

Making Sense of Good and Evil

Geoffrey Vincent

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INTRODUCTION

What we are witnessing today, especially in the field of medicine, is nothing short of science fiction when one considers that it was only as recent as the 1920's that automobiles surpassed horse and buggy. Those once blind, deaf, and lame, are seeing, hearing, and walking again, thanks to the men and women of science who continue building on the discoveries of those before them. If more of the good news was broadcast we would notice that nations and individuals are performing medical miracles and works of compassion that far outweigh the evil in the world. As science continues to progress with new and exciting breakthroughs, there will always be nurses, doctors, paramedics, fire fighters, police officers, and ordinary everyday citizens who will continue from one generation to the next caring for the communities they serve. Yet with all the advancements in technology and signs of better things to come, many believe we are living in 'the last days'. Are we to believe that everything humanity struggles through with sickness, disease, famine, war, plagues, and so on, is all for nothing?

The greatest obstacle towards world peace is not so much the leaders of the rogue nations but more of the continuing conflicts and wars between the religions that have built their faith on the traditional teaching of a 'fall'. The belief that humanity's woes are due to Adam's sin is held by two and a half billion Catholics and Protestants. Add to that number almost two billion Muslims who also believe that although Adam had sinned, he later realised his mistake and therefore cannot be held responsible for the sins of his

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offspring. Judaism is of the view we are born in a neutral state and therefore can choose between right and wrong. As it stands today, more than half the world's population of 7.8 billion, as of 2020, are taught that all the evil in the world such as war, famine, sickness, disease, death, and so on, was caused by Adam's sin.

Rarely is a sermon preached without a reminder we are more inclined towards evil rather than good because of an inherent sinful condition. So entrenched is the teaching of original sin that many Christians may find it hard to understand why there are millions upon millions of ordinary everyday people with no knowledge of the bible, yet naturally embrace goodness rather than evil. Genesis and science will never be compatible while creationists ignore what is in plain sight, especially in the fields of archaeology and palaeontology. It is becoming increasingly clear by the day it was very unlikely Adam and Eve were the sole progenitors of the human race.

Most of today's bible scholars are of the opinion that Genesis is just an allegory that explains the origin of evil and therefore should not be taken seriously. However, this line of reasoning puts the gospels in a very precarious position. If the Genesis creation narrative is just an allegory because there appears to be no defence against science, the gospels will also have to be accepted as allegorical seeing that Genesis is the foundation for the gospels teaching. And if creationists continue to argue against science, they may also contribute to the irrelevance of the gospels. One of the most difficult challenges in putting forward an alternative view of Genesis in light of science is getting past many of the deep seated beliefs, especially the belief we grow old and die because of a 'fall'. Conversely, to suggest that Adam and Eve were the sole progenitors of the entire human race is one thing, but to suggest that Cain married a sister because there appears to be no other explanation has created more questions than answers, especially since incest is strictly forbidden.

Cursed be anyone who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' (Deuteronomy 27:22).

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The traditional teachings of Genesis have caused many to doubt the reliability of the narrative. Not that science has discovered something new that contradicts the narrative but reinforces what Genesis has always held, not only about our origins, but many other erroneous beliefs that have caused unnecessary fear. For example what Genesis teaches about why we grow old and die is something more to be embraced rather than feared. That may sound unbelievable and hard to comprehend, but once we grasp what Genesis teaches about life, death and regeneration in a perfectly natural way, growing old and eventually dying takes on a whole new meaning. Admittedly these commentaries are aimed at trying to get Christians and Muslims to have a complete change of thinking about where heaven is, but at the same time mindful that non-believers, agnostics and atheists, may find comfort in what Genesis teaches about what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God; whether believer or unbeliever.

To wonder why ‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’ was put in the garden in the first place and why a ‘serpent’ would want to talk Eve into having her eyes opened to the knowledge of good and evil deserves an explanation that will hopefully make more sense than the traditional belief. The following Genesis commentary will endeavour to show the reason why those named ‘*male and female*’ and commanded to ‘*be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the ‘earth*’ were created separate from Adam (Genesis 1:26-28. 2:7-8). When one considers that Adam had only ‘*become like God, knowing good and evil*’ since following Eve into a transgression, it becomes clear why the Apostle Paul states in his letter to Timothy, ‘*Adam was not deceived?*’ (Genesis 3:26. 1 Timothy 2: 14).

Little attention is given to Paul’s testimony due to an exegetical misunderstanding of Romans 5:12-21 that appears to put Adam in a very poor light. Paul is no doubt speaking of the ‘*first Adam*’ as a ‘type’ that introduced the knowledge of sin and death, and the ‘*last Adam*’ as the ‘antitype’ that held the remedy, yet he does not accuse Adam of actually committing a sin. Paul’s use of the Greek word τύπος (typos) is not simply just a ‘figure’ of something, but the

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actual original stamp or mark from a blow that is the exact copy of the original. Notice that Paul does not say ‘as by one man’s *sin*’, but rather by ‘one man’s *disobedience*’.

For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous (Romans 5:19).

To accuse Adam as the ‘*one who sinned*’ contradicts Paul’s testimony that ‘Adam was not deceived’ (Romans 5:16. 1Timothy 2:14). (Romans 5:14). That Adam was ‘formed and breathed into’ by God yet was unaware of what he was doing when following Eve into a transgression defies logic. Before we can even understand what had motivated Adam to disobey the law of the garden; ‘*thou shalt not*’, we need to understand why the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was planted in the garden in the first place.

Isaiah speaking of the Lord states; *I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things*’ (Isaiah 45:7). Although the above testimony from Isaiah may seem contradictory when compared with the Apostle John’s statement ‘*He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love*’, the point is, without the knowledge of good and evil we would be void of free will and subject to an arbitrary God (1 John 4:8). The very thought of humanity being created in God’s ‘image and likeness’ without the potential to create evil is inconsistent with what the scriptures have to say about the nature of good and evil in relation to our image and likeness of God. So what was the point of creating a world with people who could be murderers, criminals, rapists, and warmongers if an all knowing God was aware there would be consequences due to the knowledge of good and evil? But what was the point of creating a world with people who could be compassionate, loving, kind, and gentle, while also having to suffer with sickness, hunger, poverty, war and death? If according to the gospels, the purpose from the beginning was for the Spirit of God to dwell within humanity, is it unreasonable to conclude that if God dwells within humanity doesn’t God also share in our suffering and joy?

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Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"(1 Corinthians 3:16)

Where scripture speaks of God 'dwelling within you', it is speaking about the spirit of God that is within, whether a believer or unbeliever. It was the inspiration from the spirit within that Isaiah could say speaking about God: *'I make peace and I create evil'*. This doesn't mean that God or humanity are evil by nature; it simply means that without the knowledge of good and evil we wouldn't be created in the image and likeness of God. Since we have the free will to exercise the knowledge of something that is a force for good or evil, there has to be an outcome. According to scripture, if we do good, we belong to God, if we choose evil, we have 'not seen God'.

Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God (1 John 1:11).

Law and remedy

Because the knowledge of good and evil is an integral part of our human nature and therefore all may choose between good and evil, there has to be a remedy for wrong doing. If one bible subject is more important than another it is the subject of law and grace. Eve's 'transgression' followed by Adam's 'disobedience', also described by the Apostle Paul as an 'offence', was necessary to teach humanity that law, whether written, spoken, or engraved in stone, cannot change the individual's behaviour or potential to create evil. Eve's transgression was humanity's assurance that through her choice to copulate, the seed to bring *'life and immortality to light through the gospels'* would be revealed in the fullness of time as the remedy to overcome evil (2 Timothy 1:10). The gospels are not based on a rescue plan because of an original sin, but the necessity for God's grace to be revealed due to every person's potential to sin. Eve knew once she had her nakedness revealed, she and her offspring would begin to physically die yet have everlasting life spiritually and physically through procreation of the flesh. Flesh is mere clay, but the spirit is

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pure, holy, and eternal. Adam was formed as the first '*natural man*' for the purpose of his seed bringing immortality to light through the last '*spiritual man*'.

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:46).

Eve may well have resisted the temptation of partaking from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and therefore have remained innocent of her nakedness and remained childless. 'The tree of life' mentioned first in Genesis and again in the final chapter of the bible, remains the symbol of everlasting life through each family tree. Therefore the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life go hand in hand. There would be no point in a tree of life without the knowledge of good and evil. It was not the tree of life that was guarded once Adam and Eve were expelled, but rather 'the *way* of the tree of life' (Genesis 3:24). The 'way' of the tree of life meant that had Adam and Eve chosen to forever partake from the tree of life they would have remained immortal and without offspring. If the Garden of Eden was the original place where procreation was to begin, there would have been no need for the couple to be 'afraid' or to 'hide' themselves (Genesis 3:24. 3:7-10).

To simply accept those described as 'male and female' and commanded to '*be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth*' refer to Adam and Eve contradicts the overall narrative. By not considering Eve's transition from sexual innocence to sexual awareness ignores the obvious. Had Eve had any desire to procreate, she would not have needed any prompting to have her eyes opened to her nakedness. Eve's decision to procreate knowing she would grow old and die was an act of unselfishness. Rather than living a meaningless existence without offspring, Eve knew life outside of Eden would be meaningful because her offspring were not without hope despite the knowledge of evil. The hope that Eve had looked forward to was the promise that would come to pass through her seed.

The first and last Adam.

It is essential to understand why the first Adam as a ‘type’ is named in Luke’s gospel as the Son of God, and why the last Adam as the ‘antitype’ is also named the Son of God. There can only be one Son of God. Mathew likely would not have exalted Adam as the son of God if he was guilty of sin. Notice the final conclusion of Mathew’s genealogy back from Jesus¹ to Adam.

Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God (Luke 3:38).

The New Testament speaks about the Son of God as ‘*the author and finisher of our faith*’, ‘*the alpha and the omega of God*’, ‘*the beginning and the end*’, ‘*the first and the last*’ (Hebrews 12:2. Revelation 22:13). Genesis calls our attention to ‘*the beginning of the creation of God*’ when the Spirit of God was breathed into the first natural man (Revelation 3:14). When Jesus had uttered those final words ‘*It is finished*’, the *omega* of God had completed what the *alpha* of God had begun. What was breathed into the first Adam was *the beginning of the creation of God* within the flesh and blood of humanity (Revelation 3:14). The first natural man and last spiritual man ensured that the fullness of God would forever dwell within humanity (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Adam’s deliberate ‘disobedience’ was an ‘offence’ necessary to reveal God’s grace, but not without a price. The last Adam nailed the curse of the law to the cross for all who would fall short of keeping the law. On Calvary’s cross the beauty of the serpent symbol was revealed. The figurative serpent that introduced the knowledge of evil was the same figurative serpent that held the remedy for the venom of sin.

¹ Jesus correct Hebrew name is Yeshua - a shortened name from the Hebrew Yehoshua meaning God is salvation. The Greek New Testament transliteration from Yehoshua to *Iesus* was later translated into the Latin *Jesus*. As the result of the Norman invasion of England in the 11th century, the letter ‘J’ eventually replaced first male names starting with ‘I’ or ‘Y’ because ‘J’ had more of a masculine sound: hence names like Iames or Iakob became James and Jacob. The name *Jesus* therefore does not reflect the true sense of the Hebrew meaning *God is salvation*. However, to avoid any confusion, the author has chosen to use the name ‘Jesus’.

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Moses had fashioned a 'bronze serpent' and elevated it on a pole as a symbol of the remedy for those bitten by venomous serpents while in the 'wilderness of sin' (Numbers 21: 6-9). The serpent in the wilderness was the precursor that symbolized the last Adam's admission that because he introduced the knowledge of good and evil he was therefore willing to bear the responsibility, not for sin itself, but for those infected by the venom of sin.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up (John 3:14).

The whole purpose of Jesus submitting to the humiliation and shame of being crucified was to 'condemn sin in the flesh' so a new spiritual *body* would be free from the curse of law.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:3,4).

The newly formed 'body of Christ', referred to by the Apostle Paul as 'the Church' had marked the beginning and construction of a spiritual temple where God could now dwell with no law.

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers (1 Timothy 1:9).

Jesus' message about justice and mercy fell on deaf ears. Although those two words are opposites, they are related. The law demands justice, but justice related to Mosaic Law requires grace wherever grace is warranted.

Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Romans 5:20).

Although Jesus had forgiven and pardoned a certain woman caught in adultery, the law keepers would have preferred to stone her to

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death, but when Jesus pointed out the sins of those who had accused her, they quickly had a change of heart.

When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more (John 8:10, 11).

Jerusalem had eventually become a stronghold for everything governed by law. Mercy and forgiveness came with a price. Its economy, religion, and central place of worship were based on rules and regulations becoming more and more burdensome. To this day, although the penalty for breaking the law is the only means of deterring bad behaviour, law is not without its faults, especially civil law. Judges have their hands tied, evident where the punishment does not fit the crime. It is now at the point where no one is safe under 'the rule of law'. Western civilization is eroding to where ordinary everyday people are becoming increasingly disturbed with the unfairness handed down by judges. If parents cannot teach offspring from an early age the value of ethical behaviour based on decent family values, secular leaders may have no other choice but to reintroduce the Ten Commandments into primary schools as a guide for good behaviour. Enforcing moral law may sound irrational, but if children raised under Muslim Law prove to behave better than non-Muslims, secular governments may have no choice but to join hands with Christian leaders and reintroduce the Ten Commandments. However, history proves that moral law whether Muslim or Christian, has done nothing to stop violence, unrest, wars and conflicts between those two religions or any other religion that uses law to discourage bad behaviour.

The redundancy of law

The Apostle Paul insists that when we bear each other's burdens all written laws are redundant.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

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This all important teaching of ‘the law of Christ’ is misunderstood because very few understand the true meaning of Christ. The Apostle Paul’s statement; *‘But you have not so learned Christ’* is at the heart of his teaching (Ephesians 4:20). Had Paul said ‘you have not so learned Hebrew or Greek’, his statement would have been easier to understand, but to say that Christ is something to be ‘learned’ is not so easy to identify with. While we continue to argue whether Jesus, Mohammad, Buddha, or any other sage or prophet has the truth, there will never be unity until the knowledge of Christ is re-established. There is much confusion about the Word of God and the connection between Jesus, God, the Holy Spirit, and the Christ of God.

By way of a simple explanation, Christ is not a person, but rather ‘the Word of God’ from where humanity’s goodness, creativity, and intelligence spring. There is a difference between Jesus the man who was born ‘according to the flesh’ and ‘the fullness of Christ’ that was within the man (Romans 1:3). In every instance where Jesus is mentioned ahead of Christ, as in ‘Jesus Christ’, the emphasis is on the man Jesus as one proclaiming the message of the Kingdom of God. But whenever Christ is mentioned ahead of Jesus, as in ‘Christ Jesus’, the emphasis is on the title before the name to distinguish the fullness of the Word of God that was within the person of Jesus. Where ‘Christ’ is used singularly, Christ relates to the Word of God that now dwells within humanity. It is ‘Christ within’ that is humanity’s hope of glory, not an external god or gods (Colossians 1:27). Note the following from the Apostle Paul.

But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, “ ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): (Romans 10:6-8).

Christ is the unifying principle that will bring humanity together as one body of faith. The enforcement of law cannot work because

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the very nature of judicial law is opposed to the knowledge and meaning of *Christ*, 'the end of the law for righteousness' (Romans 10:4). The Apostle Paul's admonition about 'learning Christ' is to understand the meaning of having the mind of Christ.

*Let this mind be in you, which was 'also' in Christ Jesus:
(Philippians 2:5).*

The mind of Christ

But what does it mean to 'also' have the mind of Christ Jesus? That question is best explained by asking what is in the mind of paramedics, police officers, firemen, nurses, teachers, believers, agnostics, or any ordinary everyday person regardless of gender, race or colour, who will risk his or her own life to save a stranger.

*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life
for his friends (John 15:13).*

What is in the mind of an atheist who can show love and compassion and a deep sense of grief for his or her neighbour or friend when they lose everything through fire, flood, accident, sickness, or any other unexpected tragedy? Whether believer, agnostic, or atheist, we each have an inherent sense of oneness that naturally springs into action, especially in times of tragedy. Religion does not have a monopoly on righteousness.

*There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision,
Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all
(Colossians 3:11).*

It is the Christ principle, whether believer or unbeliever that draws us together in times of need. Paul's 'revelation of Jesus Christ' was the turning point in his understanding of what it means to be Christ minded.

*But I certify you, brethren that the Gospel which was preached
of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither
was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Galatians
1:11, 12).*

Christ is 'the Word that was from the beginning'. It is 'Christ within' that enables humanity to have compassion for the poor, hungry, sick, and so on. 'The word that is near you' enables men and women of science to help the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear. It is not the spirit and mind of man alone, but the omniscient word that dwells within humanity. We are only just beginning to see medical miracles from men and women of science who are doing their best to discover cures for sickness, pain, and suffering. Christ is the omniscient indwelling within humanity that is bringing immortality to light. Christ within is the 'hope of glory' by which the Apostle Paul could confidently say:

'But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Paul is not speaking about things outside of this world but things within this world being prepared for those that love God. 'Learning Christ' may sound unusual, but with an understanding of what 'the risen body of Christ' stands for, the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection takes on a whole new meaning. The 'body of Christ' is not a physical earthly body with members answerable to men, but a spiritual body with members of Christ from all nations regardless of colour, gender, or race, answerable only to God.

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church (Colossians 1:24).

Paul affirms that the body and members of Christ remain in this world forever; Notice the following;

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. (1 Corinthians 12:25-27).Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Ephesians 3:21).

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Although the Apostle Paul refers to our state of consciousness in terms of ‘alive to Christ’, ‘asleep in Christ’, or ‘dead in Christ’, most of Paul’s statements are interpreted literally rather than spiritually. For example, the ‘dead in Christ’ has nothing to do with people literally dead, but rather a state of mind. The mind that is ‘alive to Christ’ speaks of goodness, peace, compassion, truth, justice, and so on, while those ‘dead in Christ’ speak the opposite. Many who are ‘asleep in Christ’ are often ‘awakened’ through personal tragedies and circumstances that draw communities nearer to God. According to Jesus, all who are peacemakers, merciful, pure in heart, compassionate, are ‘children of God’, the ‘salt of the earth’, and a ‘light to the world’. Mathew Chapter 5 excellently describes ordinary, everyday people as living examples of those with the mind of Christ Jesus (refer to Mathew 5:5-16).

The Christ principle.

The writers of antiquity described *logos* as the divine reason that had set in motion the creative order of the cosmos. The logos or Word of God according to the scriptures is the Christ principle that was ‘with’ God and ‘was’ God. The Gospel of John states;

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (John 1:1).

The Word is not a person but rather something unseen yet evident by what can be seen (Romans 1:20). ‘God’ is the all-encompassing ‘everything’ that brought the universe into existence from out of nothing. When the bible speaks of the ‘Godhead’, it is not referring to separate gods, but One God.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:4,5).

Whether the scriptures speak of God, Christ, Logos, Word of God, Holy Spirit, all are the ONE divine principle that brought all living things into existence.

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all (Colossians 3:11).

The forgotten Christ.

When Christians had formally merged with political Rome into '*one holy catholic and apostolic Church*', it was hoped that the knowledge of Christ would be forgotten. It was a time that saw a well orchestrated transformation of power that was the saving grace of the Roman Empire. What is assumed by many historians as 'the fall of Rome' was nothing more than transferring power in a different guise. Had the church fathers stood their ground and refused to sign what many believed had contradicted the scriptures about Christ, there may have been less reason for Mohammad or any other prophet to have a reason to start a new religion. Had the knowledge of Christ not been lost, there would have been no need for a Protestant Reformation let alone the rise of hundreds of protestant cults and sects that remain to this day.

Neither Jesus nor the Apostles alluded to anything that even resembles a 'church creed'. The first ecumenical council of 325 C.E. clarified the nature of Jesus Christ to counteract the Arian doctrine that Christ was not divine but rather a created being. Following the first council of Nicaea, the second council of Constantinople in 381 C.E. clarified the definition of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit to what is accepted today as the 'Trinity'. What followed were centuries of unspeakable horrors. A simple faith once based on Jesus' teachings of love and compassion had become a religion that meted out punishment, persecution, torment, and death to anyone who would not conform to her doctrines and beliefs.

Although many of today's contemporary scholars question the wording of the creed as it relates to the nature of Jesus and his manner of birth, it is unlikely that the nature of Christ will be questioned, fearing destabilizing the very foundation of Judaic Christianity as we know it today. Before examining whether Christianity's official creed reflects the biblical testimony on the nature of Christ and

what constitutes ‘one holy catholic and apostolic church’ as opposed to the true meaning of ‘church’, observe the wording of the official church creed:

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

While the creed is crystal clear that only after Jesus returns will the Kingdom of God have no end, the Apostle Paul states the opposite;

‘Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen (Ephesians 3:21).

Since the true meaning of ‘church’ had been misrepresented, most Christians would disagree that Paul is talking about a permanent and unbroken kingdom set up in Jesus’ time. Many think of ‘church’ as a physical building of wood and stone where communities gather for worship, marriage ceremonies, funerals, and so on, rather than ‘church’ as a universal spiritual body.

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The hundreds of ‘churches’ representing various branches of Christianity is a testimony to how the meaning of church has been lost. Rather than describe the ‘body of Christ’ for what it is, the church creed substitutes the spiritual body of Christ to suit its own ends. The distorted view of the true church had stripped believers of the freedom they once shared in the knowledge of Christ.

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22, 23).

The Apostle Paul had warned his followers of a counterfeit church that ultimately ruled under its own laws and regulations by setting up its own holy place from where an earthly representative would administer power and authority over all ecclesiastical matters.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:2,3).

The Nicene Creed not only omits the relevance of the body of Christ as what constitutes the true ‘church’, but also distorts the truth about who was responsible for crucifying the Christ. The creed states that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, yet according to the plain and simple testimony from scripture, Pilate wanted Jesus immediately released. Notice Peter’s condemnation of Israel’s role in Jesus crucifixion;

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:22,23).

The ‘wicked hands’ were certainly not the hands of the Romans, but the religious leaders who plotted Jesus’ death. Jesus was not

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only persecuted because of his differences with the Pharisees, but also because he was a threat to the Jewish economy. The only way to disguise the Pharisees true motive for wanting to have Jesus crucified was to have him charged for blasphemy. However it is clear that Pontius Pilate wanted no part of it.

Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required (Luke 23:20-24).

Pilate could find no reason to have Jesus put to death. Although he washed his hands of the matter in front of the whole multitude, he nevertheless had to comply with Jewish Sanhedrin Law as a matter of political expediency (Mathew 27:24). The Nicene Creed had cleverly laid the blame solely on Pontius Pilate to distract from their real motive. Had the Nicene Creed stated that Jesus was crucified under the authority of the Jewish high priest Caiaphas, the Jewish religious leaders of the day would have taken exception, and for a very good reason. The term 'Judeo - Christianity' first coined at the beginning of the 19th century, represents the religion that was initially Judaic and based on law. 'The one holy catholic and apostolic church' was clever enough not to mention anything about 'Christ as the end of the law for righteousness' or that 'Christ within is the hope of glory', or the true meaning of 'church' because of the Jews disagreement about the nature of Christ. Instead, 'the one holy catholic and apostolic church' continues to hold to the Ten Commandments as the guide to righteousness.

Hopefully Christians will see the deliberate fabrication within the wording of the official church creed that undermines the meaning of Christ. No doubt there are many 'Christ minded' Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, popes, bishops, believers, unbelievers, agnostics, that are 'Christ minded' regardless of their beliefs.

Anti-Christ

The correct rendering of the Greek word ‘antichrist’ (αντιχριστος) literally means ‘instead of Christ’ or ‘in place of Christ’. Antichrist has a twofold meaning; one that symbolizes the political powers that enforce civil law to discourage bad behaviour, the other, the religious powers that subject believers to church law, creeds, and ‘doctrines of men’ as a means of good behaviour. If there is to be a shared belief that can bring humanity together as one body of Christ, it is unlikely that such a transition will begin until the knowledge of Christ is reclaimed and individuals can begin to think for themselves.

Regardless of whether religious or civil, all laws are mere shadows of the substance. ‘The mind of Christ’ is our God given consciousness that gives every individual the free will to discern between good and evil (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). The Apostle Paul speaks about Christ as ‘*a mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints*’ (Colossians 1:26). Had the knowledge of Christ not been ‘hidden through the ages’, the seed that was to bring the Christ child into the world would no doubt have been in danger, hence the parallel narrative of Genesis that veils the origin of Christ. When Herod heard of a rumour that the Christ child was born, he immediately set out to murder every Jewish infant that was a potential threat to his power. However, the promised seed not only survived, but continues to bear fruit to this day. The preservation of the seed was ‘hidden’ within the descendants of Adam, through to Abraham, David, and finally Joseph. While the language and symbolism of the Old and New Testaments may give the impression of things yet to come, we are admonished by Paul to discern between what is literal and what is spiritual. As the Apostle Paul states;

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The New Jerusalem

As an example, very few had understood what Jesus had meant by ‘destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’ (John 2:19). Many were offended by his words because they thought Jesus was speaking about the destruction of Herod’s temple when Jesus had said:

In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you (John 14:2).

Jesus was not speaking about a huge physical mansion with smaller dwellings within, somewhere out in the universe, but a single spiritual temple within this world with members of ‘the body of Christ’ representing one temple of God. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God (Revelation 21:1-3).

While it may appear that the New Jerusalem is a physical city literally going to descend from the heavens, notice the following testimony.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect (Hebrews 12:22, 23).

Regrettably, the ‘body of Christ’ is no longer understood as something permanently established in this world. There is a need to discern where and when the language of the New Testament needs to be rightly divided between what is natural and what is spiritual (2 Timothy 2:15). There can be only one faith and one baptism, therefore one united ‘body in Christ’ (Ephesians 4:5). The members of the body of Christ are not divided. We are figuratively inside or

outside the New Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the hundreds of branches of Christianity that continue to argue whether Jesus will return before, during, or after an apocalypse, need to rethink about the meaning of the Kingdom of God, when it was established, and why it is permanently here on earth.

When the Apostle Peter addressed those gathered at Pentecost confused about what had occurred, he put to rest any doubt about the Old Testament prophecies concerning ‘the last days’. Although Peter explained that what the congregation had witnessed was the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy, many today are not convinced and would rather believe that Joel’s prophecy was only partly fulfilled at Pentecost. Notice Peter’s discourse on Joel’s unmistakable description of ‘the last days’.

But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come: (Acts 2:17-20) .

‘Wonders in the heavens above’, ‘signs in the earth beneath’, ‘blood fire and vapour of smoke’, ‘the sun turning to darkness and moon turning to blood’ are figurative expressions of the new age that had arrived in the 1st century A.D. Perceiving things as purely literal is likened by Paul as one drinking the ‘milk of the word’, while those who discern what is spiritual are ready to digest the ‘meat of the word’.

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. (Hebrews 5:12).

The end of religion

Many figurative descriptions of the New Testament are repeats from the Old Testament that describe the impending doom of Israel because of her figurative 'adulteries'. It should be mentioned that although the Jews to this day are despised by many individuals and nations of the world, it was only because of their rejection of Jesus that the Gentiles have been blessed with the Gospel of Christ (Romans 11:11,12). It is also worth noting that the seed that had brought life and immortality to light through the gospel was only made possible through the nation of Israel (2 Timothy 1:10). Here we have a parallel message about Eve's transgression and Israel's transgression. Whereas Eve's transgression was for humanity's blessing in learning about law and grace, Israel's transgressions saw the curse of the law nailed to the cross for the Gentiles not making the same mistake. Within the narratives of Eve's transgression and Israel's transgressions is a glimpse of why Isaiah could say; *I, the Lord create evil*' (Isaiah 45:7). Sometimes evil is necessary for the outworking of good. Life is a tapestry of mysteries that somehow makes sense, especially when good is born from out of evil. Nations of the world will never be grateful for Israel's rejection of Christ until the world understands why their sacrifices were necessary for the good of humanity. Notice just one of many examples from the Old Testament prophets that describe Israel's defiance and rebelliousness against God.

The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous

sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD (Jeremiah 3:6-10).

The Old Testament prophets such as Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and the Minor Prophets from Hosea to Malachi, speak of Israel and Judah in language that describes Israel's unfaithfulness. To say that Israel was not at the centre of 'God's vengeance' is to ignore its history of backsliding and continuous rejection of the prophets. Jesus displayed his own frustration and righteous indignation when he upturned the tables of the money changers operating their places of business within the temple walls. The Pharisees were determined to get rid of Jesus and his teachings from the time he exposed their hypocrisies. Jerusalem had figuratively become like Babylon of old, thus Jerusalem is described as 'Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots'. That may sound very judgmental and unfair to the Jewish religion, but the teaching of the Ten Commandments as the sinners guide to righteousness is the legacy because of their ignorance of Christ. The very name 'Judaic Christianity' speaks for itself. The figurative 'Mother of Harlots' spoken of in Revelations was the union of Judaic law and Christianity and the eventual hundreds of offshoots symbolised as 'daughters' of a religion that claims to be 'one holy catholic and apostolic Church' that upholds law as a guide to righteousness.

When the physical city of Jerusalem was destroyed almost two thousand years ago, the figurative New Jerusalem was raised from the ashes and remains to this day as an eternal spiritual city where ordinary everyday people are called to 'come out of Babylon'. Any religion based on fundamental rules and regulations is anti-Christ. According to the Book of Revelations, the members of the body of Christ are figuratively described as 'undefiled' because they are symbolically clothed in 'white raiment', a covering that represents 'the righteousness of Christ'. John's visions describe the members of the body of Christ wearing symbolic robes of righteousness because of their faith. They are redeemed not because of their own righteousness, but because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to them because of their faith. The events before and in the aftermath

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of the destruction of Jerusalem marked the ‘end of the world’ and beginning of a new age. Notice the similarities between the Old Testament descriptions of Israel and the New Testament meaning of ‘Babylon’. (The following commentary on ‘The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ’ will explain more about the meaning of the figurative language).

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality (Revelation 14:8).

The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath (Revelation 16:19).

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality. And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly (Revelation 17:1-6).

The end of the world

It was an earth shattering experience when the Romans destroyed the old city of Jerusalem. The Jew’s final rejection of Jesus was a pivotal point in history that saw the end of a religion at the centre of the old

city of Jerusalem that had subjected believers to bondage and fear. It was a day of vengeance and retribution, not only because they had rejected Jesus, the last of the prophets, but also retribution for all the previous prophets sent to warn her of an impending judgment. It is a mistake to interpret 'the end of the world' as something yet to be fulfilled. Jesus had warned Israel forty years previously;

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Mathew 24:21).

And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (Mathew 24:2, 3)

Jesus had used many metaphors when describing the destruction of Jerusalem and the aftershock in terms such as 'earthquake', 'lightning shining from east to west', 'the sun being darkened' 'the moon no longer giving light', with similar metaphors used in John's visions. Unfortunately many sects and cults that had sprung from the reformation use those metaphors to fit with their interpretations of past events and apocalyptic future events. However, when John's visions are understood in light of the body of Christ as it relates to the early church, the visions are a 'blessing' to all who read and understand. Note the wording to the introduction to the Revelation of Jesus Christ;

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near (Revelation 1:3).

We are now living in a new dispensation of time. Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom of God was not about a future paradise, but where each of us may find paradise within this world.

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom

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of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20,21).

The first two verses of the epistle named ‘Hebrews’ clearly states;

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Hebrews 1:1,2).

Almost the entire New Testament addresses things relating to the present. Notice the following;

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant (Revelation 1:1).

And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. (Revelation 22:6).

Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book (Revelation 22:7).

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown (Revelation 3:11).

And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand (Revelation 22:10).

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be (Revelation 22:12)

If this world was to end in a holocaust, the Gospel of Christ wouldn’t be described as ‘good news’. Hopefully these commentaries will make more sense of the Genesis creation narrative that will hopefully shed more light on ‘*the mystery of Christ that had been hidden through the ages*’ (Ephesians 3:9).