

What Does the Bible Say About
the Antichrist?



What Does the Bible Say About *the* Antichrist?

In the Christian community today, there is some confusion surrounding the word “Antichrist.” What does the Bible really say about this term? Is it something to be concerned with today? Or is it simply just a quotidian expression assigned to some looming prophetic end-time leader or political world condition out in the future?

© 2012 The Church of God International

Scriptures in this booklet are quoted from the
King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Text: Bill Watson



The term “antichrist” has caused quite a bit of debate, speculation, confusion, and, regrettably, even purposeful misappropriated and limiting concepts. Many of these speculative ideas have also generated large sums of money for personal gain for a handful of individual *Christian authors* that have merchandised articles, tracts, and books, as is illustrated by the series *Left Behind*.

In addition, Christian leaders and preachers have pointed out particular individuals down through history and mistakenly identified them as the antichrist—people like Nero, Trajan, Titus, Diocletian, or even certain popes of the Catholic Church and tyrants like Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Mao Tse-tung, and Josef Stalin. Even some U.S. presidents have been accused of being the antichrist on occasion. All of these traditional interpretations about the label “antichrist” have unfortunately misdirected many Christians into missing the *much broader and deeper meaning* of this *biblical term*. And that’s what is central to this booklet: *defining a more comprehensive biblical meaning to the term “antichrist.”*

Over the years of Christian history, the *prophetic speculation* of who the antichrist is has definitively been attached to the final end-time autocrat—labeled the beast and/or false prophet. Without a doubt, this understanding has been the dominant definition and has contributed to a very *narrow profile* of who and what the antichrist is. Arguably by inference, however, it would seem reasonable to legitimize the beast and/or false prophet as the “antichrist,” especially since they lead the final conflict *against (anti) Christ* in the battle identified as Armageddon upon His return (Revelation 17:11–14). But unfortunately, this dominant teaching has generated a perception that has blurred the *broader and much larger, deeper meaning* of the term “antichrist.”

CHAPTER ONE

Understanding the Term “Antichrist” More Comprehensively

Other than a small passing innuendo by John in reference to an end-time antichrist (more about that later), surprisingly, as hard as it might be to believe, the term “antichrist” is not specifically or directly connected to the individual called the beast or his “partner in crime,” the false prophet (Revelation 13:11–12). As is the case for many of us, because we are taught as children certain things are in the Bible, we assume they are. Clear examples of this are holidays like Christmas, Easter, or Halloween. All of us have been taught these are Christian holidays, when in fact they have nothing to do with the Christian faith and are not even mentioned in the Bible or close to being biblically based. (Write in for our *free* booklet: *God’s Seasonal Plan*.)

Therefore, it’s easy to understand how one might think the individual referenced as the beast, or the “man of sin,” could be considered “*the one and only antichrist*.” Especially since Christians have clearly been overwhelmed historically with prodigious amounts of oral presentations from pulpits around the world and written publications, it’s not extraordinary; in fact, it’s a very common phenomenon for teachings to take on a life of their own. It doesn’t take much for an innocent inference, innuendo, or implication, to become the accepted notion and finally dominant doctrine. And though there may be good reason to implicate or attach this term to the beast and/or false prophet, it’s indirect, presumed, and surmised at best! So, it becomes fundamental to ask this question if we’re going to clearly understand this term: what does the *Bible actually say* about it? *Who* and *what* is the *biblical definition* of the antichrist? And why does the apostle John call them “antichrists”? Is there more than one?

First, it’s important to recognize the word “antichrist” is *only mentioned five times* in the entire Bible, and all five references are located in the first two epistles of John. However, in every instance John supplies us with certain insights from the texts concerning how to identify the antichrist. And one surprising identifying sign, as hard as it may be for some to accept, is that, according to the apostle John, *there are multiple antichrists!* That’s right, more than one—and they were *present during his time!* Notice: “Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard the antichrist shall come, even now are there **many** [*largely, abundant, much, plenteous*] **antichrists** [*plural*]; whereby we know that it is the last time” (1 John 2:18).

Also, he actually asserts that it is by this condition that Christians *will know* they are in the last time! In other words, the fact there will be “many” antichrists (plural) should be *understood as a sign* of the end times. Notice again what the apostle says: “Whereby we *KNOW* [because there are *MANY* antichrists, or anti-Christians] that it is the last time.” All of us should ask ourselves this question: do we see any signs of a growing antichristian (antichrist) trend or movement(s) developing momentum today in our so-called *politically-*

correct Christian culture, or throughout the world? I think we'd all agree, regrettably, the answer is quite obvious—it is a resounding *yes!*

But let's continue: "They [the antichrists] went out from us, but they [the antichrists] were not of us; for if they [the antichrists] had been of us, they [the antichrists] would no doubt have continued with us: but they [the antichrists] went out, that they [the antichrists] might be made manifest that they [the antichrists] were not all of us" (1 John 2:19). In this instance, it's fair to say that "they," contextually, should be considered the antichrists (verse 18). It appears John is explaining a problem occurred with certain *former Christian people* who are either presently persuaded Christ really wasn't who He claimed He was, or perhaps, had a different belief or understanding about the actual method God was using, through Christ, to convert repentant individuals. But regardless, in either case, John has labeled these individuals (who had apparently *left the fellowship*) antichrists. They defected from the congregations, became apostate; and there were "many antichrists" at that time!

This is a stunning affirmation as well as understanding! John is warning his audience, stating that "they," the antichrists (plural), went out from those remaining, to illustrate "they" were no longer Christians (they went apostate). In modern vernacular, they fell away, or backslid. He continues to encourage those he's addressing by reassuring them. Notice: "But you have an unction [anointing, the Holy Spirit, endowment] from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, *but because you know it*, and that no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2:20–21).

Interestingly enough, he claims those remaining "know the truth" and understand "no lie is of the truth." So, that poses a question central to this epistle and discourse: *What lie* was John concerned about that caused him to determine those who left were antichrists? Remember, John asserts that "no lie is of the truth." Apparently, there were things being said, taught, advanced, or promoted that weren't true, but instead, were lies! What could these have been? It's important we get an idea of the concerns and debates before going on because it will give us contextual background to the issues John was encountering.

What Was John Presently Contending With?

There is some controversy surrounding what John was confronting at the time. For example, the *Expositor's Commentary* explains there was a growing movement of Gnostics (see the sidebars on Gnosticism, p. 8, and Marcionism, p. 22), and it would appear this was influencing some of the individual members of the congregations. Notice: "Dodd (*Johannine Epistles*, p. 61) suggests that their attitude may have been similar to that of the "Gnostic" sect known as Naasenes,' who much later also boasted of a special sacrament of anointing: "We alone of all men are Christians, who complete the mystery at the third portal, and are anointed there with speechless chrism" (*Philosophumena* V. 9. 121–2)." This goes to the point of John's reassurance that "you [those Christians in the truth] have an unction [anointing] from the Holy One, and you [not the Gnostics] know all things" (1 John 2:20). John could easily be understood here as taking issue with the Gnostics, who claimed a special exclusive understanding of God.

Some of the false teachers were self-ascribing to themselves a "special anointing" and were endowed with privileged knowledge. Out of this *posturing* came *doctrinal changes* that were not of "the truth"—they were lies! For instance, the *Expositors Commentary* also

states, “The exact kind of Gnostic denial in view is uncertain. Commentators have traditionally favored a Gnosticism like that of Cerinthus, who held that ‘after Jesus’ baptism, the Christ, coming down from that power [the Father] which is above all, descended upon him in a form of a dove [a distinct separate entity].... In the end [at His crucifixion], however, the Christ withdrew again from Jesus.... The Christ, being spiritual [pictured by the dove], remained unable to suffer’ (Brown, pg. 112).”

Obviously, this provides the idea that Christ, the Messiah, was never fully human; that somehow *His spiritual persona*, or *essence*, never experienced the suffering associated with Jesus’ passion the night of His betrayal, arrest, beating, and crucifixion. A kind of metempsychosis doctrine, or simply the teaching that Christ had a separate spirit inside of Him, which was able to leave His physical body and remain *conscious* in this *disembodied* state—thereby, allowing Him to *avoid the suffering and death*.

Cerinthus was not the only heretic at this time. Another alternate movement was the Docetic heretics who, in the second century, were attacked by Ignatius, a student of the apostle John. And though it’s impossible to conclusively determine the exact heresy John was addressing, Docetism, which arguably had its origins in the mid-first century, could be suspected. Notice what *Expositor’s* says about this: “Relying on their [Docetic] belief that they were inspired by the Spirit and claiming a direct knowledge of God, they thought that they no longer needed Jesus or his teaching. Under the influence of Docetism they argued against a real incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus, and probably adopted a view like that of Cerinthus or Basilides, that the Christ or Son of God inhabited Jesus only for a temporary period” (Introduction, 1 John, p. 296, quoted from Marshall, I.H., *The Epistles of John*, NIC, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p. 21).

But, these teachings are just not true! *They are lies!* Notice what the Bible says: “For verily he *took not* on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham [a man]. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like [similar] unto his brethren [human beings], that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:16–17). Furthermore, the writer states, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Clearly, this is because He was *fully human*, as “humanly human” as possible, and was at risk, jeopardizing His very existence and relationship with the Father for the sake of His creation (Colossians 1:14–20). This was a crucial and defining moment in the history of the world. Everything was on the line and at stake (no pun intended).

Adam Clarke’s *Commentary on the Bible* seems to agree with *Expositor’s* that John was disturbed by many of the surrounding religious movements that were undermining the original apostolic teachings. Notice: “I therefore consider that which is commonly called the First Epistle of St. John as a book or treatise, in which the apostle declared to the whole world his disapprobation of the doctrines maintained by Cerinthus and the Gnostics” (Preface; First Epistle of John, p. 896). Clarke’s *Commentary* further mentions, “it [the Gnostic sect] was consistent with their principles to regard sins as diseases; for they believed in a metempsychosis [that the soul goes on *consciously living* after death, apart from the body], and imagined that the souls of men were confined in their present bodies as in a prison, and as a punishment for having offended in the region above” (Preface; First Epistle of John,

pg. 898). Now, with this historical context in mind, let's see what John writes *from our Bibles*.

Resuming in 1 John we read, "Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ [Anointed]? He is antichrist, that denies the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). John plainly declares by the question and affirmatively answers, anyone who denies Jesus' anointing as Messiah is not only denying Jesus, but the Father too! Did you catch that? This denial also separates you from God the Father! In other words, we become *anathema not only to our Lord, but also the Father too!* John continues, "Whosoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: [but] he that acknowledges the Son has the Father also" (1 John 2:23).

John appeals then to his readership, "Let that therefore abide [remain, dwell, tarry, stay] in you, which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." And if those Christians do this, they can be assured eternal life is theirs. Notice: "And this is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:24–25).

Obviously, there appears to be a distinct difference of understanding and belief surrounding the early Christian movement about the relationship Jesus Christ had with the Father. And because of this, John is very direct to those who deny that Jesus was the Anointed (Greek: *Chirstos*). He asserts this is a lie and points out that those who believe this lie actually deny both the Father and the Son! *This, in John's mind, defines an antichrist.* He continues to make the case that there are "**MANY**" (much, largely, abundant, altogether common, plenteous, great) antichrists (*plural*) that apparently came out of the original apostolic movement (although *history records that not all* came from within the Christian Church; they also came into the church from outside of the Christian movement) already, at this time! John is heralding a warning to hold on to the original teaching and "*abide in that which you heard from the beginning,*" lest you let these *spurious teachings separate you* from both Christ the Son and God the Father.

This concern and appeal had a common thread among those early apostles. Ostensibly, you would be correct to describe the epistles of those original apostles as a written record of controversy after controversy, counter points, arguments, and debates designed to minimize and eliminate the encroachments of false teachings and their influences. Whether it was Peter, Paul, James, John, or Jude: all of them had their issues with teachings they considered were dissuading many from the original truths presented by Christ. Paul alerted Christians in Thessalonica of a "mystery of iniquity [lawlessness] already at work," while warning others *in the church* that they would defect and lead brethren astray *from within* (Acts 20:17–38). Peter warned of false teachers among the Christians who were *bringing in* damnable heresies and merchandising them (2 Peter 2:1–3). Jude implored Christians to earnestly contend (struggle) for the faith once delivered (Jude verse 3). But why? Why such alarming warnings and concerns from all of these early apostles?

The answer to this question is quite complex, but suffice it to say, the pagan culture of Rome and what is known as the Hellenist influence among the Jews all contributed to the theological compromises that were relentless in merging Greek and Roman Mithraism (see the sidebar on Mithraism, p. 20) with the original apostolic teachings of the church. The ultimate result of these invasive teachings and their influence is recorded in history, describing how they finally penetrated and gained *majority acceptance* within the first three to four

centuries, completely changing the complexion of the Churches culture.

Consider this substantiating statement from Halley's *Bible Handbook*. "The Church had Changed its Nature, had entered its Great Apostasy, had become a Political Organization in the Spirit and Pattern of Imperial Rome, and took its Nose-Dive into the millennium of Papal Abominations" (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 760). We continue in Halley's *Bible Handbook*: "Conflicts with Heathen Philosophies. Even as every generation seeks to interpret Christ in terms of its own thinking, so no sooner had Christianity made its appearance than it began its process of amalgamation with Greek and Oriental Philosophies; and there arose many sects.... From the 2nd to the 6th centuries the Church was rent with controversies over these and similar "Isms," and almost lost sight of its true mission" (p. 761). Then, in 325 C.E., a historical meeting occurred, which in retrospect, became the harbinger of change that would set the course of *the church* into a totally different direction.

The Council of Nicaea and Rise of More Antichrists

This was a time of enormous controversy. Certain subjects and teachings were converging and coming to a head. The contention, schisms, and divisions were visceral. Emperor Constantine, who allegedly adopted, or at least favored, the *Roman hybrid version of Christianity*, called for a church council meeting in the city of Nicaea. He hoped to resolve these emerging controversies and ease the tension and disruption that was building momentum within the Roman Universal (Catholic) Church.

Historical documents of the meeting record the fact there were multiple issues of controversy. Some of these topics of concern were described as follows: The Arian heresy; the established date of Easter instead of Passover (request our free brochure, *Who Changed Passover To Easter?*); the Meletian schism; the validity of baptizing heretics; status of the lapse in the persecution under Licinius; the composing of the Nicene Creed and confirmation of Sunday as the official day of rest, as opposed to the Sabbath of the Bible (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset). There were some other items, but these were the primary topics of concern.

Many of these issues confronted at the Council of Nicaea had been sizzling and feverishly fomenting for many years (see the sidebar on the Council of Nicaea, p. 14). Actually, over the first 300 years of the early Christian movement many of these differences erupted time after time into a maelstrom of passionate violence and seething debate that usually resulted in a malaise of division, confusion, and sometimes martyrdom. It was no wonder as to why John chose to herald alarm and warning late in his life. However, in retrospect, John had no idea that what he was witnessing late in the first century was just a *precursor, the cusp, or beginning*, to additional centuries of continued theological debate, agitation, deception, and compromise, which finally lead to the ultimate *abandonment and directional change* of the original apostolic truths—and climatically, some 1,400 years later, after the Protestant Reformation, dividing the Church into literally thousands of differing sects and denominations.

Notice how John alerts his audience about "trying the spirits whether they are of God: [Why?] because many [largely, abundant, much] false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). He then defines for us how we can determine if a spirit (a person and/or teacher) is of God or not. Notice: "Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit [person/attitude] that confesses that Jesus Christ is [having] come in the flesh is of God" (1

John 4:2). Conversely, he says, “And every spirit that *confesses not* that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:3). And then he affirms, “This is that spirit [attitude/person] of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; *and even now already is it in the world*” (1 John 4:3).

John appropriates this label to describe the fact *it was an attitude*, a “spirit” *in the people* and, by extension, constitutes the children of the “spirit” of disobedience, the father of lies (Ephesians 2:1–3; John 8:44). He warns this “*antichrist attitude*” is capable of driving those who have it out of fellowship with Jesus Christ and the Father, because it is *hostile toward the truth*. Notice how he says this: “And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come.... You are of God, little children, and have overcome them.... They [the antichrists] are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the *spirit of truth*, and the *spirit of error*” (1 John 4:3–6).

Obviously, John has a lot going on in this section of his letter. There are implications of Satan and his influences, which define the *ultimate quintessential antichrist!* He mentions that certain ones, *not just a single individual*, have an antichrist spirit, or attitude of error. He also explains that those who have remained have the Spirit of truth, *which is in them*, revealing the plain things of God. But interestingly, he proceeds to expound on love. Apparently, there were some hard feelings going on with those who left and those who remained. It’s obvious, from the emphasis on the subject of love and its variations in the Greek, that some advice was in order and the need to add a contrasting perspective, perhaps due to some lingering anger and hostility, was appropriate (1 John 4:7–21).

Clearly, at this time in his life, based plainly on what he (John) was observing, *truth was paramount* as was the protection, maintenance, and adherence to it. This theme is carried through in his second letter where he begins with the following: “The elder [John] unto the elect lady [the Church] and her children [Christians], whom I love *in the truth*; and not I only, but also all they that have known *the truth*; For the *truth’s sake*, which dwells in us and shall be with us forever” (2 John 1–2). He continues, “I rejoiced greatly that I found of your children *walking in truth*, as we have received a commandment from the Father” (2 John 4). His sense of joy that these were still faithful to the “truth” obviously was refreshing to him because, as he reiterates and picks up from his previous letter, the dangers and influences of the antichrist spirit remained ever present. Notice: “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. *This is a deceiver and an antichrist*” (2 John 7).

This is the second time John defines the antichrist spirit as *one who denies* that Jesus Christ *came in the flesh*. This too, was a troubling issue and apparently was gaining prominence. Some years later, the heresy known as Arianism produced a blasphemous teaching that even the Catholic Church disclaimed and decried. This was just one of the various heretical teachings that finally manifested over multiple years. But, many of these teachings had influences from secular, outside philosophies, or from religions that advanced different concepts of the afterlife and were relentless in their attempt to thwart the original truth of how God was reproducing Himself. This included, most importantly, obfuscating the supernatural means of the *process*—the impregnation of the flesh by His Holy Spirit that was made accessible through the sacrifice of Christ, *who literally came in the flesh, divesting*

Himself of the divinity He had prior to His human incarnation!

However, this idea of a *preexistent Creator God* dying for His creation as a man (Hebrews 2:16–18) so mankind could be transformed by His Spirit to become part of the *God Family*, or share in a divine destiny, was considered an outrageous and blasphemous teaching! Especially when compared to the commonly accepted teaching of an *alleged immortal soul* within us that goes on living, disembodied, apart from the flesh, upon death. The belief of an “immortal soul” was a dominant understanding and central premise among the philosophers and Hellenists, Jews and Greeks, as well as in Roman Mithraism and Docetic Gnosticism. Without a doubt, John was contending with some very serious Roman cultural and religious theological differences and pressures that were constant in their attempts to influence the original teachings of the first century apostolic church.

But inexorably, John describes an extremely disturbing issue, because it goes to the very foundation of the Christian faith. His concerns revolve around the distinct problem that some won’t confess Christ “*came in the flesh*” (2 John 7). But interestingly, many don’t realize that this term actually goes beyond just doubting Christ’s humanity and incarnation. It actually goes to the *heart* and what is *central* to *how* God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Savior, is redeeming mankind—and this was alarming John. In other words, the *PROCESS* was being denied! Let me explain.

The Process

When considering the transliteration of this term in the original Greek, it becomes rather extraordinary. Notice the transliteration: “Because many deceivers entered into the world, who not confessing Jesus anointed coming in flesh, this is the deceiver and the antichrist.” The Greek word for “coming” is *erehomai* (pronounced, er-khom-ahee) of which Strong’s *Concordance* says: “Of a prin. Verb (used only in the pres. And imperf. Tenses, the others being supplied by a kindred [mid].” It’s being used in the “present progressive” sense: in the “aorist,” and strongly implies “is coming” in the flesh. So, here is the *larger, more comprehensive* spiritual meaning to this statement—John is trying to be very plain and specific about this.

Here it is: if anyone *denies* Christ’s supernatural ability to presently dwell in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, that individual is of the antichrist spirit. This is an *important concept to grasp* since it is this supernatural force (the Holy Spirit) that, *dwelling in us after baptism*, will renew our minds and be the instrument that empowers the literal change of our behavior (2 Corinthians 5:16–21; 6:16) and, ultimately, will then convert us into an *actual spirit substance*, changing our mortal flesh into becoming an embodied spirit being (Romans 8:9–11; 1 Corinthians 15:22–23, 43–55)—*a new life form!* This is the teaching that was taught from the beginning concerning

the afterlife and the reward of the saved.

Admittedly, this truth has indeed *been lost over the centuries* of Christian history, because the majority of the Christians today have instead—sadly—adopted the doctrine that has become known as the *Trinitarian/immortal soul teaching*; and attached the promise of going to heaven upon death as the reward of the saved. Apparently, there were “many” (John’s word) within the Christian movement that began to believe this and didn’t understand or accept the mystery Paul was disclosing, which was as follows: “Even the mystery which

hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest [revealed] to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; **which is** [here it is] *Christ IN YOU [via the Holy Spirit]*, the hope of glory,” which is the resurrection (Colossians 1:26–27).

This is a *stunningly incredible statement* and *very important to accept* as a Christian. It is this understanding that provides us the means by which to comprehend the gravity of the intimate relationship we presently share when entering into the Christian lifestyle. Paul is describing a divine force *within us—the indwelling* that is able to empower us to experience the actual potential of *presently sharing in the very divine nature of God, which ultimately by a resurrection (the glory), literally will cause a transformation of our flesh to a different life form by this Holy Spirit* (Philippians 3:20–21).

This miraculous “begotten condition” we are *immersed into, upon baptism*, is quite remarkable to say the least. Notice how central this concept is to the Christian understanding. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit [conceptually, figuratively], if so *be* [act like it now] that the Spirit of God *dwell in you*. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And *if Christ be in you [the indwelling]*, the body is dead [figuratively] because of sin; but the Spirit [actually] is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:9–10). As far as Paul is concerned, he considers baptized Christians *figuratively*—conceptually—in the spirit already, because the lust of the flesh is no longer central to our lives (the body is dead). Instead, we should be living by His spiritual values and standards now, as though *God literally lives in us through His Spirit*. He’s very clear about this.

But, *pay particular attention to this next scripture*. “But if the Spirit of Him [the Father] that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He [the Father] that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken [vitalize, give life to] your mortal bodies by His [the Father’s] Spirit that dwells in you” (Romans 8:11). **Did you get that?** This Holy Spirit is the Divine Power, the Force, or the Energy source, that will be used to literally bring you back to life and change you, if you are dead; or literally change you in the twinkling of an eye, if you are alive at Christ’s return (1 Thessalonians 4:15–18)! This is an *amazingly awesome truth* and provides *additional importance* to the reason why one should be baptized to obtain the Holy Spirit. *It is the power that will be used to initiate the metamorphosis that will transfigure you into a new life form—an immortal spirit being!*

Furthermore, Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren...present your bodies [now, currently as] a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.... Be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed [converted spiritually] by the renewing of your mind.... Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:1–21). “But, ye have not so learned Christ; If so *be* that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed *in the spirit of your mind*” (Ephesians 4:20–23).

This connection with Christ is unique and unlike anything that is proposed in any other religion. Paul illustrates this for us by explaining *why this works*. Notice: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...having made known unto us the mystery of His will...that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ...that we should

be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ” (Ephesians 1:7–12). As Paul says in Ephesians, so John says also: it’s very important for Christians to acknowledge and believe this “literally”—and if they do, they are of the truth, while those who don’t are of the spirit of antichrist. The miracle of the *indwelling presence* of Christ *in our flesh* is mentioned throughout the Bible for good reason; it goes to the *heart* of God’s program of salvation for mankind. It is *central* to the ***conversion process***, both present, now in your current life and ultimately, for the future, in the resurrection. Let’s see how the apostle John explains this in more detail.

CHAPTER TWO

Christ In You, the Hope of Glory

This condition, which defines a particular relationship, or connection, also lends itself to a very *special* and *unique truth* about *what the reward of the saved really is*. Clearly, the resurrection of the dead was foreign to most within the Roman Empire, including many of the Jews who were heavily influenced by the Hellenists' doctrines, which included the premise that man's soul was immortal (Acts 26). This is why the discussion between Christ and Nicodemus was so extraordinary, leaving Nicodemus incredulous over the surprising information Jesus revealed to him that night about life after death, described in the Gospel of John (John 3:1–16).

As we are introduced to this meeting between Christ and Nicodemus, it becomes apparent Nicodemus was not confrontational. Instead, he was respectful and willing to concede Christ came from God and, furthermore, God was with Him (John 3:2). Both men proceed to engage in a *friendly verbal exchange* that results in astonishing Nicodemus about what Christ tells him *concerning the afterlife*. Interestingly enough, Nicodemus appears confused right from the start about Christ's comment regarding being "born again." The indication is Nicodemus takes Christ *literally* (biologically) and therefore asks a very logical question: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he *enter the second time* into his mother's womb, and be born" (John 3:4)? Nicodemus wanted to know, because Christ surprised him when using language that was implicit of *physical birth* and *metabolic change*. He couldn't make sense of what Jesus was saying with the physical and biological mindset he had due to the terminology He was using. It just didn't make sense to him. It seemed irrational.

Jesus recognized his confusion and responded with an easy explanation that included a metaphor of wind, hoping it would further clarify what He was trying to describe (John 3:5–8). However, in the course of this exchange Nicodemus must have shown some emotional astonishment because Jesus mentioned to him, "Marvel not [be not surprised] that I said...Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). Perhaps He even smiled a bit at Nicodemus' shock. But He goes on to explain the metaphor concerning the wind, making a clear emphatic point! Here is how He resolved it: "So is everyone that is *born of the Spirit*" (John 3:8). He is saying they are like the wind, invisible, but defined. The effects of a spirit being can be seen, but the spirit itself is invisible to the human eye; hence the reference to the wind. Apparently, Nicodemus was incredulous and stunned, because he responds, "How can these things be?" (John 3:9).

Jesus continues and responds with a prod, perhaps a friendly nudge, about an obvious point of Nicodemus' credentials and education. He mentions, "Are you not a master of Israel [apparently referring to the fact he was a well-educated Pharisee] and know not these things?" Jesus goes on to confirm He is not believed for His testimony and seems to imply He is slightly annoyed over this because He says, "If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12). The

Bible is not clear as to whether or not He paused. It may have been one of those pregnant moments, but then *He emphatically affirms*, “And no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13).

This statement goes to the heart and core of the Torah, Writings, and Prophets—the Old Testament—and what the Jews thought was the promise of the saved. Surely, they believed men such as Abraham and Moses, Joshua, David, or Elijah were in heaven; but instead, Jesus affirms they *absolutely* were not! *None of them were presently in heaven* according to Him. Jesus continues to draw an association with Moses, but goes beyond that by portraying Himself as the Son of God who will lay His life down for all mankind. Then with a sense of authority, He declares “that whosoever believes in Him should *not perish*, but *have everlasting life*” (John 3:16).

What Jesus was simply explaining to Nicodemus was that a rebirth has to occur that *transforms our flesh* into something He characterized as literal “spirit,” and it doesn’t happen at death! He said, “That which is born [literally] of the flesh *is* flesh; and that which is born [literally] of the Spirit *is* spirit” (John 3:6). Paul essentially says the same thing while talking about the resurrection. He explains, “So also is the resurrection of the dead.... It is sown a natural [fleshy, bestial, sensual] body; it is raised a spiritual [non-carnal, non-human, ethereal, supernatural] body. There is a natural [fleshy, sensual, carnal] body, and there is a spiritual [non-carnal, celestial, ethereal, supernatural] body” (1 Corinthians 15:42–44). Also, this is what Paul meant when he spoke of “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Colossians 1:26–27). This is the ultimate conversion by the Holy Spirit, not only to use it for helping you to *renew your mind and change your character now*, but eventually to be the literal *ingredient force* to actually change—transform—you into a born Son of God, a vivacious celestial immortal spirit being—that is the glory referenced!

This understanding is fundamental to knowing how God is achieving the goal of “bringing many sons unto glory” (Hebrews 2:10). “But, every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Corinthians 15:23). We must keep in mind, “For in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Jesus Christ is alive today, and through the power of the Holy Spirit it is possible to enliven, or empower, the repentant Christian by this Spirit, which is received upon repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38) that affords us the “*indwelling*” upon the laying on of hands (Acts 8:13–19; 19:1–8).

Paul relates the relationship and workings of this Spirit to the condition of redemption that one is in after baptism. Notice what he says: “In whom we have redemption through His [Jesus Christ’s] blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; Wherein He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of His will [He is reproducing Himself], according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself; That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him [to be presently changed in character and ultimately, literal substance] who works all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted [hoped] in Christ. In whom you also trusted [hoped] after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that

you believed, you were sealed [through baptism] with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest [acknowledgment, down payment] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession [the resurrection into a different life form], unto the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:7–14).

Paul plainly states *our redemption is dependent on Jesus Christ*. It is by His shed blood, in substitution for us, that we can receive grace and forgiveness of sin. This translates into a relationship with God that is *produced by a connection* to Him via the *gift of the Holy Spirit*, which Paul assures us is a precursor (down payment, an earnest) to a much greater relationship that will result in the ultimate “purchase of the possession,” which clearly is implicit of the actual resurrection, the transformation, or literal birth into Spirit life! Remember, Paul stated, “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44). He also explained that for those of us “whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be *conformed to the image of His Son* [both spiritually now, and literally later], that He might be the *firstborn among many brethren*” (Romans 8:29). Jesus Christ is called the *firstfruits from the dead*! He is the first to complete this “birthing process” that is nothing short of miraculous!

However, for the Christian, this occurs when Jesus Christ returns and not before then. In other words: *not upon death*! Notice: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live [at that time]. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgments also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this [don’t be surprised]: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves [*not heaven, hell, or purgatory*] shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the *resurrection* of life; and they that have done evil, unto the *resurrection* of damnation” (John 5:25–29).

The Bible is clear about the reward of the saved. It will occur *at the coming of Christ* when the dead in Christ shall rise first and then we who are alive shall be changed (in a twinkling of the eye) to meet Him in the air, landing on the mount of Olives to rule and reign with Him as kings and priests ON THIS EARTH (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; 1 Corinthians 15:52; Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 5:10). “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; *afterward* they that are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Corinthians 15:23). This is core to the *gospel message* that *Jesus Christ the Messenger* brought to assure mankind there is a better tomorrow beyond today.

Christ Is Literally Alive Today and Presently Living In Us

Unquestionably, *Jesus Christ is literally alive* and presently sits at the right hand of the Father. He ascended to the Father one last time right before the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:9–12) and is now serving in the role of High Priest, interceding for us as our Advocate and Intercessor (Hebrews 2:17; 4:14–16). And it is by this process with the Holy Spirit *in us* that we engage in the “conforming work” that will lead us to eternal life; and which also includes this ultimate conversion to something that is actually of a different material—non-carnal, non-physical, or non-molecular—which Christ labeled as something called “*spirit*.”

Notice how Paul explains this truth in Philippians. “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall

*change our vile [low estate, mortal] body, that it may be fashioned [conformed, changed] like unto His glorious [higher estate, immortal] body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Philippians 3:20–21). This is the goal God the Father has in mind for all of us because flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). Eternal life can only be secured and obtained after one is literally changed and clothed with, or conformed in immortality (1 Corinthians 15:51–58). **That is the gift!** We do not have it inherently. We must receive a new body that is compatible with the spirit dimension and is indestructible. This is the glory that God has predestined us to obtain. This is the gift we have coming as our birthright—eternal life as an immortal spirit being. In other words, existing in another life form—a celestial body!*

Now, let’s get back to this statement regarding Christ “coming in the flesh” and the connection it has with the term “antichrist,” and review the deeper meaning of just what this means.

We need to seriously consider this, because *it’s at the heart* of John’s concerns, which through much heartache caused him to coin the word *antichrist* in the first place. As mentioned before, it’s simply recognizing that Jesus Christ is indeed alive and presently, through the power of the Holy Spirit, able to enliven, ennoble, and vivify the repentant Christian. This is naturally done by the *indwelling* of that Spirit within the minds and hearts of those sinners who have repented, accepted Him as their Savior, were baptized, and then literally received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands (Acts 2:38). This is an extremely *important concept to grasp* and, sadly, has been misunderstood or altogether forgotten by some in the current Christian community!

We cannot forget, the total plan of salvation is built, founded, and empowered on the personality, life, and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Notice what Paul says: “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be *strengthened with might by His Spirit* in the *inner man* [in you, the indwelling]; That *Christ may dwell in your hearts* by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And *know* [indisputably clear, fully assured, doubtless] that the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all fullness [to level up, imbued, complete] of God” (Ephesians 3:16–19). And again Paul mentions to the Colossians, “Even the *mystery* which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is *made manifest to His saints*: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of *this mystery* among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you* [via the *Holy Spirit*], the hope of glory [the resurrection]” (Colossians 1:27). It is an incredible mystery, but now has been made manifest—revealed—to us by means of Jesus Christ who has made plain the mystery (inclusive of the Gentiles too) of how we as human beings may become immortal (2 Timothy 1:8–11).

Many scriptures refer to this miraculous event regarding the *indwelling presence* of Jesus Christ and how, by the power of His Spirit, He *actually lives* His life through us. Clearly, what John is specifically advancing, by virtue of the Greek syntax, using the *present progressive tense* of the word “coming,” strongly implies Christ is, literally in the present, *living His life over again within us!* Therefore, John is perfectly comfortable with the concept that Christ is “*now coming*” in the *flesh* (present progressive sense—still coming) and is to be understood, that *He is presently living within the converted Christian*. This Spirit

will then empower that person to remake and renew his or her mind, thereby resulting in a change of behavior that will eventually *reflect the very divine nature* of Jesus Christ! Those who *deny this miracle*, which is the *supreme purpose and completion* of human life, John says, are of the spirit of antichrist. Notice what Paul mentions: “For who hath known the *mind of the Lord*, that he may instruct Him? *But we have the mind of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2:16). “*Let this mind be in you [indwelling]*, which **was also in Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 2:5).

This understanding and distinction of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in a baptized member of Christ’s body, the Church, *underscores the whole plan of how salvation is secured*. Yet many within the traditional Christian world today don’t recognize, or emphasize, the reality of this fundamental process God has for mankind and *HOW* He’s actually doing it—*this method by which it’s achieved!*

The teaching that God is *reproducing Himself* through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit working within us to bring that about actually angers many Christians. Even Christ was the target of hostility and violence when He was accused of “making Himself equal with God” by identifying Himself as the “I Am” (John 8:58–59). Most reject this idea completely. It infuriates them because they have been so steeped in their man-made traditions regarding the immortality of the soul and wafting off to heaven, that the truth just *sounds like science fiction; BUT IT’S NOT!* Your Bible says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they are the sons of God*. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption [Greek: sonship, kinship, blood relative] whereby we cry, Abba [Daddy] Father. The Spirit itself [in us, literally] beareth witness with our spirit [human], *that we are the children of God* [not metaphorically, figuratively, allegorically, or philosophically; but instead, are unmistakably, actually and really]: And if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:14–17).

Sadly, today this understanding and acknowledgement has been lost to some. Many will furiously argue and take a negative position toward this belief. For one to think that God is recreating after His own kind—that we can become co-heirs with Christ, sharing the *same destiny* He is presently experiencing—through a *birthing process described as the resurrection*.... well...many will simply say that is incredibly blasphemous! This is unfortunate, because those *who deny* Christ is presently *coming in the flesh*, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within a human being, John says, are of the *spirit of the antichrist!*

How Literal Is This To Be Understood?

Paul wrote, we have a human spirit in us and it’s that human spirit which bears witness with God’s Holy Spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). Most people have been misled to think the human spirit that provides consciousness, will, volition, disposition, the ability to have emotions, determination, or decisiveness is an immortal soul. *This is simply not true!* Instead, your Bible is emphatic; there is no work, knowledge, or wisdom in the grave (Ecclesiastes 9:9). As a matter of fact, the Bible plainly states, the *dead know nothing* and there is no praise of God in death (Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalms 115:17). In other words, *we are unconscious in death*. Christ characterized it like sleep (John 11:11–14). In this condition, *mankind is non-functional*, unable to perform conscious acts, or to think; in

this state of death you are *in total shutdown*—a dreamless sleep without function, or consciousness!

However, that's not to say this human spirit *in the man* has no purpose other than to provide lucidity or limpidity of consciousness; it's more than that. Apparently, it is the actual *recorded imprint* of who "you" really are. It is the transcript, or documented history of you as the person you were; it is the inscribed database of your personality and life's character and performance. Notice: "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again [referencing the natural physical body]. Who knoweth the spirit [air, breath, rational being] of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast that goeth downward to the earth" (Ecclesiastes 3:20–21)? Now, notice again: "Then shall the dust [the material man] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit [air, breath, rational being, this database] *shall return unto God* who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Plainly, we are being told, as human beings we don't know whether our spirit (this non-physical ingredient, non-carnal essence), our personality imprint, this figurative computer disk, goes upward or downward upon death of the body. But, what we do know is, it does indeed return to God's care. Where it is stored isn't revealed within the pages of our Bible except to say, it "*returns unto God who gave it.*" But, it is not conscious or alive apart from the body.

God's Word explains there is a spirit "in" man, but the *spirit is not the man*. To the contrary, the Bible describes man as a living "soul." But, it explains man became an air-breathing creature (Hebrew: *nephesh*) that together, *both body and spirit*, equates to this *living soul* (Genesis 2:7). Clearly then, apart from the human brain the spirit in man is non-functional. The *human spirit needs to be embodied* for it to become functional. Much like a CD/DVD, unless it is embodied into a player, it will not function. There is no way the CD/DVD can "come to life" and manifest what is recorded until it is inserted into a device that allows it to play back. Otherwise, it remains nonfunctional.

The human spirit works along the same principle—without it being connected, embodied in a natural (physical, carnal) body, or a spirit (non-physical, non-carnal) body (1 Corinthians 15:44–45), it simply cannot function. We must understand, *the human spirit is not an immortal soul* that can retain consciousness apart from being in a body. It must be combined with some material, natural, or spirit embodiment in order for it to be conscious and functional (1 Corinthians 15:44).

Contrary to what most people think about the "soul," immortality is something that must be put on, or obtained, from an external source, because we are not physically born inherently immortal. Notice: "For this corruptible must *put on* incorruption, and this mortal [we are mortal] must *put on* [to clothe, to array, to dress] immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53). *Immortality is the gift we are aspiring to.* It's the *condition* we must be in to acquire compatibility for eternity—the spirit realm. Mortal flesh and blood *cannot inherit* the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:50). Your Bible teaches we must be "born again" of a different material, a different substance, that both Christ and Paul described as spirit (John 3:6–8; 1 Corinthians 15:44).

So many within the Christian faith have been deceived into believing the human spirit is a "soul" which has both consciousness and immortality apart from the body. *This simply is not true, or taught in the Bible!* The words "immortal soul" or "immortality of the soul,"

pertaining to mankind, is nowhere to be found in the Torah, the Prophets, the Writings, the Gospels, the Epistles, or any other place in Scripture. The human spirit, which gives us the ability to think, reason, and feel the variety of emotions, as well as our innermost psyche—this consciousness that manifests personality and “is a spirit in man...that the Almighty giveth understanding” (Job 32:8) *is not immortal*, or functional apart from the human brain. *It must be contained and connected to a “body”* in order for it to function. But, it is this human spirit that affords us the reflection of self-actualization within our brain, that God’s Spirit affirms we are the actual sons of God by this implant, or infusion of His Spirit through baptism.

Allegorically, then, we can see similarities between the spiritual level and the *human level*. For example, we have a father and mother, two lives producing one. Comparably, on the *spiritual level*, we have our Father and the Church, which is the mother of us all, spiritually speaking. This is implicit that we are children of God in a much more literal way than most realize. To be considered a Son of God is not some smarmy, soapy, or fulsome title, some honorary, gratuitous appellation. On the contrary, we are *literal sons of God*. When a wife who tells her husband she’s pregnant, that life is their child! That baby is an actual life they produced together and is a part of them. They understand this isn’t some nebulous term, but rather a literal life the two of them produced, which *now confirms* that *unborn child is their kinship, their blood, flesh of their flesh—it’s their offspring*. This is exactly how we should understand *what we have become* when the expression “child of God” is used to describe our relationship with Him. It means just what it says! We have become actually connected to God by His Spirit and are *now confirmed members of His “bloodline”* through the shed blood of our elder brother, Jesus Christ! His Spirit essentially begets us—we have become impregnated with His Spirit. Paul puts it this way: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they are the sons of God*” (Romans 8:14). We are the *offspring of God* (Acts 17:28–29).

In a parallel sense, spiritually speaking, God has begotten us by implanting His Spirit in us. This is analogous to being begotten on the human level. Notice: “For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have *received [begotten by] the Spirit of adoption* [literally: sonship, kinship], whereby we cry, abba [a term of endearment], Father” (Romans 8:15). This is why we use the term Father when addressing Him. He is quite literally our Father who has begotten us with His Spirit (John 15:26). Therefore, “The Spirit [of God] itself beareth witness with our spirit [human mind], that ***we are*** the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:14–17). This is the affirmation and recognized actualization of the *literal connection* to the very nature of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ our Lord, within the figurative womb of the Church.

We are new creatures! Begotten by divine beings to share in their divine nature (2 Peter 1:3–4). To take on their *spiritual DNA* much like a human baby would take on the physical DNA of its parents. Through the nurturing of the Church, conceived by the Holy Spirit, we grow into a “new creature.” “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This *in-dwelling* of the mind of Christ brings on an empowerment to *convert us from our old ways*; developing new perspectives in the way we think, causing different behavioral patterns,

which creates change in our present personalities. It rearranges our priorities—what we thought was important—and keeps our behaviors in check. Peter describes it this way: “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked [acted, behaved] in the lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revelings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange [now] that ye run not with them [your old friends] to the same excess of riot, [therefore they are] speaking evil of you” (1 Peter 4:3–4):

Over time this new creature begins to manifest the characteristics of the divine nature of God Himself. Just like we take on the very nature of our parents while growing up under their influences, we can do the same, growing up under the influence of our heavenly Father through Christ as we take the time to become more familiar with their divine values, standards, and ethics. He claims through Peter, “According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, *through the knowledge of Him* that hath called us to *glory and virtue*” (2 Peter 1:3). Ostensibly, we *must expose ourselves* to the knowledge of Him in order to become aware of, and recipients to, the “glory and virtue” He represents. It becomes the responsibility of the newly begotten Christian to *make time* for nurturing himself within the figurative “womb” of the Church until the fullness of development can be achieved via Bible study, meditation, prayer, fasting, and experience (Ephesians 4:11–16)—*this is a life-changing commitment and life-long process.*

CHAPTER THREE

God Is a Family of Divine Beings Bound By a Covenant

What most Christians don't realize is that God is a Divine Family, *not a Trinity!* This is a major difference in perspective and paradigm shift concerning the nature of God from most of traditional Christianity. Notice Paul's explanation about how we *can know the nature of God* by understanding the physical creation. He states, "For the invisible things of Him [spirit world, His dimension, His spirit realm] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made [physical things, our dimension, the material world], even His eternal power and Godhead [His spiritual nature and structure]; so that they [mankind] are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

What this simply means is *we are expected to understand God* and His spiritual world by looking more closely at the physical creation and its arrangement and structure. Paul is saying, the spirit world is *reflected* in the physical material world that surrounds us. One of the most outstanding structures and obvious *relationship arrangements* that are common to human beings, as well as some types of animals, is family. *Family* is quite common to many species in our physical world. But only mankind has the *relationship of family, bound by a covenant*, known to us as *marriage*.

By recognizing this, we can gain some insight into how God is structured, because He too is structured in a family arrangement that is *embedded in a divine covenant—a promise*. This divinely ordained structure (family, bound by a covenant) is uniquely reflected on the human level through the *institution of marriage*. This is indeed why marriage is considered a holy and sacred institution—it reflects God's spiritual relationship with the Church, which is exactly why only God has the *sovereign right to define* what structure *properly reflects a MARRIAGE!* It is not man's prerogative to determine what defines a marriage—that has *already been done by God!* Instead, what remains mankind's prerogative is whether or not he will submit to the will of God and concede to God voluntarily.

The fact that, comparably speaking, the human institution of marriage represents the same relationship God has and is bound to with the Church (Ephesians 5:22–33) makes it enormously significant. He made man in His image; in the image of God, man was made! He then made women with the intent that they—man and woman—should replenish the Earth (Genesis 1:27–28), *by reproducing themselves after their own kind*. God's *original intent* was to make them male and female so they can reproduce. (We should be able to see from the perspective of this *original intent* why homosexuality is such an abomination to God [Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26–32]: *it perverts the original intent!*)

God is doing exactly the same thing on the spiritual level through repentance and baptism—but represents the *spiritual* begetting process. The Christian is then nurtured in the figurative/spiritual womb of the Church, which is the mother of us all! Comparatively, after describing some differences between types of "bodies," Paul states, "So also is the resur-

rection of the dead. . . . It is sown in dishonour [death]; it is raised in glory [immortal life]: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural [terrestrial, earthy] body; it is raised a spiritual [celestial, ethereal] body. There is a natural [terrestrial, carnal] body, and there is a spiritual [celestial, non-carnal] body” (1 Corinthians 15:42–44). Then he goes on to describe another *comparative narrative*: the first Adam and Christ, the second Adam.

The “two-Adam allegory” explains and pictures the comprehensive purpose of man and how God is intending to accomplish this ultimate human potential. Notice: “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul [air-breathing creature]; the last [second] Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was *not first* which is spiritual, but that which is natural [fleshy/carnal]; and *afterward* that which is spiritual [non-physical, non-carnal]. The first man is of the earth, earthy [carnal, terrestrial]: the second man is the Lord from heaven [spiritual, ethereal, celestial]. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy [what is born of flesh is flesh]: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly [what is born of the spirit is spirit]. And as we have borne [Greek: *for-ah-o*, to wear as clothing] the image of the earthy [the flesh/carnal tabernacle], we shall also bear [Greek: *for-ah-o*] the image of the heavenly [a spirit body, non-carnal tabernacle]” (1 Corinthians 15:45–49). Remember, Paul assured us, “There is a natural [carnal/fleshy] body, and there is a spiritual [non-carnal/supernatural] body” (1 Corinthians 15:44).

It is important we understand that *man was made after the God kind*. Throughout the first chapter of Genesis we see that *all things were made after their kind*; and so *man was made after the God kind*. Notice: “And God said, Let us [plural] make man in our [plural] image, after our [plural] likeness: and let them have dominion over. . . . So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them” (Genesis 1:26–27). Interestingly enough, not only are we introduced to the fact that mankind was created after the God kind, but you are given the notion that God is plural. How can this be? What does this mean?

What we must recognize, the English word “God” came down to us through the Germanic language—the word *Gott*, and an ancient Anglo-Saxon word, *gheiu*. However, what most people fail to understand is the Hebrew word that has been translated into God is *Elohim* (pronounced elo-heem).

Elohim is a *plural* word/name, connoting more than one. This is why the pronouns “us” and “our” were used and *are correct*. *Unless you accept the fact* that God is creating a family of beings and reproducing them after His kind to be part of this Elohim, you *cannot make sense of why God is referenced in the plural*. Nor can you comprehend the incredible magnitude of the ultimate human destiny God is offering and that is illustrated by the fact that God is indeed a family and human beings are being called to be children of God in that Divine Family (Elohim). It truly is incredible and unbelievably remarkable—but *breathtakingly true!*

By contrast, it’s unfortunate so many are led to believe the *false teaching* that, as human beings, we have an immortal soul. This has confused so many into believing superstitions, lies, and misappropriated concepts about life after death. It also has clouded the meaning of God’s nature and, sadly, misdirected the vast majority’s understanding about what God is really offering mankind. This is all traceable to the Satanic lie, “You shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4); that you *go on living after death* as a disembodied immortal soul which, re-

grettably, rejects the divinely revealed truth that man has the potential to become a member of the Divine Family of Elohim (God)!

Please understand: terms like sons of God, children of God, first-begotten, or sons and daughters are not just syrupy labels or sanctimonious and religious terms that are intended to be used by manipulative theologians skilled in promoting unity. No, quite the contrary! These terms are intended to impart the notion and concept of an authentic relationship with God that *exceeds* that of a servant, or tutor (Galatians 4:1–7); and instead provides understanding that we are *actual members of the God family* via the shed blood of Jesus Christ; *we are blood brothers, adopted sons*, connected to God by His very Spirit, which He gives to us upon repentance and baptism. This is the mystery of Christ “coming [presently] in the flesh” through the Holy Spirit, the mystery John said many (who had left the fellowship) had ignored, rejected, and denied (1 John 2:18–19), causing them, who refused to accept this truth, to be *labeled by John as antichrists* (plural).

These familial terms are divinely inspired and are not just inserted aimlessly for any reason. Clearly, God inspired this language for the express purpose of revealing *His Godhead is structured as a family*. The *institution of marriage* illustrates this very plainly and is consistent throughout the cultures of mankind; the marriage structure is the reason mankind is *without excuse*, because it (the marriage institution) is the *obvious illustration that reveals the Godhead—it’s in our face!* Unfortunately, though, mankind has rejected this clear and obvious revelation and is currently going to extremes to abandon it, or mockingly redefine it by the homosexual movement; and consequently God has given them up (those who are attempting to redefine it) to a reprobate mind (Romans 1:20–32).

Additionally, this underscores why the Trinitarian doctrine is so deceptively ensnaring; it camouflages and misdirects our understanding from *His model* of marriage and family, which plainly illustrates His redemptive plan and mankind’s potential. The false teaching of the Trinity limits the Divine Family into three persons of sorts, called *hypostases*, and prevents access to those in the church; and then proceeds to define a different reward for the saved (the Christian) that isn’t biblical! It’s a *ruse* that blinds humanity from knowing God’s *true objective* for humanity, which is to become part of His family—literally born of Spirit, eternally co-inheriting with what Jesus Christ has already obtained as the Fathers firstborn (Romans 8:16–23; Hebrews 2:6–13).

Jesus Christ Is the First of the Firstfruits

Admittedly, Jesus Christ is the Son of God and He is God, the Father’s firstborn (John 3:16–18). We are told that in the past God spoke to the patriarchs by the prophets, but “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He [the Father] hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He [Jesus Christ] made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2). In addition, the Bible explains man’s destiny is to inherit *all things* (Hebrews 2:6–8). Scripturally, it’s plain to see He told Nicodemus, “what is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). Paul mentions there is a natural (fleshy, carnal) body and there is a spiritual (non-fleshy, non-carnal) body (1 Corinthians 15:44); and furthermore, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). Therefore, this necessitates a change, which we are specifically told will occur: “and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

With due consideration to all the above, what we understand is: Christ *literally revealed* what He meant when He was resurrected in a bodily fashion. The fact is, His death and resurrection *revealed the process, or the method*, to immortal life was actually to be *born again*—literally *embodied* in a different “life form” (2 Timothy 1:10), as opposed to a disembodied immortal spirit (soul) wafting off to heaven. This *truth* about life after death *is central to the gospel message* and critical to grasping the correct understanding about how immortality and entrance into the eternal realm of the spirit world—God’s Kingdom—is accomplished!

And yet, regardless of these plain illustrations, most traditional Christians will still concede to denominational tradition, *accepting the erroneous man-made teachings* of the *immortality of the human soul* and that God is a closed fraternity, described as a Trinity, offering an eternity with Him as some type of disembodied spirit that has wafted off to heaven upon death. Uniquely enough, Paul mentions this issue when he says, “Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is *no resurrection of the dead*” (1 Corinthians 15:12)? Inexorably, this is exactly what many Christians are saying today, not realizing their denial of biblical truth, when adopting the idea of going to heaven as a disembodied immortal soul. Read the rest of this portion of Scripture, it’s quite interesting how he answers this question (1 Corinthians 15:13–26). Remember, Paul was dealing with similar false teachings from the Gnostics, Hellenists, and Mithras who also promoted the immortality of the soul, as do most traditional Christians when claiming you go to heaven or hell after you die. This was the common understanding of the day, adopted by and from many of the philosophers of the era.

As it was in Christ’s time, so it is today; many still do not realize what, exactly, the Father and Son are doing. They are distracted by *a variety of false teachings* that have crept into the Christian church over the centuries, which unfortunately have caused blindness to the truth about what God the Father is actually accomplishing through Jesus Christ and the church. But undoubtedly, the Bible definitely reveals the Godhead is composed of the Father and Son. This Divine Elohim currently consists of both of these divine beings. They dwell in the dimension of eternity as spirit beings, composed of non-carnal material, offering to mankind the same destiny, if they (mankind) will choose to repent and accept Christ’s sacrifice for their sins and embrace Him as their Savior and model their lives after His example.

Jesus Christ’s whole life was made manifest to humanity for the express purpose of *constructing and disclosing the process of redemption* that is foundationally built on His life, sacrifice, and resurrection. Notice how this is described: “God who at sundry [various] times spake in the time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His [a] Son whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He [Christ] made the worlds [Earth and all the universe]; Who being the brightness of His [the Father’s] glory, and the express image [exact copy, stamped figure] of His [the Father’s] person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself [Jesus Christ] purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high [the Father]; Being made so much better than the angels, as He [Jesus Christ] hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Hebrews 1:1–4).

Now notice the relationship Jesus Christ presently enjoys with the Father: “For unto which

of the angels said He [the Father] at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son? And again, when He [the Father] bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He [the Father] saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him” (Hebrews 1:5–6). The writer continues clarifying the relationship between the Father and Son by saying, “But unto the Son He [the Father] saith, Thy Throne, O God [Jesus Christ], is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy [Jesus Christ’s] kingdom. Thou [Jesus Christ] hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God [the Father], even thy God, hath anointed Thee [Jesus Christ] with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Hebrews 1:8–9). So, is it any wonder why John says; “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (1 John 2:23).

Clearly, we see the Father’s affirmation of the position and status of Jesus Christ binds the two together so that if you as an individual would deny Christ, you are also *denying the witness, or validation the Father* gives to Christ as His firstborn. Notice how John explains this: “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ [the anointed]? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22). John proceeds to reaffirm Christ’s position by saying, “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God [the Father] which He [the Father] hath testified of His Son [Jesus Christ]. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God [the Father] hath made him [himself] a liar; because he believeth not the record [validation statement] that God [the Father] gave of His Son [Jesus Christ]. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son [this is the affirmation, God’s witness, His assurance, that Jesus is indeed the Anointed—the Christ]. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:9–13).

This relationship is a revelation to us as human beings of how God the Father is accomplishing His purpose and bringing many sons and daughters into eternal life. It unquestionably is a mystery, but is made somewhat comprehensible through understanding the process by which “Jesus the anointed [Greek: *Christos*]” went through and the present relationship He and the Father share. The Father achieves His work by sending forth His Spirit (John 15:26–27). Christ said that the works that He did were accomplished by the power of the Father working in Him via His (the Father’s) Spirit (John 12:46–50; 15:26–27).

Jesus illustrated this further when answering the question from Philip who asked, “Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us” (John 14:8). Notice what Jesus said: “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me Philip? [*Notice how Jesus describes His association and connection with the Father.*] he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? [*Jesus is implying that He represents the Father so closely and/or accurately that knowing Him is the same as knowing the Father.*] Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works [*therefore, knowing Me is like knowing the Father is what Jesus is trying to tell Philip*]. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (John 14:9–11). Christ is attempting to assure Philip He is the “icon” of the Father. He stands for everything the Father represents and the Father’s Spirit is in Him (Jesus) too;

and the works, the miracles, and all the profound teachings are proof—*validation*—of this claim.

The apostle Paul mentions and confirms Christ’s function, position, and present relationship with the Father to the congregation at Colosse. Notice what he says: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son [or the kingdom of the Son of his love]: In whom we have redemption through His [Christ’s] blood, even the forgiveness of sins: who is the image [Greek: *icon*—representation, likeness, picture, copy, statue, replica] of the invisible God [the Father], the firstborn of every creature: For by Him [Jesus Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him [Jesus Christ] and for Him [Jesus Christ]: and He is before all things, and by Him [Jesus Christ] all things consist” (Colossians 1:12–17).

The Bible is filled with clarity about how Christ represented the Father; that the Father was in Him and provided Him the power to do the things He did. Jesus claimed the Father was within Him, via the Father’s Spirit, and in that intimate way the two of them were connected as “one” in character, cause, purpose, will, and love. This example and description of how Jesus explained His relationship with the Father illustrated how He would do the same for His saints. This *model* of how the Father worked through Him is exactly what He meant when, on the night He was betrayed at the last supper, He told His disciples, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away [die for the sins of mankind and ascend to the Father]: for if I go not away, the Comforter [the Holy Spirit] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7).

This explanation goes back to what John was saying when he described Christ anointed “the coming,” or the indwelling, Christ in you—remember there were those who insisted Christ did not come (was not coming) in the flesh. Remember, it wasn’t only about denying Christ’s claim to be the Messiah (although for some, that too was part of their denial)—but it went beyond that! They were refuting the fact that Jesus Christ could continue “*to come in the flesh through this Holy Spirit*” and live His life over again in multiple ways through those Christians who repented and became baptized and impregnated with this Holy Spirit! This miraculous event of *God residing within the flesh of man—the indwelling*, bearing witness with our spirit that we are indeed the sons of God (Romans 8:14–17), fulfilling Jesus’ words regarding the *coming of the Comforter*, was just infuriating to some and caused them to be, in John’s mind, defined as “the spirit of antichrist.” These particular ones, labeled antichrists, came out from their fellowship (1 John 2:18–19) and denied that Christ was capable of this kind of *projection and continuation* of His life through converted Christians by the dispersion of the Holy Spirit.

This was *also part of the reason* why John said there were many antichrists. It wasn’t just one person who was the antichrist in John’s mind. No, to the contrary, it was larger than that. John said there were many (much, great, voluminous) who had been among the congregations (1 John 2:18), but now have gone out into the world and will not confess that Christ is *still coming* (then and now, in the aorist tense) in the flesh (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7); these are those who have the “spirit of antichrist” in John’s assessment.

CHAPTER FOUR

But What About the End-Time Man of Sin: Who Is He?

In the book of Daniel, we are introduced to the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream about an image made of gold, silver, brass, and a mixture of iron and clay. Daniel's interpretation provides some insight about how God will orchestrate the closure to this saga of mankind. Notice what Daniel writes after describing the four kingdoms that will precede Jesus Christ's Second Coming. He says, "And in the days of these kings [the 10 kings, beast, and false prophet] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms [of the earth] and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).

And again, some years later *Daniel has a vision* about four beasts, but essentially is about the same prophetic event, and receives the interpretation from the angel who was near him at the time. Daniel writes, "I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this [the vision]. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise *out of the earth* [like that of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel 2:36–49]. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever, and ever" (Daniel 7:16–18).

We are assured that, in the time of the end, total destruction will come to those who battle Christ. But Christ will conquer them and ***rule the earth*** from the Mount of Olives—not in, or from, heaven. Notice: "And the LORD shall be king over *all the earth*: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one" (Zechariah 14:9). So, it is encouraging to know that it does work out for the good to those who follow Christ and love God the Father, but it isn't going to be easy. Leading up to this victory there is a variety of tumultuous heart-breaking events that are initiated by the duo the Bible labels the beast, or man of sin, and in addition, the false prophet, a religious leader. These two individuals, in combination with a coalition of ten kings, will cause such chaos, destruction, and death on the Earth that Jesus said, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matthew 24:22):

After reading and understanding the beast will be the one who will fight Christ upon His return (Revelation 17:11–14), it is only natural to think he is antichrist. And regardless of the fact that the Bible doesn't ***technically connect any scriptures to him with that label***; he definitely has the *spirit and attitude* of an antichrist—confirming him to be the *end-time* "antichrist" that *John references* they (the Christians) heard about. Paul calls him a "man of sin" decades before John uses the term "antichrist." Notice: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first [from the faith once delivered—the truth], and that "*man of sin*" be revealed, the son of perdition;

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he as God [this man of sin] sits in the temple of God, showing himself [this man of sin] that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–5)? (Clearly, Paul at this time sincerely believed Christ would return in his lifetime and this *man of sin* would soon inhabit the *existing temple* during Paul’s ministry. Little did he know, almost 2,000 years later, we would still be waiting for the manifestation of this man of sin, false prophet, a ten king combine, and some kind of rebuilt temple).

However, it’s apparent this tyrant is going to set himself up as though he is some kind of messiah to the world. He will be viewed as “*the man*” with solutions for all of humanity’s problems. Notice how Daniel describes him: “And in the *latter time* of their kingdom [after the Greco-Babylonian-Roman empires run their course], when the transgressors are come to the full [or accomplished], a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up [the man of sin—the beast]. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully [by wonderful works] and shall prosper and practice [see Revelation 18 for a description of the apex of power, wealth, and influence this beast’s empire achieves] and shall destroy the mighty [strong nations] and the holy people [the church]. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand: and he shall magnify himself in his heart [setting himself up as a type of messiah—a demagogue], and by peace [prosperity] shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against [anti] the Prince of princes [Jesus Christ]; but he shall be broken without hand” (Daniel 8:23–25).

This is exactly what we read in Daniel chapter 7, where we’re assured in two places, the Saints of the Most High God are successful in taking the kingdom forever. God’s plan includes the detail of how He finally does, indeed, destroy this power with His coming, but unfortunately, not before this beast is allowed to ravage most of the world. Notice again: “Thus he [the angel] said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour [eat, consume, burn up, accuse] *the whole earth*, and shall tread [trample, tear, break, thresh] it down, and break it in pieces” (Daniel 7:23). Clearly, this beast power will be very destructive and works in collusion with the false prophet to set up the “abomination of desolation” (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14–20; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–7) that will ultimately result in *STATE* worship and *STATE* control of the masses by employing some kind of “mark” (Revelation 13:16–17).

In the book of Revelation, after describing this beast power as an amalgamation of the four beasts, John explains how its *wound was healed* and the entire world wondered at the beast (the man of sin) as to who could make war with it (Revelation 13:1–10). And then we are told: “And I beheld another beast [the false prophet] coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb [religious connotation] and he spoke as a dragon [driven by Satan/demons]. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast [the man of sin] before him and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to *worship* the first beast [*STATE* worship], whose deadly wound was healed [this is a *social system* that is healed—it returns from its dormant condition, back onto the geopolitical stage]. And he [the false prophet] doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven [miraculous signs] on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he [the false prophet] had power to do in the sight of the beast [the

man of sin—the tyrant]: saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image [connotation of worship, the *abomination of desolation*] to the beast which had the wound by a sword and did live” (Revelation 13:11–14). This agrees with the notion that Paul described in Thessalonians that arrangements would be made to set the circumstances in motion for the *man of sin to be worshiped* as some kind of “god” to establish a form of demagoguery within the government for *socialistic and cultural control*.

We know this will result in religious persecution that will be extremely catastrophic to those who claim the testimony of Jesus Christ and keep the Commandments of God—the Christian Church (Revelation 12:17)! We are told he (the beast) will make war with the saints and prevail against them. We are also warned this man of sin—this tyrant—will seek to change times and laws for approximately three and one-half years. Obviously, this will cause many Christians who observe times and laws that are *in conflict* with the government to come under *STATE scrutiny*, jeopardizing their careers, and means to make a living, along with their own personal safety and that of their families and brethren (Daniel 7:21–26; 8:24).

We are also warned throughout the gospels that in the last days Christians will be hated among all nations, that they will be delivered up to the state and governmental authorities; brethren, friends, and family *will betray one another* and *many will be killed* for the name of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:9–13; Luke 21:12–19; John 16:1–3; Revelation 6:9–11). These will be horrific conditions for those Christians who are alive at this time! It will not be for the faint of heart or the weak Christian. No, instead, these will be times for Christians who are strong and secure in their faith and can *stand in the gap* for the name of Jesus Christ and confidently provide a witness for the faith and hope that lies within them (1 Peter 3:15)! *These will be extremely tumultuous, chaotic, and the most trying of times in the history of Christianity and ultimately for all of mankind!*

John makes it plain: this government will rule the masses. Notice what the angel shows John, which confirms the reach and influence of power this socialistic government retains over all the earth. “I [the angel] will show unto thee [John] the judgment of the great whore [implied religious power] that sits upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication [political intercourse] and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk [delusional] with the wine [fruit] of her fornication [political interplay].... and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns [the same as Revelation 13:1–10], And the woman was arrayed...and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls [extremely affluent, materialistically].... in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications [corruption, graft, violations of human and civil rights and liberties]: upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Revelation 17:2–5).

Remember, a woman is a metaphor of a church in the context of prophecy. However, this is clearly the description of a *false church*—a religious organization that commits “fornication.” The use of the word “fornication” is a figure of speech intended to illustrate she is politically, socially, economically, and spiritually having confluence with many humanistic, non-religious heads of state. The names and label of “blasphemy” are appropriated by God to describe the conflict and animosity He has with this secular socialistic world government. This is a *state government combined with a church*—a mystery religion—a type of theoc-

racy, which favors purple and scarlet colors for her leaders.

Incontrovertibly, the evidence of this church's identity points to ROME! Notice where John describes her location; "And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth" (Revelation 17:9). Rome is considered the "Eternal City," which literally sits on *seven hills*. Don't forget, during John's lifetime, Rome was also the seat of the secular government of the Empire. He mentions it this way: "And the woman [church] which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth" (Revelation 17:18). Undoubtedly, during his lifetime, when this was written, *Rome is the city of reference!*

But John continues, "And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition" (Revelation 17:10–11). Halley's *Bible Handbook* (HBH) mentions this as a possible consideration to John's reference: "'Seven Kings: five are Fallen: One Is: One Yet to Come.' This, further, indicates Rome. At the time this was written, *Five World-Empires had fallen*: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. *One is*: Rome. *One Yet To Come*: Babylon the Harlot. 'An Eighth is of the Seven.' This looks like a Revival of the Beast, after the Seven Heads and Ten Horns have passed, perhaps pointing to the Final **FORM** this *end-time antichrist* will assume" (HBH, p. 731).

"An Apostate Church on the Throne of a World-Empire: This description of Babylon the Great Harlot, Seated on the Seven-Headed Ten-Horned Beast, while it *may have* ultimate reference to a situation *yet to appear*; Exactly fits Papal Rome. Nothing else in World History does fit. The desire for Worldly Power began to manifest itself in the Church, on a broad scale, in the 4th century, when the Roman Empire ceased its Persecutions, and *made Christianity its State Religion*. The spirit of Imperial Rome passed into the Church. The Church gradually developed itself into the pattern of the Empire it had conquered" (HBH, p. 731).

Throughout Revelation chapters 13, 17, 18, and 20, profiles are provided of this end-time empire that ostensibly connect with the previous Babylonian, Greco-Roman-Macedonian empires. We are told very clearly this is a *previous system* that *existed before*, but now in the last days, prior to the return of Jesus Christ, has been healed (Revelation 13:3–7). It has ***come back from its dormant past*** to regain its former status of affluence and power it once held over the world (Revelation 13:8–10; 17:1, 15). It will be structured with a secular/military arm in combination with a state religion, giving the state church the authority to arrest and penalize any who may be found in conflict with the government's theocratic civil orders (Revelation 13:11–18). It will consist of a single dictator, called the *beast*, or the *man of sin*, who will have the support of the religious organization through the efforts of the *false prophet*. These two individuals will *parlay the power of ten additional kings*, making this a socialistic government that will share their power as one with the beast for a short time (Revelation 17:12–14). (*However, keep in mind, ultimately they—the ten kings—will "make her [the religious segment] desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" [Revelation 17:16–17]. The Bible is plain about the destiny of the religious organization being destroyed by the ten kings who will then combine forces to fight against Jesus Christ with the beast [Revelation 17:11–14]; but will be conquered and removed from their roles of global influence and destroyed by Jesus Christ at His return [Revelation 19:11–*

217.)

The history of the Catholic (Universal) Church and its combined effort to stamp out the Church of God that attempted to retain the faith that was once delivered is not a pleasant legacy. There are so many shockingly devastating stories and hideous records of tortures, abuse, betrayals, and killings associated with the Universal (Catholic) Church's reach to force conformity upon the people, that it's enough to cause one to pause and consider: just how bad is it going to *get again* for those in God's true church as the age of human rule comes to an close? We are warned, "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Matthew 24:22).

We know from the annals of history that a "watershed moment" was the Council of Nicaea in approximately 325 C.E. This became a line of demarcation for the Universal (Catholic) Church. It was from this point forward that it became empowered to force compliance with the threat of death if one should refuse its edicts and directives. Many things were changed from this point (i.e., Passover to Easter, Sabbath to Sunday, Trinitarian leanings, immortality of the soul, heaven, hell, etc.). So much was changed over the next thousand years that today the original teachings of what Christ taught is known by comparably few. By the end of the second century, the Church took on a new profile, as well as character. Leading bishops began to be called "Metropolitans." Eventually the bishop of Rome became the "Pope." The church adopted the structure of Rome's secular government and created an "image" of Rome when they established a pagan Roman diocese and great diocese, and adopted the colors of harlotry.

In his *Bible Handbook*, Halley wrote:

"Popes claim to hold on earth the place of God, to have Supreme Authority over the Human Conscience, to Forgive Sin, to Grant Indulgences, and that Obedience to Them is necessary to Salvation, How could anything be more Blasphemous?"

"'Scarlet,' the color of the Beast and the Harlot, and also of the Dragon, is the Color of the Papacy. The Papal Throne is Scarlet. It is borne by twelve men clad in Scarlet. The Cardinals' hats and robes are Scarlet. Originally the Devils color, it has now become the color of Atheistic Communism: they are commonly spoken of as Reds, Red Army, Red Territory, the Red Square in Moscow, the Devil again marshalling his hosts from without.

"'Filthiness of her Fornication.' Appalling Immoralities of Popes of the Middle Ages are well known.

"'Drunk with the Blood of Martyrs.' The Horrors of the Inquisitions, ordered and maintained by the Popes, over a period of 500 years, in which unnumbered millions were Tortured and Burned, constitute the MOST BRUTAL, BEASTLY, and DEVILISH PICTURE in all history.

"It is not pleasant to write these things. It is inconceivable that any Ecclesiastical Organization, in its mania for Power, could have distorted and desecrated and corrupted, for its own exaltation, the beautiful and holy religion of Jesus, as the Papacy has done.

"But Facts are Facts. And History is History. And most amazing of all, it seems exactly pre-figured in Revelation. No wonder John's vision made him sic at heart (Revelation 17:3-6; 10:10)" (HBH, p. 732).

Revelation 17 Describes a Coming Socialistic State-Church Combine

Unmistakably, as was already pointed out, “Rome” appears to be the location where this beast power will emerge, or perhaps, if it is a figure of speech, to be used as a representation of this coming *King of the North*. The European Union and its currency, the Euro, may be the genesis of this emerging beast power. The looming economic challenges may ultimately change the arrangement of this monolithic economic system. But, if the patterns of history are repeated, which go back to Alexander the Great’s generals, the Seleucids (king of the North) and the Ptolemies (king of the South) (Daniel 11), the term “Rome” will be most appropriate.

But regardless, this end-time King of the North seems to be a resurrected Greco-Roman-Babylonian system. And quite clearly, what is described in the Bible as this latter-day socialistic government with ten kings, combined with church and state “piggy-backed” on each other is *NOT* anywhere near the description of the present European Union—*therefore something must change!* Presently, that seems unavoidable and should remain a *dynamic event* for the future of Europe to deal with in years to come as it continues to pursue European unity.

However, it’s quite the quantum leap from the present secularist multi-state European Union to a theocratic socialistic system described in Revelation 17. Yet, interestingly, John clearly writes, there will be an autocrat who will share power with ten additional kings for a short time in conjunction with a religious power that will work in support for the state. This religious organization is described to rule over many waters (people, multitudes, nations, and tongues) and will share (sit atop of the beast) power with the state. We are also forewarned; this religious organization is drunk with the blood of the saints from the past and will continue its *killing frenzy* against God’s church *in the future*, as described by Daniel (Daniel 7:21, 25) and John (Revelation 6:9–11). The fact this beast power will make war with the saints, *goes to illustrate a place of safety is not necessarily found in the Scriptures*. That’s not to say God cannot provide protection, *because He will for some*. But, to say that God is going to provide a place of hiding and/or safety for the *whole church* during the times of tribulation—*similar to the rapture*—is just not in the Scriptures. Contrary to this view, we are reminded, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

Daniel also reveals this European resurrected Greco-Babylonian system will play the role of the *King of the North* from the previous pattern established by the Seleucids who originally represented Syria that later became Rome; and they will invade the Middle East, taking control of Israel (the glorious land). Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia will also become a type of vassal state (Daniel 11:40–43).

Obviously, at this present time the E.U. has no aspirations, nor the military or political will for doing anything of this magnitude. However, that’s *not to say* geopolitical trends won’t, at some time in the future, begin to accommodate and facilitate the necessary circumstances to fulfill these prophetic scenarios—*because they will!* The Bible is very plain about the trends of the world moving toward a one world governmental system—a world order that will be connected via technology and economics. Incredibly, it would appear we are currently in the beginning of those developments. The One World Alliance, One World Order, or the

idea we are a global village is now the modern day outlook of today's geopolitics through the prism of "***State Capitalism and Sovereign Funds.***"

Don't misunderstand, and make no mistake, there are still plenty of rumors of war. World-wide tensions will continue to exist, but that doesn't dismiss the fact that many of the world's leaders realize technology and economics have caused such global interdependence, that ignoring this reality is no longer an option. Presently, it is enormously serious for any nation to consider any offensive or defensive action against another country for any reason, even among those nations that are politically, economically, militarily, or socially opposed to each other. The consequences of any overt action are far more reaching today, simply because of the social and economic interdependence. Ironically, this has certainly created a global environment for some very strange geopolitical "bed fellows."

But, with that said, a world dictator *will absolutely emerge* onto the world stage. And when he does, he will be viewed as mankind's solution to the hardships of the present world's conditions *at that time*. Notice again, "And in the *latter time* of their kingdom... a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty... and he shall destroy wonderfully [by wonderful works], and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty [nations] and the holy people [the church]... and he shall magnify himself and his heart, and by peace [prosperity] shall destroy many" (Daniel 8:23–25). We are told it will be this individual and the combine of ten kings and the false prophet that will fight Christ upon His return (Revelation 17:14). However, they will be destroyed and the kingdom of the earth will be taken from them when Christ establishes His kingdom (Revelation 19:17–21; Daniel 7:11–14; Zechariah 14:9).

EPILOGUE

Obviously, the notion the end-time “man of sin” will be considered an antichrist is a plausible presumption when considering the evidence of Chapter 4, regardless of no direct scriptural connection. *There is no debate on that.* We know it to be true if for no other reason than the plain fact that he will be the force that will confront Christ upon His return in an effort to stop Him from disrupting his powerbase and “socialistic world order.” We are told, “These [the beast and the ten kings] *shall make war with the Lamb, [Unquestionably, this is an antichrist attitude and spirit]* and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:12–14).

In addition, we mentioned at the beginning of this booklet there was what appears to be an innuendo from John referencing an end-time antichrist. This does appear to present the possibility that it was a common understanding there would be an end-time antichrist. But, admittedly, though John’s emphasis is on multiple antichrists, there does indeed appear to be some reference on this additional insinuation, *though only in passing*, that there was a common understanding of a coming person, identified as “*the antichrist*” in the “last time.”

Notice how he says this: “Little children, it is the last time: and *as ye have heard [implication: the Christian community at large “heard”—heard of what?]: that antichrist shall come.*” And then he continues with the emphasis on many antichrists, hoping, of course, to make the **additional point** of the **extended meaning**, that this is a “spirit,” or *attitude*, and was already *currently prevalent*. But clearly, he does mention in the course of that emphasis that he was aware, many of them (present Christians) “*heard*” of a *last time antichrist* who was expected to cause all kinds of destruction, persecution, and set himself up as God in the temple (Daniel 7:17–28; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4). Read it again. “Little children, it is the last time: and as *ye have heard* that antichrist [end-time man of sin] shall come” (1 John 2:18).

However, he is adamant on warning the present-day Christians they need to be aware of this, but not allow themselves to become complacent toward false doctrines, just because this “man of sin” hasn’t arrived yet onto the world stage. Reason being: it might lead them into compromise and adopt a *spirit (attitude) of the antichrist* as had been done to some who went out from among them already!

This seems to be a clear indication John was well aware of the expectation of a person who would become the end-time antichrist and confront Jesus Christ upon His return. Certainly, John was keenly aware of the prophecies in Daniel that revealed this end-time leader of the fourth kingdom, who would understand dark sentences and take control of the world right before the return of Jesus Christ (Daniel 7:7–8, 17–28; 8:23–27). Paul even went as far as labeling him, as mentioned before, the “man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3–12).

However, with that said, we also wanted to explain in our attempt to **comprehensively** understand this term “antichrist,” that it goes beyond just identifying the latter-day dictator—*unquestionably*, it does extend outside of simply his identity. And from the pages of your Bible, John makes this important distinction that does us all well to recognize—that there was an *attitude and spirit of antichrist* emerging due to the *relentless persuasion and*

incremental compromises within the church from the cultural paganism surrounding it. Consequently, he felt very strongly near the end of his life that recognizing the *additional dimension* of who the antichrist is more deeply was critical for being *better prepared* to defend the original apostolic teachings and for maintaining the truth that was being diluted.

John's outcry, as he begins to admonish his readers, in the opening statements of 1 John, is illustrative of his passion and sense of urgency to confirm and assure that what he had seen and felt, what he had witnessed, was indeed the "real deal," and because there were some serious encroachments that were attempting to undermine the substance of what Jesus Christ represented and who He really was—he passionately wanted his audience to believe what he was about to tell them was, in fact, *TRUE!* John was outraged and extremely heartfelt about providing some final statements concerning the legitimacy of Jesus Christ as the actual Son of God, Savior, and propitiation (High Priest), for all of Mankind.

Notice the emotional appeal through the words he expresses. Ironically, the first sign of his intensity is *the missing words of an opening salutation, or greeting* that normally accompanies most of the epistles, including his own second and third epistles. Right from the start, he's off and running with his "specific purpose statement." You get the sense that he's a man on a mission—a last ditch effort in the closing years of his life to appeal for abiding in the "*original teachings*" they heard "*from the beginning*" concerning who and what was Jesus Christ!

Notice: "That which was from the beginning, which we [*perhaps some of them, but most assuredly the other apostles who were now all dead. Remember John was the last apostle standing at this time*] have heard [literally], which we have seen with our eyes [literally], which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled [literally], of the Word [Jesus the Anointed] of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life [*remember, John was an eye witness of the resurrected Christ. He saw Him and witnessed stupendous miracles when He was a Spirit Being walking the earth some 40 days after He was crucified and then resurrected*], which was with the Father [*Jesus existed before His incarnation; the Gnostics denied this*], and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard [literally] declare we unto you [*he reemphasizes this, to remind them that he really and literally saw Jesus, and what He manifested as the "human potential" was, in fact, obtainable for them*], that ye also may have fellowship [partnership, be a benefactor] with us: and truly our fellowship [partnership] is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus the Christ [the Anointed]" (1 John 1:1–3).

Now here is why John claims he is writing this. He gives his readers the reason for this writing—his intent. Notice: "And these things write we unto you, that your *joy* may be full [complete, fulfilled, satisfied]" (1 John 1:4). John wanted them to be happy, at ease with knowing that he, being an eye-witness of the glory displayed, or manifested, in the resurrection of Christ—that they could rest assured their own sacrifice, present risk, and jeopardy was well worth the price for holding on to the "truth," which he references in 1 John 2:21.

John was well aware, *as it is today in our modern times*, that heresy, lies, and misappropriated biblical teachings have obfuscated the truth of God and made the way and promises of God confused. There are literally thousands of Christian denominations today, all claiming they have the "truth." When, in fact, many of them are nothing more than "carryovers" of the very things John was so intently concerned about would hijack the doctrines taught

from the beginning. Notice how he expresses himself: “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: Let that therefore abide in you [*that if you are without the Son you don't have the Father; they come as a package. Therefore you must accept Jesus Christ as your Savior in order to have a relationship with the Father*], which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you [*this is foundational part of the original teachings of the apostles—accept Christ and you have the Father too; but without Christ, there is no relationship with the Father*], ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you” (1 John 2:23–25).

John was making reference about those who were the seducers and teaching, like the Docetics, Cerinthus, and others, that Jesus was not the Anointed (the Christ). They taught He was a good man, but He was not divine, didn't preexist, nor was He the Son of God as John was teaching Him to be. They taught you should sin in order to gain more of God's grace—that you should consider your body as evil, like a prison, praying for the day your immortal soul will be released to heaven. These are just a few of the teachings compared to so many other heretical doctrines being spread throughout the region.

John found these teachings offensive, distracting, and misdirecting. So, he took these issues to task, head on—attempting to add clarity to the truth surrounding the incarnation of Jesus Christ and the value it had for all of humanity. This is why he was appealing so emphatically about *remembering the beginnings* of what was taught. He reminded them he was an eyewitness of some of the most astounding, awe-inspiring, supernatural events ever to be witnessed by a human being, and they were indeed *REAL and AUTHENTIC!*

He went on to state that if Christians would do this, they would be kept in good stead and achieve their rightful reward. Notice what John said: “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who *confess not* that Jesus Christ is come [is coming, the indwelling, Christ in you] in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things, which we have wrought [gained, have already obtained understanding of], but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (3 John 7–9).

John is explicitly clear in his reiteration: if you abide in the doctrine of Christ (that He is divine; He is God, the Son of God; He is the Savior, High Priest, King of kings, and Lord of lords), *you have both* the Father and the Son. On the other hand, if you follow the Gnostics, Hellenists, Mithras, or others of the Greco/Oriental philosophers that have so infected the present-day Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestant denominations, you would not be able to abide in the “truth” that affords you a *more authentic and real* understanding and, consequently, relationship with God.

Notice again what John says concerning this. “If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 John 10). The context is plain and to the point; those who don't accept Jesus Christ as being the Messiah, the One that the prophets spoke about, the One who was promised as Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23), which means God with us—and that His Anointing made possible the act of dispensing the Holy Spirit *into* human beings. John says they are of the attitude and spirit of antichrist, which also happens to be the same frame of mind the beast will have.

IN SUMMARY

We understand that John recognized there was more to this term “antichrist” than most realized. Yes, there were teachers and itinerate preachers who were indeed undermining the legitimacy of Jesus Christ and attempting to misappropriate and misdirect those within the church to doubt His claims of being the Messiah. Sadly, these Gnostics, Hellenists, and Mithras, to mention a few, caused some to leave the fellowship and follow their pernicious ways.

Halley’s *Handbook* states under the heading, “Conflicts with Heathen Philosophies”: “No sooner had Christianity made its appearance than it began its process of amalgamation with Greek and Oriental Philosophies; and there arose many Sects: Gnosticism, Manichaeism, Montanism, Monarchianism, Arianism, Appolinarianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, Monophysites. From the second to the sixth centuries the Church was rent with controversies over these and similar Isms, and almost lost sight of its true mission” (Halley’s *Bible Handbook*, p. 761).

Notice what the apostle Peter said about this. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even *denying the Lord* [the spirit and attitude of antichrist] that bought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (2 Peter 2:1–3).

John is trying to make the point: it’s just as important to realize that adopting a definition that includes the additional insight that an antichrist is a person who also undermines the value of Jesus Christ, His sacrifice, and *living priesthood* as the interceding Messiah—that this too, is the *spirit and attitude* of the antichrist. To embrace this *MORE COMPREHENSIVE* understanding of just what an antichrist is goes to **knowing the heart** of the spirit that resides in the children of disobedience. Notice Paul’s comment concerning this issue. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [Satan the Devil], the *spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*” (Ephesians 2:2).

Yes, there is coming a “man of sin” that will be an antichrist. He will fight Christ upon His return, attempting to stop Him from intervening into human affairs, but instead, the beast will be stopped! Christ will overcome the beast and false prophet. In the end, the good guys win! God’s kingdom will be set up and Christ will rule for a thousand years. This is the Millennium, which during this period will serve to provide the time to rebuild a new social system, based on the laws of God, for the future resurrection of the rest of the dead at the end of the thousand years—a time when those who never had a chance to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Messiah will finally get their opportunity (Revelation 20:4–5)!

But, John’s parting words to us in these last days are enormously cogent about this *additional, more comprehensive, and enriched definition* of what is the antichrist. Notice: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. . . . That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you” (1 John 1:1–3). “Let that which therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from

the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father” (1 John 2:24). “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought [gained understanding about], but that we receive a full reward” (2 John 8).

John wants us to be aware and realize that just because the man of sin is not yet in place doesn’t mean there isn’t a *SPIRIT AND ATTITUDE* of the antichrist presently influencing the world and Christians alike—because there is! And the fact that there is proves we are in the last days (1 John 2:18).

So, don’t underestimate the times we are living in and your own vulnerability to being deceived! Hold fast to what you’ve been taught and understand to be true from the beginning about Jesus Christ. The fact that some, even during John’s lifetime, would follow these deceivers proves everybody is exposed to the influences of the *antichrist spirit* that permeates the societies and cultures of our present day world (1 John 2:19).

Notice John’s warning: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist” (1 John 4:1–3). “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come [still coming] in the flesh [through the Holy Spirit]. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7).

John’s message to all Christians for our day and age is to remain vigilant and watch—be prepared at all times. The spirit of disobedience, and denial of His divinity and role as mankind’s Savior, who is able to live in human beings through His Spirit, is the spirit of the antichrist—and it is alive and well throughout the world today. It is an attitude and spirit that will accelerate and wax worse going into the future. But if we hold fast to that which we have learned *from the beginning*, we will obtain the prize. So, commit to the mission of “earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” and you will be assured entrance into the Kingdom of God!

Appendix One

Gnosticism

In the New Testament

Gnosticism (from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosis*) was a religious philosophy that taught salvation was obtained through the possession of secret knowledge known only to the “initiated.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* comments that Gnosticism was, in fact, a syncretistic mystery religion that blended together various elements of Jewish, Hellenistic, Babylonian, and Persian religions (“Gnosticism.” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Electronic Database, 1996, 2003, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.).

While *Christian* Gnosticism did not fully develop into distinct systems until the second century A.D., recent scholarship is concluding that the origin of Gnosticism is to be found on the fringes of a pre-Christian Hellenized Judaism. Birger A. Pearson, after studying numerous Gnostic texts discovered at Nag Hammadi in 1945, has concluded that the “revolutionary attitude” towards traditional Judaism in combination with the “massive utilization of Jewish traditions” in these texts can “only be interpreted historically as expressing a movement of Jews away from their own traditions as part of a progress of religious self-redefinition. The Gnostics, at least in the earliest stages of the history of the Gnostic movement, were people who can aptly be designated as ‘no longer Jews’” (Pearson, Birger A. *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis, 1990, p. 130). This “revolutionary attitude” toward normative Judaism is best reflected, writes Pearson, in the Jewish Gnostics rejection of the Law of God, and their contemptuous treatment of the biblical Creator (Pearson, p. 128).

Gnostic theology split the biblical God into a transcendent “unknown” God, whom the Gnostics worshiped, and a lower creator deity known as the Demiurge. The Demiurge was actually the God of the Old Testament, and was portrayed by the Gnostics as a demonic, illegitimate being (Pearson, p. 128). As a consequence, the material creation, and matter itself, was viewed as evil. The commandments of God were viewed as bondage, and anyone obeying them was, in the Gnostic view, serving “in fear and slavery” (Pearson, p. 129).

The belief that creation and matter were inherently evil led to extremes in behavior. On the one hand some Gnostics believed perfection could be reached by punishing the body through asceticism, “so that through the infliction of pain and the mortification of the flesh the region of pure spirit can be reached” (“Gnosticism.” *ISBE*, supra.). On the other end of the spectrum were those Gnostics who practiced licentiousness. They believed that the immortal soul of man was completely separate from his fleshly body. Accordingly, the “body may indulge its

fleshly desires” without any defilement of the spiritual aspect of man (Id.).

That the earliest Gnostics were renegade Jews should come as no surprise to those who have studied the New Testament. The record of the New Testament reveals the conflict between the early Christian Church and false teachers who often espoused proto-Gnostic doctrine. These false teachers, in many instances, were either Jews or existed on the fringes of Judaism.

Simon the sorcerer, who came into contact with the apostles in Acts 8, was from Samaria, just north of Judea. His claim to be the “great power of God” (Acts 8:10), represented “the claim to be the bearer of divine revelation,” and “illustrates the basically gnostic feature of his teaching” (Lohse, Eduard. *The New Testament Environment*. Abington: Nashville, 1976, p. 269). Lohse goes on to write that Simonian Gnosticism clearly shows “that ideas that developed on the periphery of Judaism significantly contributed to the emergence of gnostic teaching” (Id.).

Walter Schmithals has persuasively argued that the opponents of Paul in Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Rome were Jewish Gnostics who were introducing Gnostic teachings into these Christian communities, and perverting the true Gospel message (*Paul & the Gnostics*. Abingdon Press: New York, 1972). The false teachers in Galatia were pushing circumcision on the Galatian Christians, but a circumcision that was remolded under Gnostic speculation. Schmithals notes, citing Galatians 6:13, that the Gnostic teachers in Galatia, although circumcised, had renounced the observance of God’s Law in principle (Schmithals, p. 33–34).

The opponents of Paul in Philippi were also likely Jewish Gnostics. While practicing circumcision, the false teachers in Philippi were described by the Apostle Paul as being “evil workers” and “dogs.” Such expressions, Schmithals writes, would never be used by Paul to describe law-observant Jews; rather, the Jewish Gnostics in Philippi were libertines, who had rejected the observance of the law (Schmithals, p. 86). Schmithals also sees in Philippians 3:10–15 Paul’s rejection of the “foundational dogma” of Gnostic teaching—a denial of the resurrection from the dead (Schmithals, p. 92–93).

Paul again confronts teachers who denied the resurrection in Corinth. Pearson writes that the great resurrection chapter—1 Corinthians 15—was meant to counter Paul’s opponents, who taught the immortality of the soul as the basis for their rejection of the resurrection of the body (Pearson, p. 169). Again, it should be noted that the false teachers in Corinth were identified by the Apostle Paul as being Hebrews and Israelites (2 Corinthians 11:22).

The false teaching of Gnostic asceticism was addressed by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 2:21, 23, and again in 1 Timothy 4:3 (“Gnosticism.” *ISBE*, supra.). The antinomian Gnostic extreme is referenced, among other places, in 2 Timothy 3:5–6; Titus 1:16; 2 Peter 2:12, 18, and the Epistle of Jude (Id.).

Some of the false teachers in Ephesus taught that the resurrection is already past—a key Gnostic teaching. (2 Timothy 2:18). Others were teaching “fables and endless genealogies” (1 Timothy 1:4), a reference to the allegorizing of the

Old Testament that was popular with some first-century Jewish philosophers. The allegorizing of Scripture was often joined with the teaching of the genealogies of *aeons* (spiritual powers emanating from the Gnostic Supreme God) (“Gnosticism.” *ISBE*, supra.). It also should be noted that Paul’s opponents in the Pastoral Epistles are described as “those of the circumcision group” (Titus 1:10), and as teaching “Jewish myths and commandments of men” (Titus 1:14).

The Apostle John also confronted Gnostic teaching in three epistles and in the Book of Revelation. It is generally recognized that John’s epistles were directed against the teaching of Cerinthus, a Jewish Gnostic from Alexandria, Egypt. Cerinthus denied the virgin birth of Jesus and taught that He was the son of Joseph and Mary. At Jesus’ baptism, “the Christ” descended upon Jesus and allowed Him to proclaim the “unknown Father” and perform miracles. Just prior to the crucifixion, “the Christ” departed from Jesus, and it was only Jesus who suffered and died while “the Christ” remained “impassible” (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, Chapter XXVI).

The denial of the incarnation is a classic Gnostic teaching called Docetism (from the Greek word *dokeo*, to seem). Gnostics could not accept that God could ever have contact with evil matter; consequently, the concept of the Word becoming flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, as clearly taught in the Gospel of John, was inconceivable to the Gnostic (“Gnosticism.” *ISBE*, supra).

The Apostle John described the denial of Jesus coming “in the flesh” as the doctrine of antichrist (1 John 4:2–3). He also confronted and rejected the antinomian Gnostic teaching as being incompatible with true Christianity (1 John 2:3–5; 3:4–10).

The Apostle John also makes reference to Gnostic teachers when writing to the seven churches in Asia. In two instances, he makes reference to the “synagogue of Satan” and those who worshiped at those synagogues as people who “say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie” (Revelation 2:8; 3:9). Ernest Martin writes that this was likely a reference to the false teachings of Samaritan Gnostics, who often claimed to be kinsmen to the Jews, and who worshiped in synagogues (Martin, Ernest; *The People That History Forgot*, Ask Publications, 1993, p. 41–42).

The results of modern research, which shows that Gnosticism formed on the periphery of Hellenistic Judaism, is consistent with the record of the New Testament. The New Testament reveals that false teachers, often described as either Jews or Samaritans, were introducing proto-Gnostic teachings into the Christian Church in the first century. Despite the apostles’ efforts to combat this dangerous heresy, history records that some aspects of Gnostic teaching remain to this day in many doctrines of traditional Christianity.

Appendix Two

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

Clash of Two Versions of Hellenistic Christianity

The first ecumenical council of the Church was convoked by the Emperor Constantine in A.D. 325 to address, among other issues, the Arian controversy which was severely dividing the Church. On one side of the dispute was Arius, who taught that Christ was a created being and not of the same divine nature as the Father. On the other side were Alexander and Athanasius, who taught that Christ had eternally existed with the Father and was of the same nature as the Father.

Although the Council of Nicaea rejected the unscriptural Arian teaching, it did so by use of unscriptural terms that were drawn from Greek and Egyptian philosophy, and which started the Church down the road to the ultimate acceptance of the unscriptural doctrine of the Trinity. Historians recognize that the conflict at Nicaea was really a clash between two versions of Christianity that were both influenced by Hellenistic philosophy and speculation.

The main protagonists of the Arian controversy—Arius and Athanasius—were both from Alexandria, Egypt, and both were heavily influenced by the teachings of Origen, who was one of the foremost Christian philosophers of the third century. Origen's theology of the Godhead was more determined by the philosophy of Plato than by Scriptural teaching (Gonzalez, *Justo: A History of Christian Thought*. Nashville, Abington Press, 1970, Vol. I, p. 232).

Arius represented what has been classified as "left-wing Origenism" which subordinated Christ to the position of a creature, who was of a different nature from the Father. Arius' catchphrase was "There was a time when He [Christ] was not" (Gonzalez, p. 236). The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that Arianism viewed Christ as a demigod, who was produced by the Father as an intermediary between the Godhead and the universe. Arianism "appeared as an adaptation of Christianity to the Hellenistic philosophy of the time. As H. Gwatkin justly remarked, Arianism, scarcely disguised by the traditional terminology and the addition of scriptural quotations, was pagan to the core" ("Arianism." *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2002 ed.).

Athanasius represented what has been described as "right-wing Origenism" which affirmed the eternity of Christ and taught that He was of the same nature as the Father (Gonzales, p. 262). He was also, however, influenced by Hellenistic philosophy. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* notes that, from the outset, the Arian controversy "took place upon the common basis of Neoplatonic concept of substance, which was foreign to the New Testament itself. It is no wonder that the continuation of the dispute on the basis of the metaphysics of substance likewise led to concepts that have no foundation in the New Testament such as the ques-

tion of the sameness of essence (*homoousia*) or similarity of essence (*homoiousia*) of the divine persons” (“Christianity.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1979 ed.).

The Emperor Constantine, who hoped to make Christianity “the cement of the Empire,” convoked the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, in Bithynia in Asia, to settle the controversy. The Council, composed of 318 bishops, met from May 20 through July 25 (“Nicaea, Council of.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1911 ed.). The *Britannica* notes that the “one indisputable fact is that Constantine...exercised a decided influence on the discussions” (Id.).

The *Britannica* also records that only a small minority of the bishops held to the views of Arius. Furthermore, the viewpoint of Athanasius—which was represented by Alexander, bishop of Alexandria—also represented a minority viewpoint. The vast majority of the attendees occupied a position between the views of Arius and Alexander (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1911 ed.; Gonzalez, p. 273).

It is interesting to note that many of the bishops in attendance at first wanted to use the “acknowledged words of Scripture” to refute Arius and his followers (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2, Volume 4, PC Study Bible. BibleSoft, Inc., 2003, 2006). This course was rejected because of the Arians’ purported ability to twist the Scriptures that refuted their position (Id.).

Constantine ultimately intervened and suggested the word “consubstantial” (*homoousios*) to reflect that Christ was of the “same substance” as the Father, to make clear Christ’s divinity, and to reject Arius’ teaching (Gonzalez, p. 274). The problem with this choice of “consubstantial” was that it was not found in Scripture. The word had first been used by early Gnostic teachers in the second century, and had, in fact, been condemned as heretical by the Council of Antioch in A.D. 268, as it tended toward a modalistic interpretation of the Godhead (“Consubstantiality.” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2002 ed.). Athanasius attempted to explain away the use of an unscriptural term by arguing that, as the Arians “uttered their impieties in unscriptural terms,” it was proper to refute them “by unscriptural terms pious in meaning” (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2, Volume 4).

Recent research reflects that Constantine’s choice of the word “consubstantial” at Nicaea came straight from his Hermetic (pagan Egyptian) background. This word was contained “in the theological language of Egyptian paganism,” and meant that the pagan Nous-Father and Logos-Son shared “the same perfection of the divine nature” (Beatrice, Pier Franco. “The word *homoousios* from Hellenism to Christianity.” *Church History*, June 2002). Franco goes on to write that “Constantine was deeply convinced of the possibility of interpreting the Christian doctrine of the Trinity by means of the categories he had inherited from the most sophisticated pagan theology of his day” (Id.).

Although the majority of the assembled bishops ultimately signed off on a creed that defined the relationship between the Father and the Son in unscriptural terms, the *Britannica* comments that “the voting was no criterion of the inward convictions of the council” (*Britannica*, 1911 ed., supra.). Their voting was due “partly to the pressure of the imperial will” (Id.). The majority acquiesced in the

Nicene Creed because of their overwhelming rejection of Arius' teaching that Christ was a created being.

That Nicaea only achieved an "artificial unity" is reflected in the fact that soon the "creed was assailed by those very bodies which had composed the *laissez-faire* center at Nicaea" (Id.). The struggle over the proper definition of the Godhead, including the relationship and status of the Holy Spirit to the Godhead—a topic not even addressed at Nicaea—continued for the next sixty years. This period of time in church history has been called by Trinitarian historian R.P.C. Hanson the "Period of Confusion" (Hanson, R.P.C. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*. T & T Clark: Edinburgh, 1988, p. 179). It was not until the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381 that the Church settled upon a completed doctrine of the Trinity—One God in three Persons.

The temporary compromise reached at Nicaea was simply one step in the long journey to Christian "orthodoxy" with respect to the doctrine of the Godhead. Historian Justo Gonzalez, another Trinitarian scholar, admits that the "Nicene formula...shows a marked Hellenistic influence" (Gonzalez, p. 298). Both parties at Nicaea, Gonzalez writes, were influenced by Hellenistic philosophy, although in Arianism the "Hellenistic spirit was greater." What Nicaea actually represented was "the setting of a limit, by a moderately Hellenized Christianity, to the exaggerated influence of philosophical speculation on Christian theology" (Id.).

While the bishops at Nicaea rightly rejected Arius' unscriptural view of Jesus Christ as a created being, they went beyond the language of Scripture to do so. A precedent was set at Nicaea that ultimately ended in an "orthodox" definition of God that was not based upon the teaching of the New Testament. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* sums it up by acknowledging that "not only the verbal idiom but even the patterns of thought characteristic" of the church councils "would have been quite foreign to the mind and culture of the New Testament writers" ("Trinity, Holy." *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1965 ed.).

Appendix Three

Did Christianity Copy Mithraism?

Many pagans, agnostics, and atheists make the bold claim that Christianity “borrowed” their doctrines from Mithraism. Much misinformation on the Internet would have us believe that Mithra was a great teacher who healed the sick, cast out demons, and was resurrected after being killed. Mithra allegedly lived before Christ, which means the New Testament Jesus stories were based on the Mithra legends. But, actually, just the *opposite* is true. It was not a case of Christians copying pagans; it was a case of pagans copying Christians.

At first glance, the similarities between Christianity and Mithraism are striking. Like Christ, Mithra was supposedly born of a virgin, had twelve disciples, was a teacher of righteousness, performed miracles, was killed and resurrected, had a “last supper,” established a Eucharistic meal of bread and wine, and was known as the Light of the World and Mediator between heaven and earth. Since Mithraism preceded Christianity by some 200 years, is it not obvious, it is asked, that the latter copied the former? In other words, isn’t it obvious that the Gospel narratives were drawn from pagan sources?

Not at all! *First*, similarities between two belief systems do not necessarily mean that one copied the other or that the two have a common origin. The gods and goddesses of ancient pagan cultures were often *personifications* of the phenomena of nature—thunder, lightening, rain, hail, wind, daily and seasonal cycles, and so on. The coldness and death associated with winter, followed by warmth and the return of life in the spring, gave rise to myths about gods and goddesses going away or dying only to return to life again through some form of manifestation or reincarnation. As a result, we should not be surprised to find certain similarities between belief systems that arose independent of each other.

Second, the writers of the New Testament were, for the most part, observant Jews who were so radically opposed to paganism that it is not conceivable that they would have borrowed from pagan myths in telling the story of Jesus. They were, in fact eye witnesses of these things (Luke 24:48; Acts 5:32) and inspired by God to write what they personally witnessed (2 Timothy 3:16). “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). In fact, the Jewish disciples of Jesus had *no need* to borrow anything from paganism; all the main features of Christ’s life and ministry were right there in the ancient Scriptures that were read in the synagogues every Sabbath day! The book of Isaiah, for instance, speaks of the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14) as well as the death and resurrection of Christ

and His work of atonement (Isaiah 53:3–11), and describes Him as a great king, the “Mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6–7), and righteous judge (11:1–5). So all the descriptions supposedly given to Mithra were *already* in the messianic prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Third, it is most probable that the Mithraism of the second and third centuries, A.D., copied Christianity, not the other way around. There is no evidence that the *earlier* forms of Mithraism taught that Mithra was born of a virgin (he was supposedly born of a rock), was considered mediator between God and mankind (he was allegedly the mediator between light and darkness), or was a historical person. Instead, he was a personification of light (not the Light of the World), and was created before the world was made. He did not offer himself for the sins of the world; rather, he killed a bull (after doing battle with the sun) to save mankind. There appear to be few similarities between Christ and the early Mithra. Given the fact that Mithraism (unlike Christianity) was not exclusivistic, but openly accepted other gods and beliefs into its system, it is most likely that the Roman Mithraism to which Christianity is most often compared drew many of its beliefs from Christianity, giving its Mithra titles and attributes that rightfully belong to Christ.

As an afterthought, is it not much more probable that Satan, the great imposter, counterfeiter, misinterpreter, and father of lies (John 8:44)—full-well knowing the prophecies of the Old Testament—would historically place his counterfeit pagan legends *before* Jesus Christ, hoping to thwart, confuse, and deter believers today? Beware that no man deceive you (Matthew 24:4).

Counter to the falsehoods, exaggerations, and misconceptions of Christ-denying modernism, the exact *opposite* is true: Mithraism copied Christianity!

Appendix Four

THE RISE OF MARCIONISM

How Anti-Semitism and Pagan Philosophy Corrupted the Gospel

A second-century heretical movement believed by some to be connected to Gnosticism came to be known as Marcionism, named for its founder, Marcion, a native of Pontus in Asia Minor. Marcion was born in about A.D. 80 and began developing aberrant theological views fairly early in life. Later, partly due to the influence of a Roman Christian philosopher named Cerdo, Marcion's views would become a fully developed system of belief.

A council of elders in Rome excommunicated Marcion in A.D. 144 on charges of heresy. Marcion, believing his system of belief represented a restoration of the true faith, formed his own movement.

Marcion believed Yahweh, the God of the Old Testament, was a just but inferior god, and that the Father of Jesus Christ—the God of the New Testament—was a good God. With these ideas at the foundation of his belief system, Marcion edited the Scriptures, forming his own canon. He rejected the Old Testament entirely; threw out all the Gospels except an edited form of Luke's; and accepted ten of Paul's epistles, throwing out the pastorals. The purpose of Marcion's revisions was to rid Scripture of Jewish corruptions. He believed his edited version of the scriptural canon was the key that unlocked the mystery of the true gospel.

Marcion believed too much Jewish religion had been assimilated into the broader church's doctrine and practice. The good God of the New Testament, he believed, should not be confused with the inferior god of the Jews; nor should He be worshipped according to Old Testament ordinances.

Marcionism spread throughout the known world and became quite popular. Its popularity was due primarily to its anti-Judaism, which had already infected much of Christianity and was widespread among pagans. Other factors contributing to its popularity were (1) its solution to alleged contradictions in the Gospels and (2) its simple solution to the seeming paradox between the existence of evil and belief in a good God.

Many scholars believe Marcion was in some measure influenced by Gnosticism. He rejected the material world and the flesh, believing them to be inherently evil. He forbade sex, marriage, drinking wine, and eating meat. Like the Gnostics, Marcion believed that Christ did not have a material body.

While Marcionism was ultimately condemned by the broader church and stamped out, the very fact that such a bizarre belief system could be so well received among Christians illustrates how powerful an influence a sentiment or prejudice—in this case, anti-Semitism—can be, and how such influences, if left unchecked, can lead to full-scale apostasy.