

A Biblical Consideration of the Body, Soul and Spirit.

From the Old Testament

The question under consideration is this: when Jesus died, what actually died? It will be helpful to begin with the creation of man so that we can better understand what God brought together to make man unique. We understand that “God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27); from this we perceive this to mean that God placed within man (both male and female) the ability to think, to reason and to make choices based upon such cognitive abilities – nothing else in His creation has this. However, I think that we need to consider how God created man in order to help us to further understand what makes us who we are. “And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath [*neshamah*] of life [*chay* (plural)]; and man became a living [*chay* (singular)] soul [*nephesh*]” (Genesis 2:7);¹ the Lord provides us with a description of what He did to create that first man. The Lord shaped (*formed*) man from the *dust of the ground* and then *breathed* into him the *breath of lives* (in the Hebrew, this is plural).² *Breathed* is an imperfect verb, which means that it is describing an incomplete or a continuous action;³ this tells us that what God *breathed* into Adam is a pattern of things to come. “And God blessed them [Adam and Eve], and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply [become many], and replenish [fill] the earth, and subdue it ...” (Genesis 1:28a);⁴ like the plants, animals, fish and birds, God created man with the ability to produce offspring, and along with procreation would come what God *breathed* into Adam (the *neshamah* and *ruach*). We consider that man is made of body, soul and spirit, and this is affirmed in the description of God creating Adam: He formed the body of the dust (that which is visible; *nephesh*) and breathed into that body both a spiritual life (we call this the *soul*, the intellect, the seat of emotions, the ability to reason and choose; *neshamah*) and physical life (the *breath*, or spirit; *ruach*). Although this might appear to be quite clear, we need to be aware that there are times when one of them is used to identify the entire being of man or God; we need to be attentive to the context of our study of the Scriptures to ensure that we understand correctly what God is saying to us.

For example, the word *soul* is used to refer to the entire being: “When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul [*nephesh*] longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul [*nephesh*] lusteth after” (Deuteronomy 12:20) – the *nephesh* commonly refers to the living being of man in his entirety (body, soul and spirit) and, in this case, points to his desires.⁵ The same word is used of the Lord: “The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul [*nephesh*] hateth” (Psalm 11:5) – it is the guilty and those with a passion for injustice whom God has always hated (perfect tense) with His entire being, for they are contrary to His holy and just character.⁶ Therefore, *nephesh* can be used to refer to the entire being of man (body, soul and spirit) and to

¹ Strong’s Online Concordance, <https://onlinebible.net/>; Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

² Brown Driver Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

³ Strong’s Online.

⁴ BDB.

⁵ Strong’s Online.

⁶ Ibid.

the entire being of God (Who is spirit – John 4:24). Despite the *all-inclusive* application of *nephesh*, for man it significantly includes the physical aspect (the body).

Now let's consider the *lives* that God breathed into the dust-form of Adam. The flood that the Lord sent upon the earth at the time of Noah destroyed "... every man [both words are masculine singular in the Hebrew]: All [*everyone*, masculine singular (a further reference to *man*)] in whose nostrils *was* the breath [*neshamah ruach*; the Hebrew includes both words] of life [*chay* (plural)] ..." (Genesis 7:22).⁷ God breathed into man, whom He had formed from the dust, the *breath of lives* (*neshamah* and *ruach*, what we would think of as the soul and spirit), and it was these lives that were removed from everyone who was left outside of the ark during the flood. God breathing *neshamah* and *ruach* into man is what makes him unique within all of His creation; all of the other breathing creatures God simply brought forth from the waters or the earth, and they became *living* (*chay*) *creatures* (*nephesh*) (Genesis 1:20, 24).⁸ The flood would destroy all *flesh* (*basar* – the *meat* of the body, whether animal or human) wherein was the *breath of life* (*ruach* [singular] *chay* [plural]) (Genesis 6:17);⁹ this is the first time that *ruach* is used to refer to the breath of man and animal. To this point, *ruach* has been used for the Spirit (*Ruach*) of God moving over the waters (Genesis 1:2), and God coming to Adam and Eve in the *cool* (*ruach*) of the day (Genesis 3:8).

What we find is that *nephesh* primarily refers to the entire being of animals and humans, with a strong leaning toward the physical – it is the only Hebrew word that includes the physical for man; infrequently it is also used in poetic form to refer to God's entire being (as we have seen; Psalm 11:5; Proverbs 6:16). *Ruach* carries the idea of the movement of air – within living beings (whether animal or human), it is the *breath* or what we might call the *spirit* (particularly as it applies to man). Therefore, *neshamah* is what makes humanity unique within God's creation – it was this that God breathed into Adam that made him a creature after God's image **and** gave him life. To add to what is already somewhat confusing, the translation of these words into English is not consistent; therefore, we must pay very careful heed to context in order to understand what is meant. Within humanity, it is the *ruach* (the spirit) that binds the *neshamah* (the soul) to the *nephesh* (the body); within the animal world there is only *ruach* (breath) and *nephesh* (a body of *flesh* – *basar*) (Genesis 6:17).

It is interesting that when the Lord explained the necessity of the Levitical priests to remain pure or undefiled, He said: "Neither shall he [the priest] go in to any dead body [*nephesh*]" because doing so would cause him to become defiled (Leviticus 21:11). Here, *nephesh* is used to describe a body from which the spirit (*ruach*) and soul (*neshamah*) have departed; although this Hebrew word is used to refer to a living being, it can also refer to a corpse. We even find *nephesh* being translated as *dead body* based solely upon a context that speaks of those who became *defiled* by contact with it (Numbers 9:7) – there is no Hebrew word for *dead* within this text. Understand that the priests were to maintain purity in order to be the mediators between God and man; since death entered because of sin, what was dead became a means of defilement – that which had been tainted by Satan. Death was not a part of the creation that God had made (Genesis 1:31), but was an option

⁷ BDB; Strong's Online.

⁸ Strong's Online.

⁹ Strong's Online; BDB.

that man, having been created in God's image, was capable of choosing (Genesis 2:17). Just as God is the giver of the spirit (*ruach*) and soul (*neshamah*) to everyone who is born of Adam, even so God is able to remove the spirit (*ruach*) and make the soul (*neshamah*) depart, leaving the body (*nephesh*) to return to the dust from whence it came (Genesis 3:19). Therefore, Solomon, as he pondered the futility of life, could say: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit [*ruach*] shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).¹⁰

Solomon's musing raises an interesting point: the body (*nephesh*) returns to the dust from which it was made, the spirit (*ruach* or breath) returns to God Who gives it, but what becomes of the soul (*neshamah*)? We have seen that the body (*nephesh*) and spirit (*ruach* or breath) are ascribed to the animals as well as humans, but the soul (*neshamah*) is uniquely identified with humanity. Clearly, this is that which distinguishes man as being exclusively created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). It is the soul (*neshamah*) that includes man's intellect, his ability to reason and his emotional responses – God breathed this into the first man (along with the spirit or *ruach*) and man became a *living soul* in His image (Genesis 2:7). Both the soul (*neshamah*) and spirit (*ruach*) come from God and, therefore, it is not difficult to see that they are eternal and immaterial in nature (God is eternal and He is spirit [John 4:24]). What happened when man sinned? By choosing (man's God-like ability) to accept the devil's offer to *be as gods* through disobedience to the Lord, man's intellect, reasoning and passions (his soul, *neshamah*) became subject to Satan – the sinless soul (*neshamah*) that God had breathed into man became infused with sin (Genesis 3:4-5); the spirit (*ruach*) escaped as it is *air* or *wind* – although also given to man by God (unlike the other created living beings), it was untouched by man's sin, except that now God could recall it, and man would die.

What we can also see more clearly now is that it was through his soul (*neshamah*) that man had fellowship with his Creator; once that aspect of man was tainted with sin, Adam and Eve hid from the presence of God, thereby demonstrating their fallen thinking and the broken relationship with their Creator (Genesis 3:8). God's design for humanity was that they (as living physical and spiritual beings – spirit, body and soul) would commune with Him; they were made in His image and carried the ability to relate to the eternal, holy God Who is spirit (John 4:24). Because God knew that man would choose to sin, He had prepared a way for man to have a restored communion with Him – and He established this before He began creation. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed [set free from sin] with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation [worthless way of living] *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained [*proginosko* – known beforehand] before the foundation [beginning] of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:18-20; cp. Revelation 13:8).¹¹ Before the Lord began creation, He already knew that Christ (as eternal God born into human flesh) would come to earth in order to provide a means for the soul (*neshamah*) of man to be redeemed from the control of Satan.

¹⁰ Strong's Online.

¹¹ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8.

Even in his sinful condition before God, man still bore the image of his Creator. After the flood the Lord said to Noah: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image [*tselem*] of God made he man” (Genesis 9:6); on the sixth day “God created man in his *own* image [*tselem*]” (Genesis 1:27).¹² Despite man’s fall into sin, the *image of God* is still intact to a certain extent; as James wrote of the untameable tongue he said: “Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude [likeness] of God” (James 3:9).¹³ Earlier we described man’s soul (*neshamah*) as being his intellect, his ability to reason and the seat of his emotions: although still superior to animals, man’s soul has been corrupted by sin and functions under the control of Satan (Ephesians 2:2). Although man was unable to do anything to restore his relationship with his Creator, when God extended the means of restoration that He had prepared, it was the *image* of God that was still present in man that enabled him to think, reason and choose to place his faith in what God had provided. However, that did not restore his soul (*neshamah*) to its original sinless state, but by choosing to live in continuous faithfulness to the Lord, this eternal part of man will be accepted as holy before Him (Romans 8:1). No, we cannot coast into heaven based upon a prayer uttered at one time; Enoch was taken because he *pleased God*, and apart from faith, man is not able to be pleasing to the Lord (Hebrews 11:5-6) – *faith* is not active without *faithfulness*, and *faithfulness* is not possible without obedience to the Lord (James 2:17). Jesus said that it is the one who remains faithful (obedient) to Him unto the very end who will be saved (Matthew 24:13); our salvation has been purchased in eternity past, but unless we remain faithful to the Lord in all things to our dying day (or His return) that eternal salvation is not ours. When man’s spirit (*ruach*) leaves to return to God, the soul leaves as well, but its destination is dependent upon what we have done with God’s offer of restoration and then how we have lived.

From the New Testament

As we come to the New Testament, we must change from Hebrew to Greek in order to continue this study. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) identifies the *living soul* of Genesis 2:7 as a living *psuche* (soul).¹⁴ Once again, context plays a significant role in exactly how the Greek is to be understood, but *psuche* (like the Hebrew *neshamah*) refers primarily to the intellect, the ability to reason, and the seat of emotions – it is often called *life* (the essence of an individual, and sometimes used to refer to the whole person). In Hebrew, we dealt with three words: *nephesh*, *neshamah* and *ruach* (for the body, soul and spirit), and so in Greek we have: *soma*, *psuche* and *pneuma* (body, soul and spirit; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).¹⁵ Let’s consider each of these so that we understand more fully how they are used within Scripture.

Soma (the body) can refer to that of a human (Matthew 6:25), an animal (Hebrews 13:11), a plant (1 Corinthians 15:38), things celestial and terrestrial (1 Corinthians 15:40), to the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), and the dwelling place of the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19).

¹² Strong’s Online.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Septuagint, *Bibleworks 8*.

¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

Once again, we must pay careful attention to the context in order to determine exactly how the word is being used; for the most part, this is a relatively simple task.

The meaning of *psuche* (the soul) can take two paths: 1) the breath, or life, that is in what God has created (creature, fish, man), 2) the essence of man, which is its most common application in the NT.¹⁶ For the most part, *psuche* is used as the essence of an individual (and often refers to the entire person); this is where the image of God is borne – the ability to think, reason, and to express emotions. With two exceptions (Revelation 8:9 and 16:3 draw upon the first defining *path*), *psuche* is applied only to humanity within Scripture, and its application is almost evenly split between the inner essence and the entire being of man.¹⁷

Pneuma (the spirit) is from the root *pneo*, which means to blow; hence, the movement of air or to breathe is its primary meaning. It is used for the Holy Spirit or Ghost (Matthew 1:18), the breath of man (James 2:26), the wind that blows (John 3:8), demons or unclean spirits (Matthew 10:1), to one's attitude or demeanor (Acts 6:10), and the immaterial part of man held in contrast to the body or *soma* (Matthew 5:3). Its primary application is to the Spirit of God – the working of God that cannot be seen, His unseen presence in the life of the child of God, and His role as our Guide (Romans 8:1) and Intercessor (Romans 8:27); He is the Breath of God at work in the world through the lives of His children (John 16:7-8), and He is the Seal that marks us as being a child of God (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Although the spirit (*pneuma*) is most precisely the breath of life, the way that it is used draws it significantly toward the soul (*psuche*). The writer of Hebrews identifies the Word of God (Who is the Lord Jesus [Revelation 19:13] as the Creator) as being able to penetrate to the dividing of the soul (*psuche*) and the spirit (*pneuma*) (Hebrews 4:12) – clearly, these are difficult for us to differentiate. Although such a distinguishing may well require the work of the Lord, what we can be assured of is that man is made up of a body (a physical presence), a soul (that which bears the image of God; even though it is tainted by sin, it is still eternal), and the spirit (the breath of life that holds the soul and the body together – also eternal, having been given to Adam by God). James clarifies this for us: “For as the body [*soma*] without the spirit [*pneuma*] is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26);¹⁸ he uses the illustration of a body without the breath of life to explain the deadness of faith without works in keeping with that faith. We recognize that when the breath leaves, the body is dead; however, based upon our study so far, we must also understand that if the body is dead (without breath), then there are two eternal parts of man that have entered into eternity: the soul and the spirit – both of which God breathed into the first man, Adam (Genesis 2:7). As Solomon declared, the body (*dust*) returns to dust (*earth*) from which it was made, and the breath (*ruach*) returns to God Who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7); this accounts for two-thirds of man – what is left is the soul (*psuche*, *neshamah*) that bears the image of God, which is also eternal (having been given by God) but has been tainted by sin.

¹⁶ Liddell-Scott Lexicon, *Bibleworks 8*.

¹⁷ Strong's Online.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

When Adam sinned, the Lord God began by pronouncing judgment upon the serpent, Satan, Eve and Adam – each having a part in bringing sin into the world (Genesis 3:14-19), and then He implemented the plan of salvation that He had prepared before creation (1 Peter 1:18-20). The promise of a coming Savior was proclaimed in God’s judgment of Satan: “And I will put enmity [hostility] between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed [specifically designates the *offspring* of the woman]; it [*He* (this is a masculine Hebrew pronoun), the Seed of the woman] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).¹⁹ Within this promise, we see that the Savior will come as *her seed* (born of the woman), and that He will deal a death-blow to Satan (*bruise thy head*) at great Personal suffering (*bruise His heel*). As God brought His salvation to Adam and Eve (and subsequently to all of their descendants), it began with the shedding of blood: “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21); the Lord killed animals and used their skins to make coverings for Adam and Eve – their fig-leaf coverings were totally inadequate before God.

We are not told everything that was communicated to Adam and Eve by God during this time, but we do know that Abel, their second son, knew that God required a blood sacrifice to demonstrate his faith in the Lord’s promise to bring a Savior to defeat the adversary, Satan. We also see that the propensity to sin was very much a part of their first children – Cain’s offering to God was something that **he** had done, and was without the required shed blood (Genesis 4:3). “And Abel, he also [moreover] brought of the firstlings [firstborn] of his flock and of the fat [the best] thereof. And the LORD had respect [looked with favor] unto Abel and to his offering” (Genesis 4:4).²⁰ What is very evident from the Lord’s response, is that Cain did not bring his offering out of ignorance of what the Lord required; within Cain is the second evidence of man’s ability to rationalize and justify his sin (the first being with Eve) – as a *tiller of the ground*, he would have probably brought his best produce, but it is evident from the context that he knew God’s requirement of blood to be shed in faith (he lacked the faith and so felt justified in his offering). Beginning with Abel, we see that those who were faithful to the Lord offered sacrifices to Him that always included the shedding of blood; within the Mosaic Law, the sacrificial system that God established with Israel was central to their finding favor with Him, but even then, if faith in the Lord was missing, their many sacrifices brought no cleansing (Isaiah 1:11-15). The shedding of blood foreshadowed the suffering that the Savior would endure to pay the price for the sins of mankind (the *bruise* on His heel).

Returning to our subject, we understand that it is the soul (the *psuche*, the *neshamah*) that bears the image of God, and is the seat of thought, reason, and emotion. All bodies return to the dust from which they are made, and the breath that sustains life returns to the Lord Who gave it. Of the two eternal elements of man, it is the soul that bears the mark of sin. Therefore, the sacrifices that the Lord required, which needed to be accompanied by faith in His promise of redemption, were for the purpose of providing a temporary cleansing for the sinful soul of man – a *covering* for sin that permitted communion between the Lord and His created one. The sacrifice expressed acknowledgement that only God could provide an adequate covering for sin, yet unless that sacrifice was accompanied by faith in the Lord, it was of no value. Israel proved that making

¹⁹ BDB.

²⁰ Strong’s Online; BDB.

sacrifices according to the Lord's requirements did not necessarily bring His cleansing from sin – if faith in the Lord is missing, even blood sacrifices will not cover sin.

What of the Soul?

The obvious question is: what became of the souls of those who died during the OT times, and what becomes of the souls of those who have died and are dying since Jesus' sacrifice? By separating the questions, I am acknowledging that there is a difference between the two – at least to some extent.

Just as there is much ambiguity in the words used to identify the *soul*, there is also much haziness regarding the name used to describe where the soul goes after the spirit (*pneuma* or *ruach*) leaves the body (*soma* or *nephesh*). In the OT, we find the Hebrew word *sheol*, which is translated as *grave*, *hell* or *pit*,²¹ and already provides some indication as to its lack of clarity. We can glean some assistance when the OT is quoted in the NT; on the Day of Pentecost Peter declared: "Because thou wilt not leave my soul [*psuche*] in hell [*Hades*], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27), which is a quote from Psalm 16:10: "For thou wilt not leave my soul [*nephesh*] in hell [*sheol*]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."²² As we learned earlier, *nephesh* is frequently used to refer to the whole person's being (not just the body), as is the word *soul*; *corruption* in both the Greek (*diaphthora*) and Hebrew (*shachath*) refers to the physical decay of the body that takes place in the grave.²³ In these two passages, we have Greek and Hebrew words that have both been translated as *hell* (*Hades* and *sheol*) – a place where God will not permit His Holy One (the Lord Jesus Christ) to *see corruption*.

In the NT, there are two Greek words that have been translated as *hell*: *hades* (as we've already seen) and *geenna* (*Gehenna*). *Hades* is literally the *unseen place* and is understood to be the place to which the dead go.²⁴ Jesus provided us with a glimpse into this *unseen* world when He gave us the account of Lazarus and the rich man: upon death, Lazarus was taken by angels to the bosom of Abraham (thereby implying a place of comfort and rest) while the rich man was buried, "and in hell [*hades*] he lift up his eyes, being in torments [*basanos* – literally a touchstone that is rubbed with an unknown metal (gold or silver) to determine if the metal is genuine, and metaphorically speaks of torture or torment], and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (Luke 16:23).²⁵ From his place in *Hades*, the rich man could see both Abraham and Lazarus, even though they were a distance away. When he implores Abraham for some relief, the rich man is told that between them lies a great chasm that cannot be crossed – in either direction (Luke 16:26). As Jesus hung upon the cross, His words to the penitent thief were: "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Very evidently, the place of Abraham, Lazarus and where Jesus would meet this thief was called *Paradise*; this is a place of considerable contrast to the *Hades* of the rich man where the unrighteous were gathered after death. We are not told if *paradise* is a separate area

²¹ Strong's Online.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

²⁵ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

that is a part of *Hades* (that *unseen place* of the dead), or if it is a completely separate area – either way, we see that the righteous dead were in *Paradise* and the unrighteous dead went to *Hades*. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) shows the Garden of Eden as *paradise*, which is in keeping with Revelation 2:7 where Jesus assures the elder (*messenger*) of Ephesus that the one who is living faithfully (*overcometh*) for Him will have access to the tree of life in the midst of the *paradise of God* (cp. Genesis 2:9).

Geenna (or Gehenna, as we know it) is quite different from *Hades*; let's consider this for a moment. It is translated as either *hell* or *hell fire*; Jesus uses the term 11 out of the 12 times that it appears in our NT, and He notes three times that it is a place where the “fire ... never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:43-48). Jesus emphasizes that the fire is *unquenchable* (the first occurrence of *quenched*) and that it will absolutely not be *extinguished* (the second *quenched*) – the fire is forever, and it will burn where the maggot (*worm*) is absolutely not dying.²⁶ To the southwest of Jerusalem is the Valley of Hinnom (Hebrew: *Ge Hinnom*), close by the Potsherd Gate (also known as the Dung Gate);²⁷ this valley was the garbage dump for the city at the time of Jesus, and the residents went through this gate to throw their refuse and dead animals into the valley. The garbage was always burning (or smoldering) and the presence of maggots was perpetual.²⁸ *Gehenna* (a reference to this valley), being a place where the fire will never cease, is best likened to the Lake of Fire that is described as a place of eternal fire and torment (Revelation 20:10); *Hades*, that place for the unrighteous dead, will itself be cast into the Lake of Fire after it has been emptied at the end of time (Revelation 20:13-14).

Jesus – Body, Soul and Spirit

With all of this information firmly in mind, let's consider the Lord Jesus and what took place during His time on the cross. First of all, Jesus is God in the flesh; Mary was told by the angel that *the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the Highest Power will rest upon you, wherefore even the Holy Begotten will be called Son of God* (Luke 1:35).²⁹ Therefore, from our study we conclude that Jesus was born into a body of flesh (*soma*), received the breath (*pneuma*) of God, but His *psuche* (soul) was the very essence of God (this is where He differed from the rest of humanity – He was **not** a son of Adam; He **is the Son of God**). Jesus, as He came in the flesh, was still the exact representation (*charakter*) of Jehovah (Hebrews 1:3); therefore, as our High Priest He is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, seeing that He was experienced in all respects according to our likeness, except for sin (Hebrews 4:15).³⁰ His body of flesh grew (from child to adult) and was subject to all of the physical senses: not only sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch (including pain), but also hunger (Matthew 4:2), thirst (John 19:28) and exhaustion (John 4:6).

²⁶ Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online.

²⁷ <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=gehenna>; <https://www.jpost.com/travel/around-israel/sites-and-insights-gates-of-jerusalem>

²⁸ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Gehenna.html>

²⁹ Stephanus 1550 NT, *Bibleworks* 8.

³⁰ Strong's Online; Gingrich Lexicon, *Bibleworks* 8; Stephanus 1550 NT.

As Jesus faced the cross, being fully God He knew what was about to take place for Him, and His humanity shrank from the pain and degradation of crucifixion: “O my Father, if this cup may not [is not able to] pass away from me, except I [should] drink it, thy will be done” (Matthew 26:42b).³¹ Even though this had been determined from before creation to be the means of bringing an eternal salvation for mankind, the Humanity Who was also eternal God felt the fear of what was about to take place – yet it was so much greater than just the pain and degradation of crucifixion.

Mark tells us that it was the *third hour* when Jesus was crucified (Mark 15:25) – somewhere between our 9:00 and 10:00 AM. From the time that He was hung upon the cross until noon, we are told that Jesus did several things despite the agony that He was in: 1) to the Roman soldiers He said: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34); 2) to the repentant criminal: “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43); 3) He initiated a mother-son relationship between His mother and the Apostle John (John 19:26-27). He extended forgiveness to the men who crucified Him, promised to meet a repentant sinner in paradise that day, and attended to the care of His mother; His concern continued to be for others. With the arrival of mid-day, there came a change.

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour” (Matthew 27:45); this is from noon to 3:00 in the afternoon, within our understanding of time. The Greek historian, Phlegon (whose writings have disappeared) is quoted by fellow historian, Jerome: “an eclipse of the sun happened, greater and more excellent than any that had happened before it; at the sixth hour, day turned into dark night, so that the stars were seen in the sky.”³² A brief consideration will confirm that a normal solar eclipse cannot take place at the time of the full moon (the Passover is always at the time of a full moon³³); for lack of a better description, Phlegon simply calls it an *eclipse of the sun* – the sun was darkened (it was *eclipsed*) but it was not a *solar eclipse*, in that it was not the moon that obscured the sun.³⁴ In other words, this was not a natural phenomenon but a miraculous event. As Jesus, the sinless Son of God and the Creator of all things, bore the sins of mankind, darkness descended over this region (there is no indication that this was a world-wide occurrence).

As Jesus taught the multitudes, He used the illustration of the eye as that which brings light into the whole body. “The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when *thine eye* is evil, thy body also *is* full of darkness” (Luke 11:34). His application is clearly one of morality (as opposed to physical light) since *single* stands in contrast to *evil*; *single* primarily means without folds and, within the context of ethical conduct, it speaks of sincerity, honesty and innocence.³⁵ The writer of Hebrews admonishes us to *run* with *patience* (*hupomone* – remaining steadfast even in the face of adversity) *the race* that is being set

³¹ Stephanus 1550 NT.

³² <http://www.textexcavation.com/phlegontestimonium.html>

³³ https://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/4250850/jewish/Why-Is-Passover-on-a-Full-Moon.htm

³⁴ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/eclipse>

³⁵ Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

out for us (Ephesians 2:10), *looking unto Jesus* (having a singular focus on the Lord) – when our eyes have the Lord Jesus as their *single* focus, then our whole being is filled with His light (Hebrews 12:1-2). By contrast, *darkness* comes with *evil*. As Jesus, the Light of the world, bore the sins of humanity, the evil that was upon Him drew a darkness that hid the sun – a darkness that came between the Lord Jesus as He bore the sins of mankind and God the Father. The Lord Jesus, the eternal Logos (John 1:1), bore the sins of the world and received the due punishment for them (1 Peter 2:24): separation from God. “He *was* wounded [pierced] for our transgressions [rebellions], *he was* bruised for our iniquities [sins]: the chastisement of [leading to] our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).³⁶ Isaiah goes on: “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise [*daka* – to crush] him; he hath put *him* to grief [*challah* – to make sick, emphasizes the crushing]: when thou shalt make his soul [*nephesh*] an offering for sin [*asham* – a trespass (or guilt) offering], he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail [suffering] of his soul [*nephesh*], *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify [declare righteous; save] many; for he shall bear their iniquities [the consequences of their iniquities]” (Isaiah 53:10-11).³⁷ As Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he touched on this marvel: “In whom we have redemption [deliverance, release] through his blood, the forgiveness [removal or taking away] of sins [*paraptoma* – sinful acts, transgressions], according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7).³⁸ The *deliverance* that Jesus wrought was from the body of sin (*hamartia*) that is ours – the sin that is ours by inheritance from our father, Adam (Romans 5:12);³⁹ what He removed from us was the record of our debt of sins (*paraptoma*) – *handwriting of ordinances* (Colossians 2:14).⁴⁰ His deliverance from *hamartia* opens the way of communication with our Creator; His removal of the record of our debt of *paraptoma* permits us to come before Him in the righteousness of Christ!

Isaiah wrote of the *soul* (*nephesh*) of the Messiah bearing the punishment for our sins (*asham*), and Jehovah being *satisfied* with the suffering that He endured for us. As we consider the suffering that Jesus bore upon the cross, we realize that *nephesh* refers to His whole being, and not just to His *body*. In His body (*nephesh, soma*) Jesus suffered the affliction of crucifixion; in His soul (*neshamah, psuche*) He bore the awful separation from His Father that came because of the sins of the world that He carried; with His breath (*ruach, pneuma*) He struggled to hold onto life upon the cross even while He fulfilled His Word, the Scriptures. Jesus’ entire being was impacted by His willing payment for the sins of mankind, but His greatest suffering came when His load of sins caused the Father to turn away from Him during that three hours of darkness.

So, can we grasp what took place when Jesus died? Let’s look carefully into what His Word tells us.

Ruach/pneuma/breath: Consider the words of the four Gospel writers concerning the time when Jesus died:

³⁶ BDB; Holladay Hebrew Lexicon, *Bibleworks 8*.

³⁷ BDB; Strong’s Online.

³⁸ Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

³⁹ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁰ Stephanus 1550 NT.

Matthew 27:50 – “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up [*aphiemi* – to send away; active voice (Jesus did the sending)] the ghost.”

Mark 15:37 – “And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost [*ekpneo* – to breathe out; active voice].”

Luke 23:46 – “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend [*paratithemi* – to entrust] my spirit [*pneuma*]: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost [*ekpneo* – to breathe out; active voice].”

John 19:30 – “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up [*paradidomi* – to give to another; active voice] the ghost [*pneuma*].”⁴¹

As we look at each of these expressions of what took place at the moment that Jesus died, we can see that there are three different words used to describe the action, but the one common element is that each of these is in the *active voice*. This is particularly significant because it means that there is no doubt that Jesus relinquished His breath (*ruach/pneuma*) – He did not succumb to death by crucifixion; when the Scriptures were fulfilled and all that was required had been completed for the payment of the sins of the world, Jesus released His breath (it returned to the Father Who gives it to all men – Ecclesiastes 12:7) and He died. As Jesus neared the time when He would complete His mission to earth, He said this: “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him [*indeed, the Son of Man is going according as it has been written concerning Him*]: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26:24).⁴² Judas’ betrayal is the fulfillment of Scripture (Psalm 41:9), yet because of his eternal state of separation from God, Jesus says that it would have been better for him if he had never been born. Nevertheless, Judas’ role was very small compared to the work of the Jewish religious leaders who brought horrendous pressure upon Pilate to have Jesus condemned to death by crucifixion – they went so far as to release Pilate from any responsibility for shedding His blood by declaring: “His blood *be* on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:25). The Jews condemned Jesus to death (Matthew 26:66) and willingly accepted the responsibility for shedding His blood; nevertheless, Jesus’ death did not come on the terms of the religious Jews, but when He had *finished* the work for which He had come to earth, He relinquished His *pneuma* (spirit or breath) to the Father and died (John 19:30).

We find three verses that seem to be a problem to what we have just considered: 1 Thessalonians 2:15 – “[the Jews] Who both **killed** the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets ...” (Acts 3:15 uses the same Greek word); Acts 2:23 – “Him ... ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and **slain**.” *Killed* is *apokteino* and typically means to kill, but can also mean to forcefully do away with – the religious Jews’ determination was to stop the multitudes from following Jesus and listening to His authoritative teaching; out of jealousy the Jews condemned Jesus to death (Matthew 26:66), but there is a wealth of Scriptures that affirm that He **gave** His life: “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth [*tithemi* – to lay down one’s life; to die voluntarily] his life for the sheep” (John 10:11; Matthew 20:28; Ephesians 5:2, 25; Titus 2:14).⁴³

⁴¹ Strong’s Online.

⁴² Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁴³ Friberg Lexicon; Strong’s Online.

The religious Jews' intent was to kill the Lord and, from their perspective, this is what they achieved; although they *did away with* Him by having Him crucified, they did not remove His life from Him – that He freely gave! *Slain* is from *anaireo*, which primarily means to do away with;⁴⁴ although, by implication, it can mean to kill when applied to people, its primary meaning finds perfect application in this case. Paul declared: "...I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and **gave** [*paradidomi* – to entrust to another; the same Greek word is used in John 19:30 of Jesus' breath when He died] himself for me" (Galatians 2:20b).⁴⁵ Once again, we must be careful to use the context of Scripture to properly understand seemingly problem texts; the Scriptures are clear: Jesus was not murdered but willingly relinquished His life for us.

Let's consider what happened to the three elements of all mankind when Jesus died: His body (*soma*, *nephesh*), His breath (*pneuma*, *ruach*) and His soul (*psuche*, *neshamah*). We must be careful to use the Scriptures to determine what took place since there are many traditions that have not been founded so carefully.

As we have already seen, Jesus committed His *breath* to the Father (Luke 23:46; John 19:30), so there is no mystery here.

Joseph of Arimathaea, along with Nicodemus, took Jesus' body and, along with myrrh and aloes, wrapped it in linen and laid it in Joseph's new sepulchre that was close by (Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-42). It is equally clear about what became of Jesus' body – it was buried, where it remained until He was resurrected.

Now we come to the soul (*psuche*, *neshamah*) of the Lord Jesus. As we have already noted, this is where the eternal God was joined with a body, which was uniquely born of a woman without man, and (like all of humanity) was given breath in order to hold body and soul together. As Jesus breathed His last, His breath returned to God Who had given it, and His body would soon be in the earth.

John tells us: "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar [a sour wine], he said, It is finished [*it has been completed*; perfect tense – a completed action with continual, ongoing results; passive voice – the payment for sin was made by God the Father through the perfect Sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ]: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30).⁴⁶ The writer of Hebrews declared: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he [Jesus] also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy [did render of no effect] him that had [*is holding*] the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver [did release] them who [*all those who*] through fear of death were all their lifetime [being] subject to bondage [*douleia* – slavery] (Hebrews 2:14-15).⁴⁷ **Through His death**, Jesus neutralized the power of death that Satan was holding **and** (through our identification with His death [Romans 6:3-4]) provided release to those who had been caught in the slavery of sin (Romans 6:16). As Jesus relinquished

⁴⁴ Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/verbs1.htm

⁴⁷ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Liddell-Scott Lexicon; Strong's Online.

His breath to the Father, Satan's power of death was broken – *it was completed*; in other words, the promise that the Lord had made to Satan in the Garden of Eden was now accomplished. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it [He] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).⁴⁸ The enmity between the devil and the children of God has existed from the deception of Eve, but the *bruise* to the head of Satan (rendering him of no effect) came with the death of the Lord Jesus Christ – the suffering that He bore for the sins of humanity was Satan's *bruise* to His heel.

As Jesus died, His work was done: He had paid the price for the sins of all of mankind, He had broken the power of the devil, He had shed His blood and thereby implemented the New Covenant, and the prophetic Scriptures had been fulfilled. When Jesus died, two very significant things took place and Matthew records both of these for us: "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:50-53). Both of these events (the torn veil and the opened graves) confirm without a doubt that Jesus' redemptive work had been completed when He died. Let's consider these a little more fully.

The torn veil is a particularly potent sign to show that Jesus had completed His work when He died. This veil separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place within the temple. It was into the Holy of Holies that the high priest would go once each year to atone for his own sins and the sins of the people (Hebrews 9:7). This veil was not only torn apart, but its rending began at the top! If we assume that Herold rebuilt the Holy of Holies to the dimensions of Solomon's temple (which is conservative compared to many unsubstantiated reports), then this veil, or curtain of separation, would have measured about 30 feet from top to bottom (1 Kings 6:20). As long as the high priest continued to go past this veil into the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the people, the promised Redeemer had not yet come (Hebrews 9:8). However, the moment that Jesus died, the veil was parted to indicate that there was now an open access into the very presence of God through the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 9:24-26); this means that our access to the heavenly presence of God was opened the moment that Jesus died – indeed, His work of redemption was completed.

The second event that Matthew records for us is that of graves being opened and OT saints rising from the dead when Christ arose. As Jesus related the story of the rich man and Lazarus (there's nothing to identify this as a parable), He describes Lazarus (having died) as being carried by angels into *Abraham's bosom*, which is a place of comfort and rest; by contrast, when the rich man died, he simply found himself in Hades (*hell*) and in torment (Luke 16:22-25).⁴⁹ When Jesus spoke to the repentant thief on the cross, He told him that He would be with him that day in paradise (Luke 23:43). It seems (we are not explicitly told) that *paradise* and *Abraham's bosom* are the same place – a place where all of the saints of the OT went to await the fulfillment of the promises

⁴⁸ BDB.

⁴⁹ Strong's Online.

toward which all of their sacrifices pointed: *Shiloh* (Genesis 49:10), the *Messiah* (Daniel 9:25), the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 10:11-12).

Let's bring everything together that we have been learning: when Jesus died, His breath went back to the Father Who had given it, His body was quickly taken from the cross and placed in a sepulchre, and His soul (His Godhood) went to paradise to meet with the repentant thief and all of the other OT saints who were awaiting this day. After His body had remained for three days and three nights in the earth (Matthew 12:40), He rose from the dead and the OT saints were raised with Him (Matthew 27:52-53; He emptied paradise), and they joined Him when He ascended to heaven (Ephesians 4:8; the OT saints had been held captive in paradise but were now released into the presence of God in heaven). *Hades*, from Greek mythology was the god of the dead, and it also came to refer more broadly to the abode of the dead spirits, or to the invisible (literally, the *unseen place*).⁵⁰ Again, we are not explicitly told, but it is possible that the place where the souls of the departed went had two areas: paradise and Hades; although they were far apart and separated by an unbridgeable chasm (Luke 16:26), it seems that those in the place of torment were able see those in paradise (Luke 16:23-24). Regardless of the construction and location of these two, based upon what we have just learned concerning the finished work of the Lord on the cross, it is only fitting that Jesus, as eternal God, would join those saints who were in paradise. What I am indicating by this is that Jesus did **not** descend into *hell* as the traditional version of the Apostles' Creed states it.⁵¹ His work on the cross completed the blow to Satan (Genesis 3:15) and fully paid the price for our sins (the just recompense for sin had been made – Romans 6:23); *hell* (*Hades*) is the destiny for the unrighteous dead and, therefore, Jesus, as the sinless Son of God, could not enter into it; even as He bore the sins of the humanity, He did not become tainted by sin – He remained without sin! “And ye know that he was manifested [has been revealed] to take away our sins; and in him is no sin [*sin in Him is absolutely not*]” (1 John 3:5).⁵²

Paul wrote this to the Corinthians: “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21), which makes it sound like Jesus *became sin*. Consider a more literal translation of this text: *for not having become acquainted with sin, to atone for our sin He was made, so that we are becoming the righteousness of God in Him*.⁵³ Jesus was made the atonement sacrifice for our sin, which is the fulfillment of Scripture; the acceptable OT sacrifice was to be without blemish (it was to be perfect) and, as an innocent animal, it bore the sins as a substitute for the one who made the offering (this was symbolized by the offeror placing his hand upon the head of the animal – Leviticus 1:4, 3:2, etc.). The offered sacrifice did not become sin (it remained an innocent animal); even the *scape goat* that carried the sins of the children of Israel out of their camp did not *become sin* – their sins were symbolically placed upon its head, and it was sent away (Leviticus 16:21). Jesus came to this earth to atone for our sin, but **never** did He *become sin* – His eternal purity remained untainted even while bearing mankind's load of sin.

⁵⁰ <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=hades>; Friberg Lexicon.

⁵¹ <https://www.rca.org/about/theology/creeds-and-confessions/the-apostles-creed/>

⁵² Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

One final passage that confuses many in this matter: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: **By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison**; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Peter 3:18-20). The difficulty lies with the portion in bold; it is commonly claimed that this means that Jesus preached to those who were being held in Hades. Before we look at this any further, we need to bear these words in mind: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment ...” (Hebrews 9:27); the very clear understanding from this is that upon death, our destination is sealed – it is not possible for the unrighteous to be redeemed after death. In the passage from Peter, *by which* refers to *the Spirit*; the difficulty comes in reference to the *spirits in prison*. However, the next verse provides the context for Peter’s words: it is those who, for 120 years, heard Noah preach the salvation that God, in His patience, was extending to them (Genesis 6:3). Peter is saying that Jesus (the eternal *Word*), through the working of the Spirit of God, preached **through Noah** to those who, because of their refusal to believe (*disobedient*), were now *in prison* – they were now confined to Hades to await their final judgment at the great white throne (Revelation 20:11-15). Those of Noah’s day who died in the flood are clearly beyond salvation, just as the godless man who died yesterday – they all await that final judgment day.

Man is comprised of body (the physical), soul (the personality) and the spirit (the breath that holds body and soul together). Through our study we have come to see that Jesus also bore these three, His soul being His eternal Godhood confined to a body of flesh (the *Word* Who became flesh – John 1:14); throughout all of His life on earth, His body and soul remained sinless. In His teachings, Jesus clarified that it was out of the soul of man (the *heart*) that come those things that will defile him (Matthew 15:17-20) – man’s heart (his soul) bears the defilement of sin; Jesus lived out of a pure heart – a soul that remained untainted by sin for it is eternal God! The souls of mankind are all, without exception, tainted by the sin of Adam; Jesus, being conceived in Mary through the work of the Spirit of God, was not only the promised *Seed of the woman* (Genesis 3:15) but became the spotless Sacrifice to bring atonement from sin to mankind (1 Peter 1:18-19). It is essential that we understand Jesus’ purity and holiness as He died once in order to establish an eternal redemption from sin for all men (Hebrews 9:12) – it is because He remained pure that He was qualified to make the payment for sin. The soul of man, on the other hand, bears the marks of sin and deserves death (Romans 6:23) – eternal separation from his Creator. Jesus, the Creator of all things, died and rose again so that His created image-bearers could live forever with Him; the soul of man is eternal – everyone will live for eternity, it is only a matter of where.

The Personal Application

To the Samaritan woman, Jesus observed that God is a spirit (John 4:24), which means that the eternal Father, the *Word* (John 1:1), and the Holy Spirit are three aspects to the Spirit-Being of the Scriptures (1 John 5:7). It was determined from before creation that the Word would take on a body of flesh and pay the price for the sins of the yet to be created mankind (1 Peter 1:19-20); Joseph was assured that Mary’s Child had been conceived by God (the Holy Ghost) and that He would bring salvation from sins to His people (Matthew 1:20-21). We read that “the Word was

made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14a) and that “God sending his own Son in the likeness [outward form or appearance] of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3b).⁵⁴ Because the soul (*psuche*, *reshamah*) of Jesus was eternal God, He remained sinless despite being bound by a body of flesh (1 John 3:5); Jesus appeared to be a man like all others, yet this was only an earthly tent for the eternal God – born as the Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15), He became the *only begotten Son* of God (John 3:16). As we noted early on, the soul and breath that God breathed into the first man, are eternal; the breath, when it departs from the body, returns to God since it was not impacted by sin, the soul (the seat of thought, reason and emotions) remains alive after physical death and departs to be with the Lord (if it died with a living faith in, and faithfulness to, the Lord – 2 Corinthians 5:8) or, if numbered among the unrighteous, it then finds itself in Hades awaiting future judgment (Revelation 20:13). It is because the soul of man is eternal that we must take particular care to live in obedience to the Scriptures.

Jesus openly declared: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6); “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). The Apostle John expressed the impact of Jesus’ words: “And hereby we do know [are knowing] that we know [have known] him [God], if we keep [are keeping] his commandments. He that saith, I know [have known] him [God], and keepeth not [is not keeping] his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4); John’s forthright declaration is that unless we are living in obedience to the commands of the Lord, He (as the Truth) is not in us and we are liars destined for the Lake of Fire (Revelation 21:8). Clearly, it is very important that we understand the commands of the Lord Jesus so that we are then able to live in obedience to Him. No, this is **not** salvation by works; this is working out our salvation in the fear of the Lord (Philippians 2:12). Permit me to whet your appetite for God’s truth in this matter.

When Moses met with the Lord, he was given two tables of stone upon which God had written ten commandments: “And he [Jehovah] declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone” (Deuteronomy 4:13). A careful consideration of the context shows that God’s desire was that Israel should become a nation of priests to the world (Exodus 19:6); therefore, the Ten Commandments, as written by God upon tables of stone, are for all people. A review of Israel’s history to the time of the prophets reveals that they never became that kingdom of priests to the world; Jeremiah proclaimed the words of the Lord: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant ... this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33). As Jesus met with His disciples for the “Last Supper,” He presented them with the cup and said: “This cup *is* the new testament [covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20);⁵⁵ the New Covenant of which Jeremiah wrote was instituted through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus. The writer of Hebrews affirms this application of the Lord’s prophecy through Jeremiah (Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:15-17). What this means is that when we place our faith in the Lord Jesus for salvation, two very significant things happen: 1) the

⁵⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵⁵ Strong’s Online.

Spirit of God comes to abide within us to guide us into all truth (Romans 8:9; John 16:13), and 2) God places His Ten Commandments (His Law) within our hearts and writes them upon our minds.

When Jesus was queried as to the greatest commandment, He responded: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. **On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets**” (Matthew 22:37-40). In other words, everything that pointed to His coming (all of the prophecies, the Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices, etc., and even the Law of God – the Ten Commandments) flow out of these two commands: love God with all of your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. The Law of God contains ten commands: the first four instruct us in how we are to live before God, and the last six tell us how to live before our fellow man (our neighbor). Jesus affirmed the present application of the Law of God that was written by His finger upon tables of stone (Exodus 31:18); the writer of Hebrews uses the prophecy made through Jeremiah to support the present application of the Law of God through the New Covenant.

Jesus said, *If you are loving me, then you must be keeping my commandments* (John 14:15).⁵⁶ As we ponder His words, we must realize that His Ten Commandments are a very good place to begin, for He has placed them within us for easy access by the Spirit of God so that the *righteousness* of His Law might be fulfilled in us (Romans 8:4). Obedience to the Lord can **never** be considered to be legalism because Jesus has commanded it; James understood the necessity of living out our faith: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17); “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). Nevertheless, we must be sure that our *works* flow out of a love for the Lord and His Word; those *professing Christians* of Matthew 7:22-23, who did many wonderful *works* in the name of the Lord, were rejected because the Lord had never known them (faith in the Lord was missing). Israel of old kept the Mosaic traditions with great vigor, yet the Lord’s evaluation was that there was no cleansing despite the much blood that flowed (Isaiah 1:10-15). The elder (*angel*) of the assembly in Ephesus was doing many things right, but he had lost sight of his love for the Lord – he was challenged to return to that love or see the demise of the whole assembly (Revelation 2:1-5). *Works* are not enough – unless they flow out of a heart of love for the Lord, they will be inadequate. Paul challenged the Ephesians to dress themselves in the new man who has been created by God in *righteousness and holiness of the truth* (Ephesians 4:24);⁵⁷ we are included in the challenge to cloth ourselves in this *new man*. Earlier Paul wrote: “For we are his [God’s] workmanship, created [His created work] in Christ Jesus unto [for the purpose of] good works, which God hath before ordained [prepared beforehand] that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).⁵⁸ These *good works* are the *righteousness and holiness* of the *new man*; we must never think of the *works* for which God has made us in Christ to be acts of kindness or being a good neighbor (although that is not left out). Our calling from God is holy (2 Timothy 1:9), and we are to live in holiness even as God, Who is now living in us by His Spirit, is holy (1 Peter 1:15). God sent the Lord Jesus to this earth to become that perfect Sacrifice for the sins of the world, and, beyond that, so that “the

⁵⁶ Stephanus 1550 NT.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk ... after [according to] the Spirit” (Romans 8:4).⁵⁹ If we are living under the guidance of the Spirit of God (as we must be), then the holiness and righteousness of God will be evident through us. Unless we get these things right, our eternal souls will languish in this life and may well be destined for Hades in the next. Accept a love for the Truth of the Lord, above all things, for therein is the foundation for your salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:10), and then live in obedience to Him (1 John 2:3-4) – learning to love God according to His eternal Law, and then our neighbor as ourselves.

⁵⁹ Strong’s Online.