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# THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

FEBRUARY 20, 2005

## *The Tainted Theology of Hamlet*

*To be or not to be: that, my friend, regardless of what you have heard is not the question. As was Shakespeare, Hamlet was a troubled young man with a confused theology. He understood neither existence nor salvation. In that unfortunate respect, he mirrors many contemporary individuals.*

*I am and you are. We be and we ever shall be. We shall never "not be." The only issue, therefore, is where shall we be? I know where I am now and you know where you are now. Thus, the only question is where shall I be and where shall you be after we leave this life? For even then, we shall both still be.*

You exist. You are. There was a time when you did not exist. Once you were not. But, now you are. You exist. You came into being—a conception occurred and you, at that moment, became. Before then, there was no you. From then, you were and are. You came to be. You are. Had you never been born you would still be. Having become, you are forevermore. Ancient Job gave testimony to this truth.

Job 3:11,13 Why did I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? . . . For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest.

Job did not write that if *the fetus that potentially was to become him* had died in the womb or at birth then he would never have existed at all, that he would never have been—instead he records that even if he died in the womb, he would be (in his terms) laying still, being quiet, sleeping, resting, yet being. In other words, had Job died in the womb then he would not be facing the terrible, unpleasant, troubling situation that he was enduring. He would be, in that sense, better off, if he had never been born; but quietly, lying still in fistful sleep, he would nonetheless still be. Job knew that having become, he would

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# this and that

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Though the nearly one thousand Baptist preachers who receive this publication comprise almost 80% of the readership, there are a number of kind individuals who read us regularly that are not believers. This article is sent especially to those of you not yet persuaded to come to Christ for salvation. May the sweetness of the invitation from the God of Heaven or the sourness of the present world cause you to understand the urgency of your situation and

move you to think about eternity very carefully.

There is no greater need in your life than to prepare to step into eternity. Our appointment to move to our eternal residence is nearer than any of us realize (. . . it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment. Hebrews 9:27).

May the mercies of God move you to receive the LORD Jesus as your own Saviour.

—Pastor Manley

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## THE THEOLOGY OF HAMLET

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do. So, to those and to those alone whom God chose, the message of salvation is extended. What saith the Scriptures in this regard? The words of one passage are sufficient for any honest seeker.

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

In sovereign grace, the great eternal Jehovah invites WHOSOEVER will to believe in, to accept the gift of eternal life in Christ, to receive the LORD Jesus as the Saviour. *What love! What grace!*

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The message has been consistent since before the foundation of the world—the message today, over six thousand years after the creation of Adam, remains what the message was before Adam received the breath of life and became a living soul. The message will never change. It is God's only plan of salvation. God sovereignly provided atonement and sovereignly invites *whosoever—that most emphatically includes you—whosoever* will come to come. Will you come? That is the question I now ask you. What will your answer be? Will you come or will you refuse to accept the invitation of the God of Heaven? You will receive the LORD Jesus Christ as the atonement for your sin or you will die lost and continue to exist in the everlasting lake of fire. *There is no third option.* May you come today.

If you have questions about your salvation, call us (toll free) 1-866-544-5545.

—Pastor Manley

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ing raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

The death of Jesus of Nazareth was no accident. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was not happenstance. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was not an unforeseen circumstance. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was not a choice forced upon God by either Jews or Gentile Romans. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was not the result of a kingdom offer being rejected. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was not the consequences of the act of Judas and the vote of the Sanhedrin. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was not the choice of the mob, by calling for Barabbas over Jesus of Nazareth. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was not the choice of Pilate. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was not the will of the people. The death of Jesus of Nazareth was because God willed it so.

The death of Jesus of Nazareth was the decision, the choice, the determination, and the will of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Before the world was formed, that very cross was raised on that very day on that very hill in the mind of God. That spot of ground was chosen before the earth was ever hung in space to be the place where God the Son would die. That strangely shaped, even craggy hillside was designed and it was prepared for that very hour. Every drop of rain, every gust of wind, every upheaval of earth, every stress of cold or heat, every footstep of man or beast—all that touched that hillside was designed to make it the place of a skull for that particular Passover crucifixion. The Son of God was sent to earth from heaven for that precise cross on Golgotha, and the Son of God came for that exact bloody death of Mount Calvary. That day was not an accident nor a happenstance; it was the day promised before the world began. The day of God's Own choosing.

God has chosen every aspect of salvation. He chose the means—blood atonement. He chose the Sacrifice—the Son of God. He chose the time and the place—a hill called Calvary, just outside of Jerusalem. Salvation is exclusively God's choice. God provided salvation and, therefore, has the right to give it to whomsoever God chooses. It matters not at all what humanity thinks is right; the issue is entirely a decision of Almighty God. The most precious gift—eternal life—the quest of all humanity, the longing of every heart is the personal property of the Holy God of Heaven. It is the prerogative of God to give it or to deny it as it seems best to Him. No mere mortal has the standing, the right, the power to question what God does with His Own gift—certainly no created being could challenge whatever God might

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never “un-become.” Job continues to this very hour. Job will never “not be.”

Indeed, there was a time before you were. However, there shall never be a time when you are not. You became; you are, and you always will be. You will never cease to exist. You will be for ever and for ever and for ever—even for always. You are forevermore. There was a day when you were born—you entered life. You live. You will live somewhere forevermore. Having become, there will never be a time when you do not exist. There will come, if the return of the Lord Jesus does not intercede, a time when you will die. Your body will return to the earth from whence, through Adam, it first came. But, the “you” living inside that body did not come from the earth, from the dust of the ground. Your body did—but you did not. You are the result of the direct act of God.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The dust was formed into the body of a man; that body just formed was man, but without the breath of the LORD God, man was not a living soul. Man *became* a living soul. This “living soul” man of Genesis 2 is not some ape-creature, having risen to primate form from primeval sludge through eons of multiplied mysterious mutations, into which God eventually breathed thereby altering evolution's natural channel to create a man, as theistic evolutionists teach. This “living soul” man is the unique creation that God named Adam into whom, the LORD God breathed the breath of life. There is more involved in this breathing than merely the impartation of life. Plants have life; microbes have life; fish have life; worms have life; animals have life. God did not breathe life into the flora or the fauna—no plant, no animal, no fish, no insect, and no critter received that breathe of life and became a living soul—only Adam. When the rose dies, it fades and is gone for always. But when a person dies, (Ecclesiastes 12:7) “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

You have a body that was first formed from the dust of the ground, a body, which shall never leave this earth, but you are a soul created by the breath of the Creator. Long after your body has returned to the earth as the dust that it once was, your soul will still exist and, one day your soul will be reunited with a resurrected body. You will never cease to be—not even for a moment of time. You are and you will always be. After death, you will not be here—but you will

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be. You will leave the realm of time and move into the realm of eternity, that which is beyond and outside time. There are only two destinies in eternity—only two places created for man and woman to dwell after life. You will exchange a temporary home of time and earth for a permanent home of eternity and either heaven or hell. You will live for ever and for ever and for ever and for always in one of these two places. There is a heaven where the Triune God, the holy angels, and the redeemed of the ages shall dwell and there is a lake of fire where the devil, his angels, and those who have rejected the gift of eternal life shall live.

God invites you to live with Him, even sending you a written invitation—the Bible.

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Whoever you are, you are included in that wonderful word “whoSO-ever.” None should ever doubt the opportunity for salvation. Merriam-Webster’s current edition states that this is the emphatic form of the word. Who-so-ever you are, you are *emphatically* invited. The Father’s house has ample room and is graciously prepared and He invites you to live with Him for eternity. You may, however, reject his kind invitation to live in His house and, instead, live in eternity in the place He prepared for the devil and his angels. The difference between being condemned by the justice of God and confined by the power of God in the Lake of Fire for eternity and of being forgiven by the mercy of God and admitted by the grace of God to Heaven into the presence of God for eternity is found in the conception, the birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

No issue of life is as important as the one we are examining. The next few minutes might well determine which of the two destinations will be your final home for all eternity—and there are only these two possibilities—either in the presence of God or in the presence of the devil and his angels. To help you understand the urgency of the matter, I call two witnesses, the apostles Peter and Paul, for you to hear. The passages are lengthy, but I do not wish for you to think I have

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actly what is called the Old Testament, but in a different order. Abel is named as the first prophet after the foundation of the world to die as a prophet because of the offense of his message and Zacharias was the last of the Old Testament prophets to be slain for his preaching. From beginning to end, the uniform message of the Old Testament is that of the incarnation of the Messiah.

Acts 3:12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? 13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. 14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; 20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. 23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

This verse is a quotation from Deuteronomy 18 and we find an interesting word used there that the apostle gives us as “every soul.”

17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well *spoken that* which they have spoken. 18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

With that understanding (every = whosoever), read on. This becomes very important in a moment.

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, hav-

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The message of God has been consistently the same from before the days of Adam until the present hour.

Luke 1:67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; 70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72 To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; 73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, 74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. 76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; 77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, 78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, 79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. 80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

Salvation and redemption in the Christ of God was preached from the foundation of the world by the prophets of God. God has had a preaching prophet since the world began. The first prophet was the Son of God in the Garden. Every covenant of the Old Testament is connected with the incarnation of the Son of God.

Luke 11:45 Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also. 46 And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. 47 Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48 Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: 50 That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51 From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. 52 Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.

The definition of the Hebrew Scriptures is given as Genesis through Chronicles and is minus the Apocrypha—in other words, ex-

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moved verses from their context.

Acts 10:1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, 2 A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. 3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. 5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter: 6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. 7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; 8 And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. 9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: 10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: 12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. 15 And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. 16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. 17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, 18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. 19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. 20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. 21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? 22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

The fact that the God of Heaven sent an angel to Cornelius—a man sincerely desiring to know how to be saved—with instructions to direct that man to find Peter *but did not allow the angel to discuss*

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salvation with Cornelius is most intriguing. Angels do not preach the Gospel today! The apostle implies in Galatians 1 that any gospels preached by an angel in this age would be a false gospel. Trust your Bible over even an angel.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. 24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. 25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. 26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. 27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. 28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? 30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. 33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. 34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. 36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) 37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem: whom they slew and hanged on a tree: 40 Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly: 41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. 43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth

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out blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory: that your faith and hope might be in God.

"Before the foundation of the world"—before the Sons of God ever sang the first recorded song, God had already foreordained salvation would be by the blood of the Lamb. Not a man needing salvation or redemption or an earth ruined by sin existed when God foreordained salvation. It was the only plan of salvation that ever was, is or will be.

Revelation 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. 3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? 5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Before there was either earth or Adam, The Eternal I AM, the Great Jehovah, decreed that Adam and all of his descendents would be redeemed by the death of the Son of God as a sacrifice. The necessity of the body and the blood of Jesus of Nazareth were decreed by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God before there was a man on the face of the earth. That truth is denied only at the peril of throwing all of these passages—and many more—completely out of Scripture. If the Bible is to be accepted as the infallible, inerrant, inspired word of God preserved for this generation to have and to hold then this truth stands unchangeable. Using the language of humanity, we may safely say that God planned the incarnation before He created the world or placed a man upon it, even before time began.

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ording to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; 3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour.

Unto whom was this promise made? It was made before the world began. The promise of eternal life was made by and to the Godhead before there was an earth or a man. That is all the information that God has given us regarding what transpired before the creation of the world—God promised eternal life.

1 Peter 1:1 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. 10 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. 13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: 14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy: for I am holy. 17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: 18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb with-

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in him shall receive remission of sins.

Now, read Paul's testimony:

Acts 13:13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem. 14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. 15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men *and* brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. 16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with *his* hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. 17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. 18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. 19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. 20 And after that he gave *unto them* judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. 22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will. 23 Of this man's seed hath God according to *his* promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus: 24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose. 26 Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you heareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. 27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*. 28 And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. 29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of *him*, they took *him* down from the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre. 30 But God raised *him* from the dead: 31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. 32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, 33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. 34 And as concerning that he raised him up

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from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. 35 Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: 37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. 38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: 39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; 41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you. 42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. 43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. 44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

You and I (at least in this life) will never fully comprehend *why* the death of the Lord Jesus atoned for our sins; we may never (here) completely understand *how* the shed blood paid the complete price of our redemption; but the unavoidable fact is that both Peter and Paul (as all the prophets of the Old Testament) preached that salvation and redemption are only found in Jesus Christ. An honest heart must admit that the apostle Peter and the apostle Paul both preached that salvation is through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth that the record of the word of God shows that each men taught the exactly identical message cannot be denied. You just read messages that they preached in their early days of ministry. What about their preaching as they neared the end of their ministries? Did they change what they preached? Listen to the further testimony of Peter as written in his latter years. It is a consistent continuation of what he said before. He makes no addition. He makes no substitution. He changes nothing. The way of salvation had not changed.

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively

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Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

We may debate and we may misunderstand [*sadly, a great many have and, ignoring the "whoSOever" presume that only a certain few can be saved*] what is meant by the word predestinate—but whatever one accepts as the meaning, no honest person can deny that before the world existed God already determined what salvation and redemption would involve and how both would be given to humanity. God made the choice of the means and the manner without the involvement of any human and without the consultation of any angel. I am not suggesting that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost sat around a conference table and talked about the possibility of creating creation and what might happen within that creation. The Father did not appoint a committee to propose contingencies in case of Adam's fall. The Son did not lose the draw or end up with the short straw and then submit to the vote of the Father and the Holy Ghost to be the sacrifice. There is no "time" in eternity—eternity is outside of time and unaffected by time—so I cannot properly speak "*of a time when*" the Trinity held a counsel and decided to create. I can (scripturally) say that before the world was, the Godhead knew all that would occur. This is not a truth that is obscure in Scripture nor is it an isolated truth. We will have time to consider only a few passages, but they are clear enough for the sincere, honest seeker.

2 Timothy 1:8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; 9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: 11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. 13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

The purpose of God in Christ Jesus was established *and given* before the world began.

Titus 1:1 Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, ac-

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given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. 26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

1 Corinthians 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace: 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence: 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness 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: 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy

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hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. 5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. 10 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. 13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: 14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. 17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: 18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, 21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory: that your faith and hope might be in God. 22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: 23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. 1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his

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steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray: but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

The Apostle Paul adds nothing, deletes nothing, and changes nothing of what he first said in his additional testimony. The way of salvation had not changed during the ministry of the apostle Paul.

Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. 5 For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. 6 But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) 7 Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) 8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even in thy mouth*, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? 17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

There is no wavering in the testimony of these two men. Salvation is only through the Lord Jesus Christ. When asked the very question,

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sages—remember them for the future. Let this be settled permanently. God planned the incarnation and designed all that the incarnation entailed before He created the world and placed man upon it.

John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. 6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. 7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. 8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. 9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: 21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. 24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast

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allowable into His presence. Their thinking seems to go something like this—

*God tried requiring the simple obedience of one insignificant law—that resulted in the fall of Adam.*

*God tried human government—that ended in the near universal depravity that required the flood in the days of Noah.*

*God tried a modified human government—that produced the rebellion that necessitated the division of races and languages at the Tower of Babel.*

*After a few centuries of thought, God tried giving a system of laws—that resulted in another failure.*

*So, in abject anguish, God threw in the towel and sent His Son to die in the place of humanity and if that does not work—and it does not seem to be working—then God is going to burn the whole world up and maybe start all over again.*

For others, over long generations, the most repeated rejection of biblical Christianity has been the intellectual dismissal of a god who would require a blood sacrifice. Such a god is a discardable concept that remains as a vestige of religious evolution. Long after man had fallen from the tree, losing the necessary prehensile appendage in the process, and had to remain on the ground; humanity retained the primordial fear of the unknown. Thus, men (perhaps a few women) developed a desire to express subservience to whatever indefinable forces controlled the weather and provided the caves and so they sought to find some sacrifice that would bring good favor from these gods. The greatest gift that could be given was a life and so developed the institution of blood sacrifices. It is primitive, barbaric, and repulsive—unconscionable, *in their enlightened view.*

Scripture denies these allegations.

First, as to the origin of blood sacrifices, Scripture declares that man did not devise blood sacrifices. The Bible states that God established blood sacrifice as the means of redemption before He ever created earth or man and then God revealed it to humanity.

Second, as to the incarnation being a move of desperation after failed attempts to find some other method, the Bible declares that God determined the incarnation would occur before He ever created earth or man.

Let this simple truth be settled in your heart forever. Take the BOOK of God as the sole and final authority. Consider these pas-

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you and I need to ask if we are ever to see Heaven and if we are to avoid the Lake of Fire, Paul gave a simple and direct answer.

Acts 16:25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. 26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. 29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

It is not possible to make this matter of salvation any plainer. The question is precisely worded:

And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

The answer is purposely and plainly presented:

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

No church membership is mentioned. No baptism is required. No holding on faithfully is demanded. No reformation of life is established as a prerequisite. No balancing act of juggling good and bad is suggested. The question is as unmistakable as is the answer. The answer is as unambiguous as is the question. The question is simple; the answer is definite. The question is definite; the answer is simple. The question is explicit; the answer is clear. The question is clear; the answer is explicit. No honest, sincere, seeking heart could misunderstand the question. No seeking, sincere, honest heart could misinterpret the answer.

The question is straightforward and direct:

And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

The answer is forthright and simple:

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

You will live either in the place prepared by the God of Heaven for His children or in the place prepared by the God of Heaven for the

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devil and his angels. It is certain that you will live in one or the other for ever and for ever and for ever and for always. The only uncertainty is "which place shall it be?" Your eternal destiny is your choice.

At the conception in the womb of the virgin daughter of Heli, the Word became flesh, the Son of God "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The very body that was taken down from the cross, wrapped in a clean linen cloth with a hundred pound mixture of myrrh and aloes, and then laid in a sepulchre, hewn out of a rock, wherein never a man had lain, and enclosed in that tomb with a great stone rolled unto the door of the sepulchre, was the body of the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth. It was the body of the Son of Man, Jesus of Nazareth. When on the third day that very body come out of the grave—words will fail to adequately, perhaps even to accurately, describe what I must say—when that very body that was placed in the tomb came out of the grave and reunited with the Spirit that He had placed in the hands of the Heavenly Father and with the soul that was not left in paradise, Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead on that Resurrection Morning. It was Jesus of Nazareth that stood in the Garden, spoke to Mary Magdalene, and forbade her to touch Him, as He had not yet that day ascended to His Father. It was Jesus of Nazareth that then ascended (Hebrews 9,10) and presented His blood at the Mercy Seat on the altar in Heaven there to forever bear witness of His sacrifice, our atonement. It was Jesus of Nazareth that walked on the Emmaus Road with a husband named Cleopas and his wife. It was Jesus of Nazareth that appeared in the upper room and showed his wounded hands and His pierced side to the ten disciples. It was Jesus of Nazareth that invited Thomas to touch His wounds at the following week's Sunday night service. It was Jesus of Nazareth that met and ate with disciples on the shore of Galilee. It was Jesus of Nazareth that was seen of above five hundred witnesses many of whom were still alive in the days of Paul. It was Jesus of Nazareth that, after forty days of such appearances, ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high; ever living to intercede for those for whom He died. It was Jesus of Nazareth that appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus. It was Jesus of Nazareth that appeared to John the apostle on the isle called Patmos. It is Jesus of Nazareth that one day soon will come to catch away His Own and to bring this world

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into judgment. It is Jesus of Nazareth that will be crowned as LORD OF Lords AND KING OF Kings and before Whom every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus of Nazareth is LORD to the glory of God the Father. This paragraph simply summarizes the doctrine of the INCARNATION—the time when the Son of God became man to redeem all humanity.

The Holy Ghost moves the apostle Paul describe this unfathomable, inscrutable, incomprehensible sequence as "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." While we can never fully fathom this great mystery, we can adequately understand the revelation, because this Jesus of Nazareth is "believed on in the world." Listen to the simple preaching of the apostle Peter: (Acts 4)

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, . . . This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

There is no salvation other than in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Therefore, this is the most important truth you could ever know and the one truth that you must believe. Jesus Christ of Nazareth was and is very God of very God. Now, in the undeniable light of that revelation, I suggest that you and I need to determine the answer to the following question: Why was the incarnation required for our salvation and for our redemption? Why was it necessary? To answer that question we must determine, at least, the following issues:

What is the difference between salvation and redemption?

What is the connection between salvation and redemption?

Why was it necessary for the Son of God to have a body?

Why was a blood sacrifice of a dying victim, God manifest in the flesh, required as essential to enable God to forgive sins?

Why was the body of the atoning sacrifice, the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, preserved from destruction through decay (as every human body faces upon death) and resurrected uncorrupted from the dead?

The incarnation neither was a last desperate measure by a frantic god nor was it more than what was properly required by a holy God. Some suggest that the Supreme Being devoted centuries in various attempts to work out some methodology whereby humanity could be

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