateias* in the Greek and means “warfare”, “military expedition,” and “military campaign”.

The word “weapons” is *opla*, meaning “weapon” or “instrument of warfare”. This is a very general word for both offensive and defensive weapons. However, the list of spiritual weapons in Ephesians 6:13-18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8 provide more specific details about these weapons, so show more clearly how this word is used here by Paul:

*Take up the **whole armor of God**, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the **breastplate of righteousness**, and, as **shoes for your feet**, having put on the readiness given by the **gospel of peace**. In all circumstances take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the **helmet of salvation**, and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**, praying at all times in the Spirit, with **all prayer and supplication**.*

- Ephesians 6:13-18

*Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the **breastplate of faith and love**, and for a **helmet the hope of salvation**.*

- 1 Thessalonians 5:8

In contrast, “weapons of the world” and “weapons of the flesh (*sarkika*)” are the weapons the common man uses to inflict their ideologies and philosophies on others. Besides instruction and proclamation, these weapons include coercion, deception, manipulation, use of physical force, etc. to build strongholds in the mind that support false ideologies and empty philosophies.

The greater weapons of the Spirit are available to the believer for private and public use. The believers’ weapons have divine power since they are rooted in God’s divine nature, and they allow truth and reality to be revealed to all mankind. Remember, the absolute reality we profess to the world has already been revealed to all mankind in Creation. We simply need to re-identify it and testify to it. The special revelation of truth recorded in Scripture should be presented by believers to the world, but it also must be illuminated by the Spirit of God to be fully understood.

Our weapons, therefore, are the clear presentation of the facts of God's created reality and the proclamation of God's written revelation, the Bible. The believer's strategy must be threefold:

First, the believer must understand, believe and concentrate on the truth in their own souls.

Second, the believer must proclaim the truth in words for others to hear. This will encourage other believers to do the same, and has the potential of setting free those taken captive by the world's philosophies and Satan's strategies.

Third, the believer must live a righteous life before both God and man. This lifestyle must be in agreement with both God's revealed reality and his truth.

The believer who will succeed in this warfare must have all three facets of God's weapon - their thinking, their words, and their actions - aligned with reality and truth.

When Paul writes that our weapons have "divine power", the Greek text literally says they are "powerful to God".

- They are "powerful" - *dunata* in the Greek, meaning "strong", "mighty", and "powerful".
- And they are "of God" - *theo* is translated "of God", indicating that these weapons are employed on God's behalf and have God's personal interest involved.

These weapons of ours "demolish strongholds". The word "demolish" is from the Greek *kathairesin* meaning "overthrow", "tear down", "pull down" and "destroy". And what they destroy are "strongholds". "The word "strongholds" comes from the Greek word *oxuromaton* meaning "stronghold" or "fortress". In papyri documents from the time the New Testament was being written, the word is seen to

have been used to denote a prison.

The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (that is, the Old Testament) that Paul was familiar with - and often quoted when among Greek-speaking Gentiles - uses the same word for "stronghold" both in 2 Corinthians and in Proverbs 21:22 when it says:

A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold (oxuroma) in which they trust.

- Proverbs 21:22

It is obvious that Paul knew this verse and envisioned the "wise man" defeating the stronghold of the "mighty" with wisdom and thought, instead of physical violence or military strength. Although Paul uses an intense collection of six military terms in these four verses - "waging war" (10:3), "weapons", "warfare", "destroy strongholds" (10:4), "taking captives" (10:5) and "punish disobedience" (i.e., court-martial; 10:6) - the context places the battle in the arena of thought instead of physical military force.

This becomes very clear when we realize that the six military images are described as battling for six facets of the soul - arguments, opinions, knowledge, thoughts, and "not the flesh (world)" but "divine power".

In the proverb quoted above, the wise man - who is, by the way, specifically singular in the Hebrew - scales the entire fortress of false realities defended by self-confident mighty warriors (plural in the Hebrew, *gibbor* meaning "mighty men" or "warriors").

The one overcomes the many with spiritual virtue, as opposed to his opponents' spiritual vice - such as systematic deceit, public censure, social oppression, and lawlessness. By wielding spiritual weapons, he is able to conquer their seemingly undefeatable stronghold.

The phrase translated “demolish arguments and every pretension” is formed as follows:

- The word “demolish” is translated from *kathairountes* which means “to tear down, to destroy”.
- The word “arguments” is from the Greek word *logismous* which means “calculation”, “reasoning”, “reflection”, “thought”.
- The word “pretension” or “high thing” comes from the Greek word *upsoma*, which describes the attitude of men who have crafted ideas they consider to be superior to God’s reality. This crafty human ideology becomes lofty high-mindedness that leaves no room for the knowledge of God. In fact, the very mention of God Almighty is so far beneath their lofty high-mindedness that they find God disgusting. They consider it appalling to allow the Lord to be mentioned alongside their own achievements, ideologies, and plans. Recognition of “the knowledge of God” offends them. The terms “god” or “lord” are only used by them if the image of God has been twisted and perverted into their own image and agrees with their own agenda. In this case their “jesus” or “god” has become an idol supporting a false philosophy.
- This “pretension” or “high thing” is further identified by Paul as “rising up”. This phrase comes from the Greek word *epairomenon* which means “that which is lifted high and exalted”. This means that men have crafted something they put above the knowledge of God, and continually raise it up in a more lofty, pronounced, and dominant position where they expect it to replace all of God’s created reality and revealed truth.

Taking into consideration the deeper meanings of the Greek words, the image created by this phrase – “demolish arguments and every pretension” – is that of walls and towers standing defiantly against God’s reality and revealed truth. These walls and towers are made of deceptive words, false realities, and empty philosophies, and have been built by the world’s systems.

To fight these evil strongholds, the Lord will imbue the armor and weapons of the believer’s warfare with his power. The Lord and Creator of all will have the victory, and he will take captive every thought that comes against the knowledge of God.

And even if he chooses to not do so now in history, we are promised it will happen for certain when Jesus returns:

At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

- Philippians 2:10-11

Paul here tells us that “every thought” will be taken captive after the divinely-powered weapons of thought, word, and righteous lifestyle destroy every argument and every opinion that has raised itself above the knowledge of God and fueled every thought against Christ.

The word “thought” is the Greek word *noema* and means “design”, “purpose”, “scheme”, “mind” or “thought”. These “thoughts” refer to man’s supposed wisdom without God and Satan’s strategies against God. They are the cleverness of man that convince other men they do not need the Lord in life or death. They are worthless. They contain no knowledge of God. And they are the seed of all false philosophies - which are the idols to which men bow down today.

Jesus and the apostles saw themselves in a war for the thought and understanding in the souls of men.

This fact is evident in 2 Corinthians, where the same Greek word *noema* is used by Paul again (and noted below in bold type):

*That we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his **designs**.*

- 2 Corinthians 2:11

*Their **minds** were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.*

- 2 Corinthians 3:14

*In their case the god of this world has blinded the **minds** of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

- 2 Corinthians 4:4

*I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your **thoughts** will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.*

- 2 Corinthians 11:3

Although clearly very powerful, all of these ungodly “thoughts”, “minds”, and “designs” will be destroyed by the divinely-empowered thoughts, words, and actions of godly believers.

Both Jesus and Paul did more than quote passages from the Scripture when they taught or debated. They also used logic, natural evidence, reasoning, and sound arguments to prove their positions and tear down their opponent’s faulty beliefs. Jesus and the apostles saw themselves as being in a war for the thoughts and understandings in the souls of men.

On this note, here is one final thought on the verses at the head of this chapter: The phrase “take captive” is the translation of the Greek word *aichmalotizontes*, which means “to take captive with a spear”, “to bring into captivity”, or “to bring into subjection”. The present tense of this Greek word in 2 Corinthians 10 indicates a *continual* struggle and ongoing warfare.

However, as Paul says, with God’s weapons (the understanding, profession, and living out of truth and reality) we will “take every thought captive to obey Christ”. We will take captivity itself captive, and tear down those fortresses of deceit. And those who have been imprisoned by Satan’s schemes and the lofty, high-minded reasoning of mankind will be set free in Christ. Because “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

13 - COUNTERING FALSE IDEOLOGIES

This chapter is a little different.

It consists of a list and description of just a few of the many false philosophies that teach a view of reality and truth that is contrary to what is clearly revealed by natural revelation (Creation) and special revelation (Scripture). Its purpose is to educate - and in educating, to arm believers against them.

These philosophies and ideologies are examples of both man's intentional rebellion and simplistic ignorance of the knowledge of God. Our intention is not to rid the earth of these philosophies. These false worldviews are never going to go away completely, any more than the sin nature of mankind is going to disappear.

It is a biblical principle that false philosophies and their deceptions will continue to grow and increase as the end draws near. Jesus explained in Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43 that an enemy has sown "weeds" - defined as people who have accepted false doctrines and the corrupt philosophies of Satan. In the parable, when someone asks if the weeds should be pulled out of the field (i.e., the world) the answer given is, "No, because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest."

Paul tells us even more clearly that near the end there will be a vast manifestation of "all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in

order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

The goal of righteous people cannot be to end false philosophies but to expose them. We must fortify our soul against deception and to be ready to make a strong defense that supports our faith. There is no place in reality or truth for the censorship of opposing opinions or the extermination of those who hold false ideologies.

Rather we are told to:

Expose Error - *“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”* (Ephesians 5:11)

Fortify Our Soul with Truth - *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”* (Romans 12:2)

Defend Our Position - *“In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.”* (1 Peter 3:15-16)

Here, then, is a short list of some of the false philosophies we must be prepared to battle.

SECULAR HUMANISM

Secular Humanism is a religious worldview that believes the universe to be self-existing and not created. It is a philosophy based

on naturalism in which man slowly emerged through a continuous process of evolution. It teaches that the perfect realization of human personality (i.e., everything related to being a human person) is the purpose of life. We must seek our own personal fulfillment right here right now, because once a person dies their “human personality” will be gone forever.

Since humanity is simply an anomaly that sprang up randomly in a pointless universe, our lives have no real, objective purpose. Thus, the greatest good is our own personal fulfillment in this life.

Any behavior accepted by law is ethical. Which also means that any behavior not accepted by law must be harmful to the common good. A culture’s ethics are the foundation for social law, and are established by those who control society’s communication systems - such as public schools, media, entertainment, and whoever has a voice able to influence the masses.

How is secular humanism shown to be false by Natural Revelation (that is, by Reality)?

The “Humanist Manifesto I” was written in 1933 with an eye on human and social perfection. The word “religion” or “religious” was used 28 times in the work. The Manifesto states:

Today man’s larger understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and deeper appreciation of brotherhood, have created a situation which requires a new statement of the means and purposes of religion.... While this age does owe a vast debt to the traditional religions, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age.

These lofty but impossible goals of the 1933 manifesto were ad-

dressed exactly 40 years later in 1973 by the next generation of humanists (in the “Humanist Manifesto II”), who admitted that “events since 1933 make that earlier statement seem far too optimistic.”

One of the signers of this 1973 document was the world-renowned atheist Antony Flew. Thirty-four years later in 2007 Flew wrote the book, “There is a God”, with the subtitle “How the world’s most notorious atheist changed his mind.” In 2006 Flew added his name to a petition calling for the inclusion of intelligent design theory into the UK science curriculum.

Flew described his conversion from atheism to a form of deism like this:

I now believe that the universe was brought into existence by an infinite Intelligence. I believe that this universe’s intricate laws manifest what scientists have called the Mind of God. I believe that life and reproduction originate in a divine Source. Why do I believe this, given that I expounded and defended atheism for more than a half century? The short answer is this: this is the world picture, as I see it, that has emerged from modern science. Science spotlights three dimensions of nature that point to God. The first is the fact that nature obeys laws. The second is the dimension of life, of intelligently organized and purpose-driven beings, which arose from matter. The third is the very existence of nature.... This was a consequence of my continuing assessment of the evidence of nature.... ‘We must follow the argument wherever it leads’ ... the origin of life cannot be explained if you start with matter alone ... I must stress that my discovery of the Divine has proceeded on a purely natural level, without any reference to supernatural phenomena. It has been an exercise in what is traditionally called natural theology.

(Flew, Antony. “There is a God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind”. 2007, HarperCollins Publishers, NY, NY, chapter 4 – “A Pilgrimage of Reason”, pp.88-93)

As we see so often in human intercourse, a strong opponent becomes a strong ally.

How is secular humanism shown to be false by Special Revelation in Scripture (that is, by Truth)?

As you might expect, Scripture is overflowing with truth that shows the tenets of Secular Humanism to be false. Here are just a few of them.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

– Genesis 1:1

“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

– Romans 11:36

“Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

– Colossians 1:10

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

– Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

“There is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

– 1 Corinthians 8:6

“I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.”

– Psalm 139:14

“O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.”

– Isaiah 64:8

“I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God.”

– Luke 12:8

“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

– Colossians 2:8

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.”

– 1 Timothy 4:1

“Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”

– Romans 1:22-23

In summary, secular humanism is opposed to truth because it is based on several fallacies.

Through the application of logic (part of natural revelation) and God’s Word (source of special revelation), we find secular humanism to be false.

- Secular humanism denies the existence of a God and opposes all theistic religions.
- Secular humanism must deny that anything other than material is the source of thought, logic, personality, soul, etc. Naturalism is a necessary doctrine of humanists.
- Secular humanism must defend evolution and deny divine creation since evolution is their explanation of the origin of the universe and life.
- Secular humanism must reject any absolute in human values or morals so ethical relativism, which is as solid as shifting sand, is the foundation of their morality.
- Secular humanism believes that humans are the highest form of life. Humans are self-sufficient and responsible to solve their own problems to the extent that the survival of humanity depends on the individual human behavior. The only hope of the human race is human reason and secular education.

Humanism is wrong because:

- God does exist
- Naturalism is illogical
- Evolution is false
- Morals are absolute
- Mankind’s only hope is Christ

The fallacy of secular humanist thought is destructive to humanity, environments, and institutions.

MATERIALISM

Materialism is a theory stating that physical matter is the only reality - and that all existence, processes, and occurrences are the result of nothing but matter. This includes, of course, human consciousness.

In the 1800's, materialists began thinking of the world as a machine that could be fully explained by the material from which it was made. Being a machine, there was no room for such things as values or freewill. Accordingly, materialism is a philosophy that finds no meaning or purpose in existence.

In the philosophy of materialism, ethics are only meaningful as personal preferences and are not based on any absolute standards. Values are regarded as useful fictions to aid the human experience. Words such as "good" and "evil" have meaning only in relation to the person speaking, so the meaning of these words can vary greatly, depending on the individual. The material machine certainly cannot define good and evil in any objective sense.

How is materialism shown to be false by Natural Revelation (Reality)?

The philosophy of materialism fails to agree with reason and reality in several ways. A couple of the most accessible relate to this image of the universe - and all that is within it - as a machine.

The most obvious breakdown in the "godless machine" theory of all things is the fact that every machine has a designer and a maker. And so, even the materialist's own self-chosen image carries with it the need for a Creator.

Another problem began way back in the 1600's when materialism first denied mental substance - and in the 1700-1800's when it denied the validity of all supernatural and religious experiences. And finally in the 1900's materialism tried, but failed, to explain human consciousness in its own terms.

Acknowledging the existence of matter is one thing, but the materialist takes it to the extreme. For matter to become self-aware,

analytical, and capable of forming thoughts that are expressed as words is totally beyond explanation.

While materialism claims that material is eternal and existed before the mind, we must recognize this as science fiction and nothing more than an example of blind faith. Claims like these have no basis of support.

Much more defensible is the view that reverses this order, explaining that there is an eternal mind from which matter was created. It is easier to understand man as a mind existing in a material body, than it is to accept the material body as the cause and source of man's mind and all that it experiences and expresses. It is simply not possible for bundles of nerves and neural stimuli to explain universal human experiences such as reflection, purposefulness, and planning ahead as we anticipate the future.

In fact, recent advances in quantum physics have revealed that the behavior of the smallest particles in existence do not support the picture of a deterministic machine envisioned by the earlier materialists (determinism being the philosophical doctrine stating that all events, including all human action, are ultimately determined by causes external to the will).

Basically, the only thing that materialism has proven is that the science which investigates the natural system of the material world cannot explain all that we humans know or experience. Materialism cannot satisfactorily explain what we as humans are, and it does not understand what we are becoming.

Ultimately, the philosophy of materialism is self-defeating because "human consciousness" cannot analyze physical matter if it is nothing more than physical matter itself. The "thought" produced by matter cannot be both outside of matter making evaluations, while

at the same time being caused by the matter it is evaluating. This would be illogical. Mind can only transcend matter if it is something other than, and outside of, matter.

How is materialism shown to be false by Special Revelation in Scripture (Truth)?

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”
– Colossians 1:16

“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”
– Hebrews 11:3

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”
– Revelation 4:11

“To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”
– 1 Timothy 1:17

“I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’”
– Revelation 5:13

“Of the angels he says, ‘He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.’”
– Hebrews 1:7

“When the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’”

– Jude 1:9

“... Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”

– Ephesians 1:21

IDEALISM

Idealism is a theory stating that reality is not objective (i.e., is not real), but is instead constructed by mind and consciousness.

How is idealism shown to be false by Natural Revelation (Reality)?

There is no way for a person operating from the position of idealism to rationally accept that things perceived cannot exist without the mind. For example, idealism claims color and sound are perceptions and cannot exist in any physical way since they exist only within the mind that perceives them. The famous declaration of idealism is “to be is to be perceived.” Thus, perception gives things existence.

Now you decide. Is the book or electronic device you are reading at this moment an actual thing made of matter that will continue to exist even if your mind ceases to function - or not? If this book or device continues to exist when your mind and your senses stop perceiving it, idealism must be incorrect.

How is idealism shown to be false by Special Revelation in Scripture (Truth)?

“God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”
– Genesis 1:3

“Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.”
– Genesis 2:7

“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”
– Hebrews 11:3

“In six days the LORD made heaven and earth.”
– Exodus 31:15-17

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”
– John 1:1-3

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”
– Revelation 4:11

ATHEISM

The word “atheism” itself means “no belief in god(s)”.

The prefix “a-” indicates the absence of something. And “theism” means “belief in the existence of god(s)”.

How is atheism shown to be false by Natural Revelation (Reality)?

All design implies a designer.

Since the universe, genetics, the human body, mathematics and so much more (essentially, everything that exists) have order and design, it follows that there must be a designer. All these things could not possibly have become ordered as they are by random chance.

There is a designer, and that Designer is God.

Also, the fact that something (rather than nothing) does exist means there must be a cause for all things existing. The universe was caused to exist in its beginning, and something is causing the universe to continue to exist even now. Things are not self-creating. And (as identified in the second law of thermodynamics, which says that as energy is transferred or transformed, more and more of it is used up; this law also states that there is a natural tendency for any isolated system to degenerate into a more disordered state), things are not self-sustaining.

The Cause of created things and the Sustainer of the created universe is God.

Science tells us there was a beginning. Mathematics and time prove there was a beginning - since neither time nor numbers can

be counted backward forever. At some point there had to be a beginning.

This logically-necessary beginning of the universe is identified by science as big bang cosmology, which can be seen today in the “red shift” (or Doppler Effect) seen three ways:

- In light from stars as they continue to move away from their point of beginning
- In the radiation echo from space with the same wavelength expected from the cosmic explosion at the beginning
- In the discovery of a mass of energy as expected from the beginning big bang

(Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics” by Norman L. Geisler, Baker Books, 1999; p.276-277, “Evidence for God”)

This beginning is described in God’s Word - Genesis 1.

How is atheism shown to be false by Special Revelation in Scripture (Truth)?

“Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Are you not he, O LORD our God? We set our hope on you, for you do all these things.”

– Jeremiah 14:22

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”

– Psalm 90:2

“Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ declares the LORD.”

– Jeremiah 23:24

“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And he said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel: “I AM has sent me to you.””

– Exodus 3:14

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

– Psalm 19:1

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”

– Psalm 90:2

“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

– John 1:18

“For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): ‘I am the LORD, and there is no other.’”

– Jeremiah 45:18

“O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.”

– Isaiah 37:16

“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.”

– Revelation 11:17

“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.”

– Psalm 14:1

AGNOSTICISM

Agnosticism is a view that declares human reason cannot rationally know or be certain of the existence of God, spiritual beings, or anything supernatural. There are two forms of agnosticism. The first is known as limited agnosticism, and teaches that our finite knowledge cannot attain the infinite knowledge of God. The second form is called unlimited agnosticism; it claims that God and reality are simply unknowable.

How is agnosticism shown to be false by Natural Revelation (Reality)?

Unlimited agnosticism defeats itself when it claims that God and reality are unknowable. It is completely illogical to claim to know that this position is true on the grounds that nothing is knowable - which is what must be done for unlimited agnosticism to be taken at all seriously. How could anyone claim to know anything, if their philosophy is based on the belief that no one can know anything?

Limited agnosticism however, which distinguishes between finite knowledge and infinite knowledge, does line up with biblical revelation. Man is finite and so limited to finite knowledge. Infinite knowledge exists, but can only be known entirely by an infinite being. So, there must be an infinite being that we call “God”. Limited agnosticism leaves the door open to the possibility that infinite knowledge - including the existence and character of an infinite God - could be made known to us by God. This is also the biblical position. God has revealed himself in creation and by special revelation.

How is agnosticism shown to be false by Special Revelation in Scripture (Truth)

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

– Deuteronomy 29:29

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

– Matthew 7:7-8

“And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”

– Hebrews 11:6

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

– Hebrews 1:1-2

“Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

– Matthew 6:33

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.”

– Psalm 19:1-4

“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”

– Romans 1:18-20

“No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

– John 1:18

“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”

– Jeremiah 29:13

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

– 1 Corinthians 2:14

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.”

– Isaiah 40:28

“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”

– James 2:19

“And one called to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!’”

– Isaiah 6:3

“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

– Isaiah 55:6-7

EVOLUTION

Cosmic evolution holds that matter has existed eternally, and the universe as we know it evolved out of this eternal matter over a very long period of time. The simple structures that existed billions of years ago have changed and evolved through various forces of energy into everything that exists today - stars, planets, all life forms, human beings, and modern technology.

Biological evolution can be subdivided into two categories - microevolution and macroevolution.

Microevolution is the process of various forms of life adapting to their environment. This is natural selection as we understand it, where the random desirable and success-inducing genes of one generation of a species are passed onto the next generation and become part of that species’ standard makeup. This part of evolution is consistent with biblical revelation.

Macroevolution is what we normally think of when we think of “evolution”. It is the idea that things turn into other things. For example, a microbe will, in time, become a human being. And since the process is still ongoing, human beings are even now slowly evolving into the next higher level of being. This part of evolution is not consistent with biblical revelation.

How is macroevolution shown to be false by Natural Revelation (Reality)?

As well-known and generally-accepted as this worldview is, it is not without problems. Here are a few reasons we would do well to remain skeptical.

- Explosions of new life forms are found in the fossil record with no sign of the transitional forms that are necessary for evolution to have occurred.
- Random mutations do not lead to new species - they lead to mutations. If drastic enough, these mutations will lead to an early death of the individual, or even the extinction of the species itself.
- DNA evidence destroys evolution's "tree of life" diagram often seen in textbooks. Instead, DNA supports the process of species producing more of their own kind, which creates clusters with none of the connecting branches the so-called "tree of life" presents in evolution-supporting textbooks.
- The provable and observable small-scale changes occurring within a species - such as the size of a bird's beak or color - are not demonstrating macroevolution (the transformation of life from simple to complex), but instead are adaptations of a species to its environment. The ability to adapt genetically (microevolution) has been in DNA since Creation, and is a demonstration of design placed in the DNA by the Creator.

In addition, evolution has been proven to be a false theory for the origin of life in several scientific fields:

- Genetics shows that random mutations cause harm to organisms and do not build complexity.
- Biochemistry suggests that random and undirected processes do not seem capable of producing cellular complexity.

- Paleontology - meaning, the fossil record, shows the abrupt appearance of species and generally lacks intermediate fossils.
- Taxonomy tells us that despite increasing DNA discoveries, biologists are failing to reconstruct Darwin's 'tree of life'.
- Chemistry has not been able to prove that the origin of life is the result of chemical processes. From the perspective of chemistry the origin of life remains an unsolved mystery.

How is evolution shown to be false by Special Revelation in Scripture (Truth)?

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

– Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made."

– John 1:1-3

"They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen."

– Romans 1:25

"By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host."

– Psalm 33:6

"You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you."

– Nehemiah 9:6

“It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens.”
– Jeremiah 10:12

“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.”
– Hebrews 11:3

“For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God.”
– 2 Peter 3:5

“For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.”
– Hebrews 3:4

RACISM

According to the Merriam-Wester online dictionary the definition of racism is “a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.”

How is racism shown to be false by Natural Revelation (Reality)?

Quoting from a 2019 book called “The Genealogical Adam and Eve”:

All of us, in actuality, shared a common ancestor just two to three thousand years ago.... For a population of one million, universal ancestors arise in about twenty generations. For a population one thousand times larger, one billion, universal ancestors arise in about thirty generations. Going back just a little bit further, we

reach the identical ancestor point (LAP) where everyone at that point and more ancient is either ancestor of everyone alive today or ancestor of no one.... For a population of one million, for example, the LAP would be at about thirty-five generations. Using a generation time of twenty-five years, that is less than 900 years ago.... Very quickly, all our genealogies begin to “collapse” by sharing more and more of the same ancestors.

(The Genealogical Adam and Eve: the Surprising Science of Universal Ancestry, 2019, InterVarsity Press, Grove, IL, 2019 by S. Joshua Swamidass, p. 44-49)

The findings are summed up thus: “Recent universal ancestry affirmed the unity of all humankind... [and that] much of what we understood of race was naïve, an illusion not rooted in biology.”

Besides genealogical research, DNA evidence also confirms that all humanity stems from a single human. The maternally-inherited mitochondria in our cells connects us all to a common ancestral mother.

Recent findings confirm that polygenesis (a theory supporting racism which states the races originated from a number of independent stocks of humanity) is scientifically unsupported and false. On the other hand, monogenism (the theory of a single origin of humanity) is now widely accepted as true and accurate.

Natural revelation rejects the concept of, and destroys the basis of, racism.

How is racism shown to be false by Special Revelation in Scripture (Truth)?

All people are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and are the seed of one man Adam (and, then again, the one man Noah, Gen. 10:32). In this way, Paul could explain to the philosophers in Athens in 50 AD that “from one man God made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth” (Acts 17:26).

Throughout the text of Scripture and through the prophets and apostles, the Lord directly addressed many nations and ethnic groups. While Israel alone was chosen to preserve the knowledge of God, it was done in an effort to help facilitate God's plan for all nations.

In the Bible God is recorded as being involved with many cultures and people groups for both blessing and judgment. The Lord is clearly presented throughout the Bible as being impartial.

Jesus came to the Jews, but also ministered to people from other nations and cultures (Matt. 8:5; 15:22). In fact, Jesus' final commission to his Jewish disciples was to go to all the world and make disciples from all the nations (Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19).

Paul taught that salvation in Jesus Christ goes beyond race, sex, or social standing (Gal. 3:28). In the end, when all believers are gathered to stand before the throne of God, there will be "a great multitude that no one [can] number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev. 7:9).

SCIENTISM

Scientism is the belief that science is the best - or only possible - source of knowledge.

How is scientism shown to be false by Natural Revelation (Reality)?

The first problem with scientism is that its claim that science is the only source of knowledge was not developed through the process of science. It is not an experimentally proven fact, but a philosophical statement about the nature of knowledge.

Science is undeniably a source of knowledge - but we also know that logic, mathematics, history, and psychology are also sources of knowledge. Even science leads us to understand there is something beyond the limits of what science can examine.

As we've seen, science itself (as well as physical reality) leads us to believe there is a Creator and Sustainer. One could even make the case that science (and life) even suggests the need for a Redeemer, since it shows there is death and decline in a world otherwise designed for life.

How is scientism shown to be false by Special Revelation in Scripture (Truth)?

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right."

– 2 Timothy 3:16

"The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew. My son, do not lose sight of these—keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble."

– Proverbs 3:19-23

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

– Deuteronomy 29:29

"They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen."

– Romans 1:25

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

– John 4:24

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

– Romans 8:19-20

“He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

– Colossians 1:17

“Just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in Him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”

– Colossians 2:6-8

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.”

– Isaiah 40:28

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

– Job 38:4-7

“Guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge,’ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you.”

– 1 Timothy 6:20-21

“Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

– 1 John 4:1

“For Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) Jesus then asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Legion,’ for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.”

– Luke 8:29-31

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.”

– 1 Timothy 4:1

“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”

– 1 Corinthians 1:20

“The ‘wise men’ shall be put to shame; they shall be dismayed and taken; behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD, so what wisdom is in them?”

– Jeremiah 8:9

“Claiming to be wise, they became fools.”

– Romans 1:22

NATURALISM

The philosophy that natural laws are the only forces that determine behavior and govern the structure of the universe is called naturalism. According to this way of thinking, there is no supernatural realm, let alone any manifestation of the supernatural in this world.

Naturalism divides into two opposite camps of thought - the material naturalist, and the pantheist naturalist.

The material naturalist reduces everything that exists (including soul) down to matter. Everything that exists is made of material. Nothing non-material exists.

The pantheist naturalist reduces the source of all existence to the mind or spirit. In this view, the entire world is made of mind and spirit. An unexplainable event to a pantheist naturalist would be identified as merely an unusual manifestation of mind or spirit. In this case it would be identified as supernormal - yet still a natural, explainable event coming from the mind or spirit.

In a similar way, reductionism is a philosophical idea that tries to explain complex life forms and scientific processes merely with terms from the laws of physics and chemistry. It oversimplifies complicated things, such as the make-up of man, which is both material and immaterial (i.e., the physical and the soul). There are two layers here, but the reductionist would oversimplify man into merely a physical being. The simple physical nature of the man would then be the source of man's thoughts, attitude and words.

How are naturalism and reductionism shown to be false by Natural Revelation (Reality)?

Naturalism cannot replace an eternal God with eternal material

or with the mind/spirit. This position is insufficient for the same reason as the theories of atheism, evolution, etc., because it reduces everything that exists to only one type of thing - in this case, either mind/spirit, or matter.

Like other false philosophies, naturalism cannot explain the origin of material, order, design, time, or the morality of mankind. A scientific explanation that claims that material (and, mind/spirit) came from nothing at all is much more ridiculous than the biblical position that material, mind, and spirit are the creation of an eternal God who exists outside of material and time.

Naturalism strives to explain everything by saying that everything is caused by material, which itself has no evident - or explained - cause. Man's mind, soul, and emotions would have to be the result of materialistic chemical reactions.

The interior of the physical body of a man can be examined in every aspect, but the thoughts of the soul can never be known unless the thinker speaks. Yet scientists and philosophers that follow naturalism and reductionism use thought and logic - which are supposedly caused by materialistic chemical reactions - to form thoughts and logic to explain that thought and logic are merely chemical reactions. The theory they form and the logic they use to explain the material universe cannot be material itself.

How are naturalism and reductionism shown to be false by Special Revelation in Scripture (Truth)?

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”

– Colossians 1:16

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”

– John 1:1-3

“Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’ 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. . . . But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”

– 2 Peter 3:3-7; 10-14

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

– Revelation 4:11

“They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”

– Romans 1:25

“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

– John 4:24

“To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

– 1 Timothy 1:17

“The angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.”

– Jude 1:6

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

– Ephesians 6:12

“When the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’”

– Jude 1:9

“God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.”

– 2 Peter 2:4

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them.”

– Job 1:6

“Then Elisha prayed and said, ‘O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.’ So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”

– 2 Kings 6:17

MORAL RELATIVISM

Moral relativism is the view that morality (that is, ethical positions of right and wrong) are merely cultural opinions. Morals are established using a socially-determined standard for right and wrong. Morals may vary from culture to culture, or from time period to time period. Since there are no absolute ethics or any universal moral code, every culture and time period selects its own morals based on its own current cultural norms. Different cultures and time periods must be tolerant of the wide variety of moral standards. If there is any conflict between cultural norms, tolerance becomes the primary virtue.

How is moral relativism shown to be false by Natural Revelation (Reality)?

The establishment of the social expectation that there are no absolute universal morals is itself an establishment of an absolute universal standard. This ironic fact, combined with the call to societies to practice tolerance, establishes yet another absolute - which should not exist, given the definition of moral relativism. The establishment of any absolutes in moral relativism defeats the concept of moral relativism and situational ethics.

How is moral relativism shown to be false by Special Revelation in Scripture (Truth)?

“God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.”

– Genesis 1:31

“In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

– John 1:4

“You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.”

– Psalm 104:9

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

– Ephesians 2:10

“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

– Romans 1:21

“And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them... You have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very

same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?”

– Romans 1:28-32; 2:1-3

“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”

– Isaiah 5:20

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

– John 14:6

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

– Romans 12:2

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

– 2 Corinthians 5:10

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

– John 14:15

“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

– John 8:44

“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

– Colossians 5-10

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

– Hebrews 13:8

“For I the LORD do not change.”

– Malachi 3:6

14 - LOGISTICS: THE COMBATANTS

In this battle between truth and deception - the contest of reality vs deconstruction - there are four types of combatants. These four types of players in this strategic game for life or death are identified in Solomon's book of Proverbs in the Old Testament. Proverbs identifies these four types of people and gives examples and warnings, but also advice on how each of these combatants might be beneficial, avoided or corrected.

The four combatants are:

1. The Wise
2. The Simple
3. The Fool
4. The Mocker

The wise are referred to at least 70 times in the book of Proverbs. They are described in Proverbs as:

- Increasing in learning when they hear teaching (1:5; 9:9)
- Fearing the Lord instead of being "wise in your own eyes" (3:7; 26:12)
- Loving those who reprove them (9:8)
- Receiving commandments willingly (10:8)
- Listening to advice (12:15)
- Ignoring insults (12:16)
- Speaking words that bring healing and are not rash (12:18)
- Turning away from evil (14:16)
- Spreading knowledge (15:7)
- Appeasing the anger of a king's wrath (16:14)

- Having Discernment (16:21)
- Speaking sweetness and persuasiveness (16:21)
- Speaking judiciously and persuasively (16:23)
- Seeking knowledge (18:15)
- Being full of strength and enhancing his might (24:5)
- Turning away wrath (29:8)
- Quietly holding back his emotions (29:9)

Additionally:

- Their teaching is a fountain of life (13:14)
- They walk with the wise and become wise (13:20)
- They are cautious (14:16)
- Their tongue commends knowledge (15:2)
- They will inherit honor, while fools get disgrace (3:35)

And “if a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet” (29:9).

The fool as described in the book of Proverbs in these ways:

- A babbling fool will come to ruin (10:8)
- His mouth brings ruin near (10:14)
- He utters slander (10:18)
- To a fool, doing wrong is a joke (10:23)
- His way is right in his own eyes, but takes no advice (12:15)
- His frustration is known at once (12:16)
- He flaunts his folly (13:16)
- The companion of fools suffers harm (13:20)
- The mouth of the fool brings a rod for his back (14:3)
- He has no words of knowledge to share (14:7)
- He is reckless and careless (14:16)
- The folly of fools brings folly (14:24)
- His mouth pours out folly (15:2)
- He despises his father’s instruction (15:5)

- He sets his goals on distant, unattainable fantasies, instead of attainable knowledge (17:24)
- His only wisdom lies in keeping silent (17:28)
- He finds no pleasure in understanding truth or reality (18:2)
- He finds pleasure in expressing his own opinion (18:2)
- He will be constantly quarreling (20:3)
- He devours his treasure (21:20)
- He despises the good sense of the wise (23:9)
- He will repeat his folly and mistakes (26:11)
- He trusts his own mind, but not wisdom (28:26)
- He rages, laughs and is not quiet while in an argument with the wise (29:9)
- He gives full vent to his emotions (29:11)

The simple as identified as having these characteristics in the book of Proverbs:

- The simple are killed and destroyed for turning away from Wisdom, truth, and reality (1:32)
- He lacks sense (9:16)
- He believes everything (14:15)
- He inherits folly (14:18)
- The simple will learn and become wise when the scoffer/mocker is struck (19:25; 21:11)
- The simple does not see danger, and so continues on into suffering (22:3; 27:12)

Psalm 19:7 says, “*The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*”

Psalm 119:130 promises, “*The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.*”

The mocker (also called “scoffer”) as identified by Solomon in these ways:

- He abuses and hates those who correct him (9:7-8)
- He does not listen to rebuke (13:1)
- He seeks wisdom in vain (14:6)
- He does not like to be reproved (15:12)
- He will never be wise (15:12)
- Striking the scoffer will teach the simple man (19:25)
- Punishing a scoffer will make the simple wise (21:11)
- He is arrogant, haughty and acts with raging pride (21:24)
- He is an abomination to mankind (24:9)
- The scoffer sets a city aflame (29:8)

And, not surprisingly, we are promised that strife, quarreling, and abuse will cease if we get rid of the scoffer (22:10).

Solomon sums up the three unwise types like this:

*How long, O **simple ones**, will you **love being naive**? How long will **scoffers delight in their mocking** and **fools hate knowledge**?*
- Proverbs 1:22

Clearly, being a wise person is the goal. Wisdom holds the wise person up as an example to be followed, because the wise person fears the Lord, listens to teaching, and accepts advice. The wise ignore insults and avoid fools. They are recognized as constantly sharing life, spreading knowledge, and helping those who walk with them to also become wise. The wise man appeases anger and speaks persuasively when he presents truth and reality. The wise are full of strength. They are constantly increasing their might because they do not trust their own worldly wisdom, but instead, continually turn away from evil whenever it approaches.

The wise will be the victors at the end of this war - even though they will face setbacks and occasional defeat in their battles in this world, to which they have been sent to testify to truth and reality.

*And the **wise among the people shall make many understand**, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder.*

-Daniel 11:33

*And **those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above**; and **those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.***

-Daniel 12:3

So, summing up the information on the three unwise combatants, we can define them in these ways:

The simple is the person who does foolish things because they do not know any better. They lack knowledge, and so can be corrected by being given correct information. Teach them and they change. They are simple because they do not know truth. And because they do not know, they are easily led by mockers and scoffers and influenced by fools.

The fool is the person who knows what is right, but lacks the self-discipline to do it. Teaching a fool does not help them, since they already have the information. What the fool needs is someone to provide discipline for them to succeed with the knowledge they already have. The fool does not have the moral discipline to do the good they know they ought to do. Their souls are empty. They will follow leadership (whether good or bad), since they cannot provide it for themselves.

For the fool, discipline will make a difference. Providing strength to the soul of the fool will empower them to gain self-discipline and overcome. Punishing the mocker/scoffer, and thereby removing the fool from their influence, is key. Follow this up by fortifying the fool’s soul with the transforming power of truth and reality, and

you will have a chance to deliver the fool from their harmful ways. But, in the end, it is still the fool that must make the choice. Will they embrace the knowledge needed to fortify their soul, or will they continue in their empty thoughts, leaving themselves vulnerable to the winds and waves of the world?

Unfortunately, fools will follow the mocker (Pr. 9:7; 13:1; 19:25; 22:10:29:8), so they must be dealt with.

The mocker/scorner rejects and abuses those who correct him and will not listen to a rebuke. He hates those who love him. He is arrogant and haughty, and attacks truth and reality in his pride. The mocker is an abomination to mankind and set cities on fire with their strife, quarreling, and abuse (Pr. 29:8; 22:10).

Because the mocker's mind is closed to instruction, he cannot be corrected with instruction (like the simple), nor with discipline (like the fool). Conflict with the mocker can only be resolved by either driving him out or removing yourself - and allowing him to self-destruct.

This may seem harsh, but remember, the mocker hates those who love him, and those who try to help him he resents (Pr. 9:8; 15:12). In a group situation, the simple will naturally follow the mocker and join in with his rebellious and divisive behavior. Punishing the mocker will teach the simple, and driving the mocker out of the group will remove strife, quarrels and insults. The term "drive out" indicates ending a relationship by force (Gen. 3:24; 4:14; Ex. 23:29-30; Josh. 24:18; Ps. 78:55).

We would be wise to apply this truth to our understanding of certain organizations, groups, and religious institutions, which may not need to be ended or reformed. Instead, they simply need to begin applying the principle of expulsion of the member(s) who is

the mocker. Remove the mocker to save the institution, church, or social program. If the mocker is feared or respected within the organization, the mocker will drive out the wise, and that institution will continue to decline further into corruption until it self-destructs or becomes entirely insignificant.

The four types of combatants in Proverbs can be paired up with people in our society today.

- The wise are mature believers who understand God's ways
- Fools are immature believers who are saved by faith (delivered from death in a similar way the Exodus generation was delivered from Egypt), but they are still ignorant of the ways of God because they do not have sufficient knowledge of God
- The simple are captive unbelievers whose minds have been taken captive
- Mockers (scorners) are rebellious unbelievers whose hearts have hardened into evil against the knowledge of God

The Galatian believers of 48 AD are an example of foolish, immature believers. These believers had accepted the gospel but were soon led back to legalism. Paul calls them "foolish".

*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?
It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed
as crucified.*

- Galatians 3:1

The word Paul uses here for fool is the Greek word *anoetos*, which uses the prefix "a-" to negate the meaning of the word to which it is attached. In this case, "a-" is attached to a word meaning "mind" (*noetos* is a form of *nous* which means "mind"). The Galatians were "no-mind believers".

By using this word, Paul is saying that the Galatians possessed minds that were capable of holding information - and had some very important information already - but they refused to use the discipline of logical thinking. Thus, they were *anoetos* - believers who remained immature because they did not embrace the Word of God or advance in their understanding of the knowledge of God.

Since they had not developed their knowledge of God they had little or no faith. And, because they did not have faith in God's Word, they had to place their faith in something else. The Galatians had made their own works and obedience to an empty religious code the focus of their faith. Since the foolish, immature Galatians did not have the truth of God in their souls, the object of their faith became their own performance in a legalistic system that required observance of dietary laws, religious days, and other carnal forms of holiness.

The wise man will instruct many, help many to understand, and turn many to righteousness (Dan. 11:33;12:3). To do this, the mature believer must know how to interact with each of the other fellow combatants in this battle.

Immature believers (fools) need instruction and verse by verse teaching from the Word of God.

- Jude 22 – *“have mercy on those who doubt (FOOL)”*
- Colossians 2:8 – *“See to it that no one takes you captive (FOOL) through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”*
- Romans 12:2 – *“Do not be conformed to this world (FOOL), but be transformed by the renewal of your mind (WISE), that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

Captive unbelievers (the simple) are held hostage by the world, the mockers, and by Satan. The simple must be set free from their captivity by having the empty philosophies in their soul dismantled and replaced with God's truth and reality. They need to hear the Word of God and see the Light of God shine in the lives of mature believers.

- Jude 23 – *“Save others (SIMPLE) by snatching them out of the fire, to others (SIMPLE) show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.”*
- 2 Timothy 2:24-3:1 – *“The Lord's servant (WISE) must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them (SIMPLE) repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. But understand this: In the last days terrible times will come!”*
- Ephesians 2:1-3 – *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient (SIMPLE). All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.”*
- Ephesians 2:12 – *“Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”*

Rebellious unbelievers (mockers and scorners) who have been hardened by deceit should be warned and avoided.

- 2 Timothy 3:2-9 – *“People (MOCKERS) will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeas-*

able, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not advance much further. For just like Jannes and Jambres, their folly will be plain to everyone.”

- Romans 1:18, 20-23 – “...Men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth (MOCKERS). So they are without excuse...For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.”
- Romans 1:32 – “Though they (MOCKERS) know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them (SIMPLE and FOOL).

*The Lord’s curse is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous.
Toward the scorners he is scornful,
but to the humble he gives favor.
The wise will inherit honor,
but fools get disgrace.*

- Proverbs 3:33-34

15 - RUNNING WITH THE HORSES

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord:

“Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. You shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: “Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.””

- Jeremiah 11:1-4

It appears this prophecy was given shortly after the “Book of the Law” (known to us as Deuteronomy) was found during a renovation of the temple during Josiah’s reign in 623 BC (2 Chr. 34:8-13; 2 Kings 22:3-7).

In it, Jeremiah called the people of Jerusalem to hear and obey the words of the covenant - which would have been Moses’ words from 1405 BC that were spoken and sung to the second generation in the wilderness before they crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land. These words - described by Jeremiah as “the words of this covenant” - were recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, but they had been mistreated, replaced, and misplaced by the priesthood in Judah by the time of King Josiah (640-609 BC). Soon after the discovery of this document in 622 BC, while Josiah was working toward national reformation, these words were made public. They were read aloud to the people, and the priests were instructed to obey them:

Then the king (Josiah) sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him.

And the king went up to the house of the Lord, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he (Josiah) read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord.

- 2 Kings 23:1-2

And the king commanded all the people, "Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant"... Moreover, Josiah put away the mediums and the necromancers and the household gods and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord.

- 2 Kings 23:21, 24-25

The prophet Jeremiah joined with Josiah to increase the people's knowledge of the Book of the Covenant, but according to the Lord's word to Jeremiah, some of the people of Jerusalem and Judah were not hearing or obeying it. So, Jeremiah spoke for God to the people. Jeremiah was speaking in support of Josiah's efforts to bring reform to the culture only 36 years before the city and temple were totally destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

Jeremiah was one of the priests who lived with his family in the town of Anathoth, a priestly town just two miles northeast of Jerusalem on the other side of the Kidron Valley. When Jeremiah began to support Josiah and proclaim his prophecies he was rejected by his fellow priests and, and even by his own family



in Anathoth. The priests continued to oppose the written Word of God that had been given to them by Moses, but now they began to also reject the prophetic Word of God spoken by Jeremiah to call the nation back to the written Word.

In fact, the priests, including Jeremiah's family in Anathoth, were so embarrassed by Jeremiah's ministry that they demanded he stop. They threatened to kill him if he continued to bring disgrace on their family and their reputation.

Thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth, who seek your life, and say, "Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord, or you will die by our hand."

- Jeremiah 11:21

The priesthood was a very lucrative "business" to be involved with. Even in Jesus' day the priesthood consisted of the wealthy elites who persecuted and oppressed those who did not cooperate with their stranglehold of control on society, the temple, and the profits made on the sacrificial system. (Remember Jesus turning over the tables of the money changers in the temple while quoting Jeremiah's words from Jeremiah 7:11: "Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching!" declares the Lord.)

Jeremiah was putting his life at risk by breaking rank with the priests and his own family's priestly "business". Even though the priests had managed to lose and replace the words of the law of God by 623 BC, they had not lost, renounced, or replaced themselves as overseers and beneficiaries of the sacrifices and offerings (food, drink, money, clothing, and other possessions) brought to them by the people, which the words of the law of God had prescribed. In other words, the priests had kept the benefits, but discarded the purpose.

The priests were still getting paid, but were not doing the work. In fact, the priests had expanded their temple “business” by opening new locations at many shrines and high places on the street corners of Jerusalem and in towns across Judah (Jer. 11:13; 2 Chr. 28:24-25). This priestly business had been very, very good to Jeremiah’s priestly family, but now Jeremiah was acting out of line with the priestly business policies. By condemning the cultic high places and calling the people back to the “words of the covenant”, Jeremiah was not being politically correct.

At first, Jeremiah was blindsided by the priesthood’s rejection of his ministry. In Jeremiah’s thinking it was unfair for the priesthood to come against him just because he was actually doing the work of the Lord and proclaiming the Word of the Lord. Jeremiah complained to God saying,

*I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter.
I did not know it was against me they devised schemes, saying,
“Let us cut him off from the land of the living,
That his name be remembered no more.”
But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart
and the mind,
Let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed
my cause.*

- Jeremiah 11:19-20

The Lord responds to Jeremiah’s prayer by declaring that he will bring judgment on the people of Anathoth (Jer. 11:22-23), but it will happen in “the year of their punishment” (11:23) - not right away. Jeremiah will have to continue his ministry while opposition from the priesthood continues as well. Jeremiah’s cry for justice will have to wait until the Lord is ready to bring judgment to the false priests.

Hearing this, Jeremiah then followed up with another complaint, asking again that those opposing his ministry be eliminated. He begins by appealing to God’s righteousness - the characteristic of God that would most surely understand Jeremiah’s oppression at the hands of the ungodly. Jeremiah asks the Lord why the wicked still prosper in their corrupt priestly “business” while he suffers:

*Righteous are you, O Lord, when I complain to you; yet I would
plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper?
Why do all who are treacherous thrive?*

- Jeremiah 12:1

Jeremiah tells the Lord that while those who oppose him seem to serve him, it is in appearance only, and they are actually far from him. Jeremiah compares himself to these godless men and reminds the Lord that his heart is very close to him. The Lord knows Jeremiah’s heart, because the Lord has tested him. According to Jeremiah’s logic, since there is such a stark difference between the evil oppressors and himself, the Lord should simply do away with them:

*You are near in their mouth and far from their heart.
But you, O Lord, know me; you see me, and test my heart toward
you. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart
for the day of slaughter.*

- Jeremiah 12:2-3

The Lord’s reply was not as sympathetic as Jeremiah had hoped. In fact, it came back as an accusation of Jeremiah’s failure to endure. The Lord challenged Jeremiah to step up his game, because there were bigger battles to be faced than dealing with mere men who were masquerading as priests while making vain threats toward God’s prophet. The Lord tells Jeremiah:

*If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out,
how can you compete with horses?
If you stumble in a safe country, how will you manage in the
thickets by the Jordan?*

- Jeremiah 12:5

In his response, the Lord points out Jeremiah's weak endurance and shaky stability - especially considering the promises that God had given him. The mere words of the wicked priests were driving Jeremiah's soul out of God's rest and causing him to stumble into the captivity of their false reality. Even as a man of God, given the strength and rest of God, Jeremiah was failing to remain in that place of strength and rest. He was instead, entering the competition as a mere man "racing" against other mere men. The Lord's intention for his prophet was that he be strong and confident in the power of the Lord - and from that place of strength and rest be able to successfully run even with horses (just as Elijah had - 1 Kings 18:45-46).

The Lord also points out that Jeremiah was stumbling even on a relatively smooth road merely because of some verbal threats. What would Jeremiah do when those threats became physical and involved public mocking, stocks, prison, deep pits, and starvation? The Lord asked his prophet, "if you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets by the Jordan" - where the land was dangerous, overgrown with thick vegetation like a jungle, and a home to lions?

Jeremiah was stumbling from just the small amount of opposition he faced in 622 BC - but he would have to continue to speak reality and truth to his generation for another 36 years, as the society continued to decline into deeper and deeper social oppression. And then, after four hard decades of his ministry being rejected, the Babylonians would finally arrive to burn the city and temple. The events Jeremiah would face in the coming years would be

nothing compared to a few threats from the priests and want-to-be prophets who opposed him early on.

The Lord concludes his rebuke with some inside information that Jeremiah had not fully understood. Apparently Jeremiah had figured out that the priests of his hometown of Anathoth were against him, but what he didn't know was that he could not even trust his own family. The Lord tells Jeremiah that even if his relatives speak well of him in public, they are not to be trusted, because some of them had already betrayed him and were crying out against him:

*Your relatives, members of your own family— even they have
betrayed you; they have raised a loud cry against you.
Do not trust them, though they speak well of you.*

- Jeremiah 12:6

This was not the only time the Lord would need to remind Jeremiah to return to his place of peace, rest, and strength. For years, Jeremiah continued to proclaim the Word of God to his generation, encouraging friends, family, kings, priests, prophets, and the public to trust the Lord and obey his Word. Jeremiah was able to remain faithful to his calling because he made a practice of constantly returning to the place of God's rest in his soul and maintained the fortress of the knowledge of God in his mind - no matter what the response to his preaching.

*Thus says the LORD:
"Stand by the roads, and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way is; and walk in it,
and find rest for your souls."
But they said, "We will not walk in it."*

- Jeremiah 6:16

16 - ENTER THE HIGH PLACE

Habakkuk prophesied around 606 BC, only twenty years before the final destruction of Jerusalem and the temple - just two decades before the nation of Judah was overthrown and the people taken into captivity in Babylon.

Habakkuk describes the culture of Jerusalem in 606 BC as being filled with social injustice. The elite oppressed the middle class into poverty, resulting in strife and contention as the middle class attempted to fight back within a corrupt legal system that favored the ruling class. Obviously, in that kind of setting any judicial decision would have been twisted and unjust. As Habakkuk told them, the “law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth.” This enabling atmosphere naturally resulted in the elite (mockers) further oppressing the wise, fools, and simple of the land for their own benefit.

These ubiquitous and shameless iniquities caused Habakkuk to cry out and seek understanding from the Lord:

O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear?

Or cry to you “Violence!” and you will not save?

Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?

Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.

So the law is paralyzed, and justice never goes forth.

For the wicked surround the righteous; so justice goes forth perverted.

- Habakkuk 1:2-4

In response, the Lord explains to Habakkuk that he is going to bring justice upon the evil in Judah using the “bitter and impulsive” Babylonians (1:6). In fact, the Lord reveals that he has been preparing them for his use. He has actively not prevented them from developing their arsenal of the best military armaments, technology, and technique available in that age (1:7-8).

Habakkuk is shown that the Babylonian invaders will bring an even deeper level of social injustice and destruction than was currently happening in Jerusalem (1:9). The Babylonian culture that will overpower the wickedness of Judah consists of “guilty men” who worship their own strength (1:11). They are mockers (1:10) who consider their victims as worthless as sand (1:9) and treat them like nets full of unnamed fish from the sea (1:14-16). Surprisingly, they will be doing the work of the Lord as history continues to move forward toward its ultimate end - the kingdom of God on earth, the home of eternal righteousness (1:5).

Habakkuk is stunned by this revelation of the Lord’s plan and tries hard to deny it (1:12-13), just as Peter, after having identified Jesus as “the Messiah, the son of the living God”, immediately rejected the Lord’s intention to “go to Jerusalem and suffer many things... be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

Peter’s reaction to Jesus’ revealed plan was strong:

*Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying,
“Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.”*
- Matthew 16:22

Just as Habakkuk was stunned in 606 BC by the Lord, so Peter was stunned by Jesus’ rebuke of his attempt to correct and reject the Lord’s plan in 30 AD: “[The Lord] turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For **you are not setting**

your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Indeed, Habakkuk had faith in the Lord and was able to articulate in his words, life, and prayers the truth that God had revealed to him. But God’s determination to crush Judah with the pagan Babylonians was beyond Habakkuk’s limited understanding of God - and his plans and his purposes.

God’s promised plan for Israel - and God’s plan of salvation - are still active and developing today, but the fulfillment of those promises are yet in the future.

Habakkuk was promised that the Lord’s plans would still come to pass at the appointed time. But until then, Habakkuk (and all the believers he represented as a prophet) must “wait for it”. Until that time, Habakkuk must stand firm in faith regarding those things he did understand, while trusting God for the things that were too overwhelming to be grasped by mere humans - even by the prophet to whom so much was revealed.

In his mercy, God reminds Habakkuk that “the righteous shall live by his faith.”

*For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.
If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.
Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
but the righteous shall live by his faith.*

- Habakkuk 2:3-4

The mature, wise, and righteous man will stand firm in the knowledge and understanding already stored in his soul - but will also extend his faith to trust in the deep recesses of God’s unrevealed

mysteries of truth.

Understand that this is not a blind faith. Our faith should never be blind! We are never told in the Bible to merely trust in some fantasy or vain hope. That is a doctrinal error we could call presumption.

What we are talking about is faith in the person and character of God. Our Father has already proven himself to be trustworthy concerning his revealed intentions and his past interventions. We should have already experienced the Lord's good and perfect character in our lives before we seek to live by faith in him. And so, with this knowledge and experience, we can move forward to face the unknown and incomprehensible things of life, knowing that the same Lord is in them and will continue to be.

This is why Habakkuk was able to write at the end of his book that he would continue to trust the Lord even though all the surrounding evidence tried to convince him to despair. While the "fool" and the "simple" would renounce their presumed confidence in God, Habakkuk was able to remain steadfast.

*Though the fig tree should not blossom,
nor fruit be on the vines,
the produce of the olive fail
and the fields yield no food,
the flock be cut off from the fold
and there be no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
God, the Lord, is my strength;
he makes my feet like the deer's;
he makes me tread on my high places.*

- Habakkuk 3:17-19

We see that Habakkuk's knowledge of and faith in God enable him to stand strong in hopeful faith, as he joyfully proclaims that "He will make me walk on my high hills."

The Hebrew word translated "tread" or "walk" is *darak*, which also means "march". So what we see here is Habakkuk saying that his soul is in a high, strong tower where he can remain at rest even when everything outside is chaotic - no harvests, no food, no economy, and no physical signs of hope or deliverance.

Habakkuk knew his salvation was not in the harvest, or in his strength, or in the economy. His place of protection was not in his provisions. It is a good thing he did not place any of his hope in any of these things, because they would all begin to fade away when Babylon defeated Egypt at Carchemish in 605 BC. And they would continue to decline for the next twenty years. When Babylon burned Jerusalem and the Lord's temple to the ground in 586 BC, all these things were gone and would not be restored in Habakkuk's lifetime.

Habakkuk's joy was in God, because God was the source of his salvation.

Habakkuk's Lord was the God of his strength, and because he was able to understand these concepts and his mind remained focused on them, Habakkuk was able to enter God's rest and tread forward courageously in the security of a soul fortified by reality and truth.

And so, in the coming days let us be very careful to imitate Habakkuk in these things - never fleeing before the enemy, but standing firm with our eyes set immovably on the person, character, and promises of our God.

This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says:

*“In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength!*

– but you would have none of it.

You said, ‘No, we will flee on horses.’

Therefore you will flee!

You said, ‘We will ride off on swift horses.’

Therefore your pursuers will be swift!”

– Isaiah 30:15-16 (around 730 BC)

