

## A Biographical Sketch of Sin

Ever since I discovered and began to study the Holy Bible and recognized that it was authored by our Creator God Himself, trying to understand the meaning, nature, cause and effect of sin has been an important component of my “Christian Musings.” Three previous essays titled, “The Consequence of Sin,” “Sin Unto Death,” and “The Covering of Sin” express my earlier observations and beliefs regarding this provocative word. What follows here, I pray, is a look at sin from what might be a little closer to God’s universal perspective, as we can determine it from His infallible Word. To represent one’s self to be an authorized spokesperson for our Creator, is a privilege, which was given by Him only to the Prophets and the Apostles, and their revelations are accurately recorded in His Holy Bible. The only legitimate privilege anyone else has is to search, find and attempt to interpret from, and only from, this Book, as clear an understanding as possible, of what He would have us know. It is on that basis, and much prayed for perception, that I offer the following observations.

God tells us that on the sixth day of the week, during which He instituted all of creation, He made man, and made him in His own image out of “adamah,” the Hebrew word which means “ground,” not “dust.” Dust is “aphar” which is similarly alluded to in other parts of the Scripture. Careful study of this portion of Scripture cannot help but engender an awe and unlimited respect for the exactness and precision of God’s Holy Word. God created the heavens and earth. Created is the translated Hebrew word “bara” which means created out of nothing, something only God can do. When He speaks of having made man, He uses the word “formed” in Genesis 2:7. This is the translation of the Hebrew word “yatzar” which means, “to mold.” Hence we often see God’s use of the analogy of the potter molding the clay when He refers to man. While in Genesis 1:27, we find God telling us that He “created” man, in Genesis 2:7, God enlarges on this idea by revealing that He made or formed man from the very substance which He made from nothing.

Naming man Adam after the word for earth reflects man's material origin in that he is but an earthling made out of earth, or ground. This is important to remember in the context of so many religions, which portray man as being as God, or becoming able to achieve godhood, just as Satan believed he could. God, the Creator, obviously is infinitely above any part of His created image. What separates us from all other forms of life is that into the particular composite of earthly matter called man, He imparted His breath (neshameh), which is the spirit of eternal life. The Hebrew word for soul or spirit is "rauch." This He gave to man, animals and even to false gods (demons). But "neshameh" caused man to become a living, immortal soul with the unique faculty of spiritual understanding. Animals were given only "rauch," a soul or spirit of life, which is not immortal and cannot understand the spiritual aspects of life or of eternity. Angels are also created beings, who were given immortality, but in a different and less revealed manner. They were created as spirits with considerable power but not in the image of God. Their powers, however, great and presently far superior to man, have no future destiny greater than that which was originally given them. Man, however, being in the image of God, has the potential for being "above" the angels in the final dispensation of God's grand plan. Those who will achieve that potential are those, and only those, who accept, comply with, and obey God's Word as the whole of Scripture clearly prescribes. Thus one might fairly conclude that earthly life for man is a proving ground, a school, a one time only period of preparation and absorption of understanding, all predicated on, and evidenced by, a humble recognition and unconditional acceptance of God's goals as represented by God's own Word. This Word was manifested here on earth through the virgin birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. Not just believing, but knowing that Jesus is Lord and Savior, is the pre-condition which allows for admission into this school of preparation for Godly service.

Having said all of this, what about sin, and what does all of this have to do with it? To this I am persuaded to offer this somewhat simplistic overview, which may at least serve as an outline for a more comprehensive analysis, which is presently beyond my capacity and level of ability or understanding. This outline consists of five components, the definition, the origin, the impact, the progression and finally the disposition of sin.

1. Definition of Sin: Sin is simply defined as anything contrary to God's will. This is clearly an all inclusive definition which stands alone and is adequate as a starting point for those who seek to be "in His image" as He demands of all who would be His sons and daughters. What this means, what God considers contrary to His will, is clearly described in Scripture and available to all sincere seekers who avail themselves of it. However, this is not as easy as it may sound, because we are all inveterate sinners who find it almost impossible to avoid rationalizing, diminishing and excusing our own sins. Until we are able to remove those cataracts of the mind's eye, which deliberately cloud portions of God's Word, those portions, which we would rather not understand, all of our efforts in genuinely seeking God's truth will be fruitless. Only the truly humble heart which recognizes the depth of depravity within which its sin filled nature exists, and then enlists the power of the Holy Spirit to remove this glaze, can ever even hope to discover what God would have His own be able to understand. The result of this self deception and lack of Scriptural understanding is, that not only are there sins which we choose not to acknowledge, but that there are also sins which we don't even know are sins, and which we inadvertently commit daily. If we are serious in our desire to try to obey the command to be perfect as our Father is perfect, then we must seek to at least know as much as possible, the full spectrum of what sin is. The ancient Hebrews had been given this incite, and, therefore, had a special sacrifice for the sins they may have committed but didn't know that they were sins. This wasn't empty ritual. This was a part of the God-ordained process of full coverage of their sins until Christ Jesus would come to wash them away with His blood. When Jesus gave the "Sermon on the Mount," He revealed to all who would take Him seriously, many of these "unknown" sins. For instance, He revealed that mere thoughts of doing sinful acts were as fully sinful as the acts themselves.

How awful is sin? It's simply a matter of personal judgment, as the world believes, that is, that portion of the world that even acknowledges that there is

such a thing as sin. Limiting the first question to the Christian worldview, it seems even here, sin is often trivialized. Perhaps this is because it seems that it is so easily cleansed from our souls through simply believing that Jesus is Lord and Savior. First, sins are not cleansed from the soul by that simple belief, unless that belief has outgrown its place in the brain and has penetrated every fiber of the heart and soul, as evidenced by a changed life, which grows in reverence and obedience, and away from sin. Second, Jesus' substitutionary payment was not easy, but was the most painful ordeal of suffering ever possible to have been perpetuated; a pain worse than any human could possibly comprehend. It was a God-sized pain that only God Himself was capable of suffering and surviving. The more one studies Scripture and is given an understanding available only through the Holy Spirit, does it become possible to even begin to appreciate what God did to make it possible for us to be extricated from that unbearable burden. Psalms 22 and 69, along with Isaiah 52 and 53 express but a tiny portion of what Jesus suffered out of His love for those who would but accept Him as Lord and Savior.

Doesn't this tell us much about how God views sin? The whole of Scripture makes much ado about sin, how God views it, and what it has done to all of creation. Let's look at just one little phrase in the Book of Romans, Chapter 7, verse 13. Here Paul is describing how law brought sin into focus. But at the end of this verse he says, "*that sin by commandment might become exceedingly sinful.*" There doesn't seem to be anything very exciting there, or even suggestive of being worthy of extended thought. That is unless you are full to overflowing with the Holy Spirit, having been given the spirit of wisdom, discernment and articulation, as was the great man of God, Charles Hadden Spurgeon. He was able to derive from the two words "exceedingly sinful" an entire one hour sermon, filled with divine insights and understanding. Here is but a small portion of how he began that sermon:

*Now, what I want to call your attention to is that Paul here calls sin “exceedingly sinful.” Why didn’t he say, “Exceedingly black,” or “exceedingly horrible,” or “exceedingly deadly”? Why, because there is nothing in the world so bad as sin. When he wanted to use the very worst word he could find, to call sin by, he called it by its own name, and reiterated it: “sin” “exceedingly sinful.” For if you call sin black there is no moral excellency or deformity in black and white, Black is as good as white, and white is as good as black, and you have expressed nothing. If you call sin “deadly,” yet death in itself hath no evil in it compared with sin. For plants to die is not a dreadful thing; rather it may be a part of the organization of nature that successive generations of vegetables should spring up, and in due time should form the root-soil for other generations to follow. If you call it “deadly” you have said but little. It you want a word; you must come home for it. Sin must be named after itself. If you want to describe it, you must call it “sinful.” Sin is “exceedingly sinful.”*

If we recognize that every sin represents rebellion against God, that its first introduction upset the very order of the universe, and that it is responsible for what has happened, and is going on in the world in terms of pain, suffering, disease, death, etc., it should be evident why God has put so much emphasis on its “wrongness.” Isn’t it right, therefore, that we should seek to better understand it and treat it with the same seriousness as God does, and has told us that we should as well?

2. Origin of Sin: There are several eminent Bible Scholars such as Barnhouse and Fruchtenbaum whom I value and respect most highly, who believe in a so-called “gap” theory based on Genesis, chapter one, verse two, which seems to suggest that there was something in existence before God created the heaven and earth. Verse two speaks of a darkness being on the face of the deep and that “the spirit moved upon the face of the water.” I presently don’t have a satisfactory explanation of this with which I am satisfied. However, these Scholars conclude that prior to the Genesis creation there was some form of substance, and that this

was an earth-like place which was the abode of Satan, a place to which he was exiled and which was later destroyed, leaving this formless water mass. If that was the case, then his sin of envy must have occurred well before God created the universe. That such mightily spiritually blessed servants of God can believe this, tells me that it may be my own deficiency of understanding that is the problem as I here try to advance my thoughts as to the origin of sin. I mentioned this other view so that the reader may know of it and seek, if he or she chooses to, just what that is all about.

At any rate, Scripture tells us that the first sin was committed by Adam. Eve, of course, ate the forbidden fruit first. Adam was told directly by God not to eat from a particular tree or he would surely die. (Genesis 2:17). It was after that, that God made Eve, and there is no evidence that God repeated this to her. The fact that she distorted the message by claiming that God said not to even touch it, (Genesis 3:3) suggests that it may have been Adam who relayed that information, and may have even added the “no touch” for empathysis. While Eve was deceived, Adam knowingly, through violating God’s direct word, willfully did sin, that is, he did what he knew was contrary to God’s will. Here the origin of sin gets a bit sticky. Both Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit. But what about Satan who convinced them to ignore God’s decree? Didn’t he sin first through envy, and also by his lying and deceiving Eve? Yet the shame of Adam’s and Eve’s nakedness, the entry of death, the commencement of universal entropy, the groaning of the universe, the turning of vegetarians into carnivores, the development of thorns and thistles to plague man, the institution of labor pains in the woman, and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from that perfect environment of the Garden, were all the result of man’s first sin, not Satan’s. This makes it evident that the first act of man’s disobedience, and not Satan’s acts of rebellion, was the activating sin. Satan persuaded Eve to sin, to act contrary to God’s will. But was Satan acting contrary to God’s will? Don’t jump too quickly to a conclusion.

Before we enter that tangled web, let's first look back a little to see how this drama may have begun. God made man in a state of unconfirmed creature holiness, that is, he was created holy, but with the power of contrary choice. At that point, his holiness had not yet been confirmed. That is why he was given a choice, a choice to obey or disobey, and a choice to remain holy or to sin. It was his choice that confirmed him to unholiness. The angels were all holy, but yet unconfirmed when Satan rebelled. Those who followed Satan confirmed their wickedness, while those who didn't became confirmed to holiness and are no longer even capable of choosing sin. Those who followed Satan, no longer had the ability to choose holiness. By this line of reasoning it may be concluded that God also instituted for man some probationary period wherein, if he had retained his holiness, that is, avoided the fruit, he too would have gained perpetual holiness and lost any possibility to sin. He would have then been confirmed to eternal holiness. But once he sinned, his lack of holiness made it impossible for him not to continue sinning. Man, by his own efforts, cannot climb out, but remains in this state until God in His loving mercy initiates a change in him. This change, and the restoration to holiness, is offered to all of mankind who will become believers in Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. Prior to Jesus' resurrection, this restoration to holiness was positionally available to all who believed in the God of Abraham, chose obedience and faith in Him, and obeyed the laws He had given them. It became effectual upon the completion of Jesus' work on the cross. Note that the lost angels have no Savior, no redeemer, for Jesus died in order to redeem only man, not angels or demons, or any other form of life. All genuinely saved believers became justified, and then are glorified as they ascend to heaven (Romans 8:30). In their glorified state, they no longer have any capacity to sin. They become forever holy. What a blessing we have in our Savior! And what a relief it will be to never again even be able to sin!

Now, back to who sinned first Satan or Adam? The preponderance of evidence, from my viewpoint, points to Adams' sin as having commenced the decline of all creation. However, it was most certainly Satan who sinned first. I don't believe

that we can know just when Satan committed his first sin, but it did manifest here on earth as he toyed and manipulated this intellectually far inferior species God has just created. It seems, therefore, that we might rightly conclude that Satan's sins are of a different nature than man's sins, because he is of a totally different species, and in a different realm. The Greek word for sin is "hamartano" which means, "missing the mark, so as to not share in the prize." There is no prize waiting for the angel species, even the one's who proved their holiness. Their future is in serving the redeemed man. Sin by that definition is ascribed to man, and doesn't appear to be applicable to Satan or to the angels. Pride is certainly a sin in man's realm and was also a fault in Satan's heart. But somehow the effect seems to have been different, because Satan's sin didn't shake God's Genesis-recorded creation, as did Adam's sin. There is no God ordained formula for forgiveness, justification or sanctification for any beings other than humans. God made the earth and all living things for the benefit of man and man alone (Genesis 1:28-31).

God didn't orchestrate Satan's rebellion by His directive will, but by His permissive will He allowed it, as He well had to if His provision of free will was to be an authentic, sovereign characteristic of His created beings. It is by God's permissive will, that God allows Satan to exert influence on man. Having failed the test in the Garden, man's sinful nature was established, as was Satan's even earlier. It appears that it was God's will that Satan, who is the perfect prototype of evil, should become the "standard bearer" for the "dark" side, so that there would continue to be a genuine choice available to man even as God would continually strive to convince man to choose His way. There seems to be no doubt that man's mortal life is yet another probationary period God has given him in order to seek a remedy for the sin affliction, which Adam and Eve imposed on all mankind by their first sin. All of God's love, mercy, grace, blessings and eternal fellowship are freely offered subject only to making the right choice, which is Jesus.



To see just how deep and indelibly anchored in man's soul sin really is, consider what the Holy Spirit has revealed about this fact in the Book of Revelation. During the Millennium, Jesus Himself will personally and physically rule "with an iron rod." Yet the sinful nature will remain in the heart of man. This will become so pervasive that after Satan is allowed out of the abyss for a while, he will be able to recruit a vast army of men actually willing and eager to wage a massive war against Jesus! (Revelation 20:18).

3. Impact of Sin: It's impossible to apprehend the full impact of that first sin, let alone that of its later manifestations. A hint of this is found in Romans 8:22, where the Holy Spirit through Paul says, "For we know that the whole of creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now." The word "groan" in Greek is "sustenazo" which means, "to experience a common calamity," that is, a calamity experienced by all. Groan is found 20 times in Scripture, but only this one time with that all encompassing meaning. That common calamity which affects the entire universe is sin, that first sin in the Garden of Eden when man exercised his free will and chose to go contrary to God's will by eating fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This put into the heart of man, and woman, the concept of having the power to decide for one's self what is and what is not in one's best interest apart from God's directive.

How could such a small infraction cause this terrible "common calamity" which was suddenly shared by all of creation? Seven times in Genesis, chapter 1, God speaks of His creation as being good. In fact, when He speaks of having created man, He says, "that was very good!" This obviously indicates that everything was good at the beginning. This offers no hint of any kind of impending calamity. Suddenly, however, all "very good" disappeared. The instant sin was committed, that is an act contrary to God's will, that perfect edifice God had created began to crumble, to deteriorate. Man, generally ignorant of how it happened, calls the condition entropy, the winding down of the universe, that all pervasive and continuing existence of chaos and disorder. Before sin, there was

no death. Scripture clearly states that sin caused the advent of death. Therefore, all creatures had to have been vegetarians. The first recorded death was that of the animals which furnished the skins with which God first clothed Adam and Eve.

With the greatest of self restraint of which I am capable, I'll resist going into my usual tirade on the "billions and billions of years hypothesis that modern "science" insists is the only answer to the great size of the universe and to the "evolution" of man. God said He made all things in six days, clearly six of our 24-hour days, not billions of years-days. If one carefully examines the Hebrew word for "day" as used in Genesis chapter one, and in Exodus chapter twenty, as well as many other places in Scripture, one cannot help but conclude that God meant 24-hour days! Because various stars are billions of light years away from each other doesn't mean that it took billions of years for this to happen. This is only relevant if one accepts a single point of beginning, the idea of the big bang theory, that first there was nothing and then it exploded from one single point, outward for billions of years in order to reach the vast distances at which the stars are now observable. Why only a one point beginning? Couldn't God have created the various segments of the universe at many distant places all at the same time on the same day? Also, isn't it possible that "*in the beginning*" the speed of light was billions of times faster than it is now, so that any distance measured in light years could have delivered these stars to where they are much faster, like in 24 earth hours? I'm not claiming that those thoughts necessarily have any validity. I only know that what is called "science" today is wrong, and that God is right. He created everything in six 24-hour days! Period! End of story! Anyone who tries to torture God's words in order to make them something other than what He said they were, 24-earth-hour days, is accepting man's word over God's word. Why rationalize and try to accommodate to man's godless theories, when God made it clear as to the truth!

Man's theories, those that desperately try to eliminate God as the Creator and His precious truth as meaningless, are like what is called New England weather. Wait a few minutes and it will change. How many of the ever changing "scientific" theories on this and other matters must be advanced before sad, simple, gullible and brainwashed man finally realizes that this is nothing but a desperate game by those who deny God and will propose any explanation, no matter how absurd, as long as it doesn't require having to admit that there is a Creator God. If "science" would expend its time, energy and money in prayerful thought on how God created, rather than trying to prove that it was accidental and absent of God, perhaps real scientific progress could be made in this and related fields! The earth groans. We have earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, typhoons, droughts, floods as evidence of its groaning. There are star collisions, super novas, dying stars, fragmented stars such as comets and meteors all attesting to the groaning and the continued groaning caused by that first sin, and I suspect that it is also because of the progression and growth of sin which we will discuss next.

4. The Progression of Sin: It was the musing about this aspect of sin that sparked my need to write this paper. Of course, as is too often evident, it was like putting an overdose of leaven into a measure of dough. This thought expanded well beyond its initially intended scope. What do I mean by the progression of sin? As I thought back through world history as our Lord recorded it, it became evident that man's sinful nature, his rebelliousness against God, has increased, become deeper seated, more matured, and ever more sophisticated, especially in these late end times.

At first there was but the one sin. But it, by itself, was enough to break the bond that had existed between the Spirit of God and the spirit in man. This severance was the spiritual death, the on-going penalty for the sin that remains in man, and will remain to the very end of existence of mortal man, except where God will intervene and restore that bond. God's intervention which is able to restore that bond was His coming to earth in the form of Christ Jesus and paying the penalty

that God's justice demanded, through Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. But that restoration is effectual in only those persons who believe He did this, and who, on this basis, obey His ordinances. I believe Jesus tells us this when He offers to give us His peace, the peace which passeth all understanding (John 14:27, Philippians 4:7). The word for this particular peace in the Greek is "eirene," the definition of which includes to "set at one again." I believe that this peace, the peace that accompanies salvation, is the reconnection of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man that had been severed by the original sin, and incapable of reconnection until Jesus did His work on the cross. Isn't evidence of the Spiritual reconnection manifest in the very presence of the Holy Spirit in the new heart of redeemed man?

Back again to the progression of sin. After that first sin, the next sin of which we are given evidence is Cain's choice of an offering contrary to God's will. It is evident that God must have instructed that first family on at least some of what later became the Levitical laws. They apparently were told that they were to perform at least some form of worship associated with the sacrifice of animals. Abel apparently followed the rules, while Cain chose to "do it his own way" by instead, bringing to the altar the fruits of his toil, "works." We are told that God was displeased with Cain's offering because it was contrary to His will and His instructions. The next recorded sin seems to have been that Cain was "wroth" at God's response. The word "wroth" is a translation of the Hebrew word, "charah," which means to blaze up in anger, jealousy, incensed, etc. He was mighty angry. Here in Genesis 4:7, God even tells Cain that this anger was sinful! Of course, the next sin was that of murder. How rapidly the cancer of sin spread and deepened. Only 9 more generations after Adam, God found it necessary, because of the universal spreading of sin, to destroy the entire world and kill every breathing soul, except Noah and his family. That evil heart, that soul having a dormant or "dead" spirit no longer linked to God, fully expressed its evil nature to the point where God had had enough! Through Noah, who "walked with God" and was "perfect" in his generations, God in His loving mercy, offered

mankind another chance to deal with his problem through the “covering of sin” procedure He gave Moses as recorded in the Book of Leviticus.

Another evidence we have of God’s pre-Leviticus instructions as to how man was to worship Him and “cover” his sins, is found in Genesis 8:20. Here we are told that as soon as he left the ark, Noah built an altar “*and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.*” However it wasn’t long before sin was evidenced again. The occasion recorded is when Noah fell into a drunken steeper and somehow in some unidentified way, a very serious sin occurred having to do with his son Ham, or perhaps Ham’s son Canaan. Many commentaries suggest that Ham committed the sin because he is the one who reported Noah’s nakedness to their brothers. But it was Canaan on whom God levied the resulting curse, not Ham. Most believe that the sin was homosexuality.

Scripture informs us that Ham begat Cush who begat Nimrod. This was the world’s first dictator and founder of Babel, which was the future site of Babylon. He also built Nineveh and other Assyrian cities. The sinful nature of Babel is well known as we read of the Tower of Babel and, of course, it’s outgrowth. The City of Babylon is consistently, more than any other place on earth, referred to both symbolically and literally as the very citadel of evil. Because his name seems to be associated with the verb, “marad” meaning to rebel, early tradition identified Nymrod with rebellion against God and his seeking of tyrannical power. With the Tower of Babel, he tried to unify the human race into one nation under his leadership. As “a mighty hunter before the lord” is seen as him having put himself before or ahead of the Lord as he founded two great empires, Babylon and Assyria, both of which were the major enemies of God’s people. Based on what he accomplished, we might conclude that he was a mighty hunter of the souls of men, not of lions and deer. Some expositors, such as Alexander Hishop in the book “The Two Babylon’s depicts Nimrod as the lawless one and a shadow, or type of the last world ruler, the antichrist. Thus we have in him a

primary source of pagan religions and the institutionalizing of man's concerted sin filled rebellion against God, wholly apart from that segment of the human race God later designated as His "chosen" people.

God chose Abram, later to be called Abraham, as the one through whom He would develop this chosen people. By then, less than 500 years after the flood, we find wickedness already spread throughout the populated world. Whatever Godly ways may have survived the flood through Noah had quickly vanished or had been severely perverted into a variety of idol worshipping religions. It would seem then that the world had been almost completely "given over to sin," hardly any different than how the world is today. It was through these chosen, as they multiplied out of Abraham, that God would reveal Himself and His plan of redemption to all the world. Abraham was of the sinful pagan culture from a Chaldean town called Ur, not far south of the point of beginning in Babylon. God didn't call him until he was 75 years old. The story of his wanderings for the next 40 years or so reveals some of the highlights of God's work in him as He converted him from an idol worshipper to the epitome of Godly faith and obedience.

Jumping from Abraham down through the entire history of these people, up to the birth of Jesus, man's sinful nature is a major theme. Only two men of the Old Testament, whose lives have been described, appear to have nothing mentioned about them regarding their sinful nature. These are Joseph and Daniel. As a people, they were almost continuously reminded of God's love and power. They were also instructed most clearly and in great detail, as to God's purpose for them and His requirement of them. The entire biblical account may be characterized by the ups and downs of their obedience, or the tug of war of good vs. evil. Sin, deep rooted and wide spread, prevailed more than did the ways God had taught them. This is most evident from the time when the Tribes of Israel came to the easterly shore of the Red Sea to become the nation Israel, until Jesus came ushering in a whole new dispensation. We see sin and its consequences on both a personal as

well as a corporate level, evidenced by the good or bad fortunes of not only the nation Israel, but the surrounding pagan nations as well.

Backing up to Abraham again, we see God's plan for the nation Israel unfold through his son Isaac producing Jacob who would father the 12 tribes from which the nation would grow. Sin and its painful consequences are evidenced in essentially every principal participant in this saga. As noted, of the many participants, only Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, escaped having any of his sins being revealed in the Scripture. The Old Testament depicts the brothers of Joseph as a despicable lot making one wonder why God would chose such a bunch from which to forge His own special nation. But the answer is quite evident. They, we, everyone, is hopelessly wicked and have hearts as described in Jeremiah 17:9. So, why should we be so surprised that God chose this motley lot? Where could He find any collection of twelve who were better? God has no problem working with what is available, as bad as it may be. That should give each of us great hope that we too can be used by God for His purpose!

Scripture tells us that they were in Egypt for 430 years, and it is silent as to their character and conduct after Joseph died until Moses was born. It's commonly believed that they were slaves during that 400 plus years. However, this was not the case. They became slaves considerably later under a completely different Egyptian dynasty, which had no cause to honor any of the commitments that the earlier dynasty had made to Joseph. Dr. Nolan Jones, in his "Chronology of the Old Testament," established with compelling evidence that the servitude could not have been more than 135 years before the birth of Moses and, therefore, was no more than a total of 215 years until the Exodus. With their patriarch Jacob gone, and Joseph, their benefactor and moral example also gone, it is reasonable to conclude that whatever ways of Godly worship and conduct the brothers may have known were soon lost in the subsequent generations. The idol worship and other pagan ways of the Egyptians most likely penetrate their culture quite deeply. This, no doubt, became even more pervasive when they became slaves and were thereby denied some, or perhaps all, of the last vestiges of their original heritage. Under the servitude it is known for example, that they were even forbidden the custom of

circumcision. We also know from the narrative regarding the birth of Moses, that the Israelites were required to kill their male babies. This was to hold down their population, the number of which was seen as a threat to the then ruling dynasty. Can we see something like “poetic justice” or a “tit for tat” in that the tenth plague took the first-born male from every Egyptian household? We need only to look around us here today to see how effectively and quickly a society can descend into depravity when it is induced to accept ungodly ways. Look what has happened to our whole culture in just 40 years since God was removed from the schools and the killing of pre-born human babies was legalized and encouraged. On the basis of all of this, it is evident that by the time of Exodus, while their racial identity seems to have been well preserved, there was bound to have been little or no remembrance of the God of Abraham nor of how or why He was to be worshipped and obeyed. So, except for their bloodline, we can conclude that there was little difference between these children of Israel and the Egyptians with whom they had so closely commingled for centuries.

All of this has been mentioned in order to put into proper perspective the reason for the low level of spiritual understanding and faith in our Creator God with which they left Egypt. The fact that so many, perhaps all of the families, adhered to the ritual of sacrificing a lamb and smearing the door frame with its blood was more likely motivated by a supernatural prompting from God rather than any residual of understanding of faith. The ten miracles, plagues conveyed through Moses, certainly must have impressed them and caused them to be more easily convinced to implement that instruction, but it hardly can be viewed as evidence of a genuine faith in God. They did obey Moses and moved out in accordance with his instructions, recognizing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. But their resolve quickly vanished when they reached the sea and saw Pharaoh coming with his army. That repeated vanishing of faith in God was evidenced over and over during their stay in the desert. It took them but 3 days to get out of Egypt, but it took nearly 40 years to get Egypt out of them. The greatest sin, that of unbelief and also that of idol worship, remained in their hearts in spite of all of the miracles and love God quite personally and dramatically provided them. Look what happened at Mount Sinai. After Moses came down from the mountain and told the people all that God had instructed,



they said, “*all that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient*” (Exodus 24:7). However, only a few days later, their leader Moses returned to the mountain and remained there for 40 days. But long before his return, panic gripped them. God’s Word and their commitment to it were forgotten. Without Moses’ physical presence to support their “faith,” their resolve to be obedient faded away. Words, even from God, couldn’t support them. They quickly reverted to their desire for a former comfort, that of a physical image, an idol, the golden calf that they had worshipped while in Egypt. Therefore they prevailed on Aaron to make for them a golden idol like that which they had worshipped in Egypt (Exodus 32). They were willing to worship God as just another god, but felt the need for an experiential physical god they could see and pray to. Aaron was a Godly man, yet he yielded to their demands for the sake of consensus. Isn’t this the embryo of both the “user friendly church” and the ecumenical policies of today’s “Christian religion?” The less there is of serious Bible study and genuine understanding of Scripture as the rock foundation of faith, the weaker and more vulnerable to false beliefs does the Christian body become. The golden calf of today is the pastor whose sermons are filled with pleasant, social advice seemingly derived from Bible verses but which are always pleasant feel-good platitudes. Never do we hear of our hopelessly sinful state curable only by our Redeemer. When, if ever, are such words as repentance or obedience to God’s Word heard from a pulpit? Today’s Christianity would better be called merely “churchanity” because, while Jesus is spoken of, more often than not, He is forced to share His throne with some form of modern day golden calf. This translates to blasphemy, apostasy, hereacy, criminal negligence through willful ignorance, and in the end eternal damnation.

Scripture tells us that the 40 years of wilderness wandering was punishment for their sin of lacking faith in His promise of protection and victory when they would cross into the Promised Land. It was only three months after their entry into the wilderness when Moses made that trip up to Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:1), and to teach them the laws, as well as what God had given them to know regarding what he would have of them. They were given not only the Ten Commandments, which made clear the basics of what God viewed as sin, but also how to worship and how to be spared

the spiritual consequences of sin. This is when all of the processes and implements of worship dealing with blood sacrifice were specified. These artifacts included such items as the Arc of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat and the Tabernacle along with all of its accouterments. Having thus set up the theocratic government and all of its decreed privileges, obligations and behavioral codes, they were commanded to proceed on the eleventh day journey to Kadesh-barnea. It was from this location that they were to move on into the Promised Land. We all know how their lack of faith in God and His promises of protection and victory caused them to hesitate. This in turn resulted in God's punishment of forbidding their entry into the Land, but instead to spend forty years in wilderness wanderings until every single person over age 20 had died, all except Joshua and Caleb, the two who were trusting of God's protection. The wilderness wanderings reveal very little as to an increase on faith or reduction of sin. They repeatedly expressed a desire to return to Egypt, even to slavery. However, when they finally crossed under Joshua's leadership, there did seem to be a stronger faith consensus, at least for a while.

From there on throughout the entire Old Testament recording of the exploits of His chosen people, that 1450 year period from the time of Exodus to the coming of Jesus, we see precious little conformance to God's ways. God spoke to them through the prophets for over 1000 years, teaching and prophesying His intentions, but seldom would they listen and even less often offer any semblance of obedience and resistance to sin. Then, for about 400 years you might say He gave them over to Satan until once more He would reappear and offer His love and righteous ways through our blessed Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. Throughout those many centuries of knowing through the written word, all that God wanted of them, the ways of the world, Satan's ways, always seemed more attractive. Sin and punishment, as having a cause and effect linkage, never seemed to be recognized in the hearts of those who chose sin, and so the temptation to sin was seldom thwarted by forethought of any consequences, as long as the world had no objections. For the most part, rituals were observed, but sincere worship was scarce. As it was then, so it is today, but even more so today, during these end times, as the world moves toward, and revels in, unconstrained, unabashed sinfulness, that total departure from the true God. What did Jesus find when He brought His divine presence and holy message to the

world? Sin prevailed everywhere, and even more so than it had in earlier times. His chosen people, through who by His earlier instructions through Moses and the prophets were to have evangelized their faith, failed completely to do so, and thus they sunk even deeper into apostasy. They had not only kept His teachings to themselves but during the 400 years of God's "silence," after the last prophet, Malachi, they had actually added to and subtracted from His sacred instructions by formulating a perverted self centered self serving religion with no "redeeming" value. This is demonstrated by how Jesus attacked the ways of the Pharisees, the official and undisputed leaders and the purveyors of the legacy He had left them through the sacred Scripture. Here we could say that the powerful threads of sin had been cunningly woven into the whole fabric of their religious belief, that very belief with which God had so carefully clothed His people through His love. It was the power of these sinful threads that now held together the spiritually worthless temple rituals, along with the false doctrines, which they preached and by which they lived.

Jesus introduced a new dispensation and a different way of recognizing the "sinfulness of sin" with all of its horrible yet seductive disguises and consequences. He proved Himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and the One who would come to save the world and provide the way to eternal life through His power over sin. Jesus fulfilled every prophecy, which predicted His coming, and also demonstrated through His coming that He was the One. Yet that powerful thread of sin, which by then had permeated the souls of the Pharisee / Sanhedrin leadership of Israel, spread a veil over their eyes so that they could not or would not, acknowledge Him for who He was. Instead, they chose to kill Him rather than shed their prominence, leadership, and carnal comforts they enjoyed in their pious self-righteousness yet woefully sinful ways. Because of their denial of Him, these "chosen" people temporarily lost their exalted position as God's earthly representatives. Instead Jesus trained His 12 "sowers" to go forth and plant His great truth throughout the world, the truth that was to grow and form the church of which Christ Jesus is the Head and the Rock foundation of assured salvation.

With Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection, a whole new spiritual enterprise, or dispensation, came into being. Sin, and how it could be dealt with, was, of course, the primary purpose and focus and His momentous achievement. Prior to this event, the souls of all of the faithful, who died from Adam on to the moment of Jesus' resurrection, were sent to a comfortable "way station" called Shoel, located near the center of the earth "next door" to where the condemned souls were sent to suffer. They were, of course, heaven bound, but could not yet go there, because their sins had not been cleansed away but merely covered. One could say Shoel was like Ellis Island to the millions of European immigrants who sought permanent residence here during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They were quarantined there until their health had been assessed and other conditions of entry into the USA had been satisfied.

From the very beginning when God killed the first living creature to ever die, in order to provide a "covering" for Adam's and for Eve's sinful nature, a shedding of innocent blood had been God's ordained way of dealing with man's sins. In the five books called the Books of Moses, God explained in minute detail how this was to be done in order to affect this temporary covering for those who had demonstrated their faith by their obedience and compliance to this and other rituals. Because there can be absolutely no sin whatsoever entering heaven, it was not possible for any saved soul to enter there, until those sins were removed. The covering only got them to Ellis Island, that is Shoel, but when the Lamb of God was sacrificed, Jesus' precious blood instantly and completely cleansed those souls. The covering that had allowed them to proceed to the way station was no longer needed. They were now clean and pure. It was at that moment when Jesus Himself left Shoel, after visiting there for three days and three nights, that He brought them out of Shoel and straight to heaven where they now reside, waiting for their incorruptible bodies which will be delivered to them by Jesus at the Rapture. There is no longer a need for covering of sins. Jesus paid in full for the sins of all of His faithful from the beginning of time to the end of time.

For a while the efforts of the "sowers," the Apostles whom Jesus has equipped and sent out, had great success in spreading His Gospel. The world was yet filled with sinful

pagans, idol worshippers, but Christianity was making major inroads and spreading throughout the world. Satan-led persecution and execution sought to eliminate believers, but God allowed a remnant of His to remain and “re-seed” those purged areas. By around 330 AD, Satan found agency for his most effective way to damage the church. That was to subtly subvert the church from within. Through the Roman Emperor Constantine, the previously underground, much persecuted but extremely faithful church was suddenly legalized and even made fashionable. Evidence seems to indicate that while it was underground, it was made up of groupings of people who were genuinely saved believers in Jesus as Lord and Savior. They devoted their lives to that faith and would rather die than forsake it, as many did. But now, under Constantine, they could walk freely professing their faith. However, this was not before the church became thoroughly impregnated with pagan rituals, customs and idols, no longer having any vestige of that purity it enjoyed previously. Finally, under a Caesar once removed after Constantine, this compromised “Christianity” became the state religion. The blasphemous sin-filled doctrines of the evolving “official” Christian church can easily be characterized by the lifestyles and decrees of the subsequent leaders of the church, the Popes. Anyone of these for many generations would easily have met the requirements for the position of antichrist, and they did, in fact, function to a large extent in that capacity as they persecuted and caused the execution of millions of the genuinely faithful, and even those who merely possessed Bibles.

We might consider here what Jesus, through Scripture calls the “Kingdom of God that is this present dispensation which is the church age. It is a manifestation of another people “set aside” by God, as were the Jews, until they rejected Christ Jesus. Therefore, we can say, this age has been and is, even more wickedly sinful than that previous age. Satan keeps learning, sharpening his skills and finding new ways to propagate sin and destroy souls.

The Pharisees, for the most part, were men of some integrity, deep learning of Scripture, and dedicated to what they believed was God’s truth. Because they were wrong, because they projected God’s Word into a Satan-inspired, twisted, tangled assembly of additional

laws and rituals, which obscured the purity of God's way, does not negate what was probably in some perverted sense, their good intentions. As it is said "hell is paved with good intentions." So their good intentions did little to benefit their trusting flocks.

However, the hierarchy of the official "Christian Church," at least until Martin Luther, cannot be credited with even a modicum of those qualities. Satan finally had his church. His church for centuries totally controlled the kings of Europe and amassed physical wealth and power beyond anything previously imagined even by Greece, Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, or even Rome at its pinnacle.

Spiritually it was antithetical to the true church of our Lord Christ Jesus and it persecuted to the death any and all who were true believers, in every country into which its tentacles could reach. An understanding of its structure, its doctrines, its activities and its leaders can lead one to a justified conclusion that it could serve as a prototype and preview of reign of the Antichrist during the tribulation. It was rich in rituals and superstitions and destitute of any trace of Christian holiness. Later, evidence of this is profoundly expressed by Pope Leo the 10<sup>th</sup> as he exclaimed to his cardinals, "what a profitable thing this myth about Jesus Christ has been to us." He was far, far from being the exception among the many popes who proceeded and followed him. Institutionalized sin reigned everywhere except where small underground remnants of the real church could be found. In essence, it was again the persecuting power of Rome of the second and third centuries and well beyond. What had changed was the leadership, Caesar to Pope, and unabashed paganism to a pseudo Christianity, masking an even great satanic influence.

What has been described was the status of the official "Christian Church," all the way to the time of Luther and beyond. The reformation under Luther brought back a great many of the biblical truths and a rejection of some of the heresies, which had become institutionalized. The result was the formation of the so-called Protestant churches. However, these various "denominations," while at first restoring Jesus to His rightful place, failed to address and correct a number of the other institutionalized heresies such as the allegorization of most of Revelation, as well as of certain critical parts of Genesis.

Thus there remained in the “reformed churches” several easy points of entry for Satan to do to those “churches” what he had done to the organized “mother church” under Constantine and beyond. It took a while for Satan to establish himself fully in these new institutions, which collectively did contain large segments of the genuine church body. These early years of the reformation, until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were the prophesized years symbolized by the church of Philadelphia as described in Revelation 3:7-13. This was probably the most prolific of all ages in terms of biblical understanding and the salvation of souls. It was the age when a large majority of the western world had Bibles and who read, effectively understood, and tried with sincerity to live the essential Christian doctrine. It was also the age of evangelism, where biblical truths were spread across the entire world.

However, at the same time, Satan was busy raising a new crop of apostates and conjuring up a number of pseudo-Christian cults and other deceiving belief systems. He was also burrowing his way into each of the denominational Christian churches, planting many seeds of diversions, divisions and confusion. These seeds soon germinated, and during the whole 20<sup>th</sup> century, grew into the grotesque monster which most of them are today. The parable of the mustard seed is a graphic and accurate representative of what exists today, which may, in the abject ignorance, be called the “Christian Church.” If the great late church fathers such as Luther, Spurgeon, Wesley, etc. could see even the best of the denominational church of today they would be sickened unto death as to what had become of the institutions in which unvarnished truths about repentance, obedience and the nature of sin had once been so effectively delivered to seeking souls.

The Christian church is for the greatest part perfectly typified by what Jesus said it would be in the end times before the rapture, when He described the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22. It’s the church age about which Jesus had absolutely nothing good to say. He said to it, “I will spew thee out of my mouth.” Of course, there remains a small remnant of saved believers scattered throughout the world. This will remain so; otherwise, there would be no living soul to rapture.

One could go on and on compiling mountains of evidences as to the terrible spiritual decay present today in what are called Christian churches. Except for a small, faithful remnant inside each gathering of professors of the faith, there is no spiritually effective difference between them and the world at large. Scripture tells us most clearly just what the end time condition of the world would be, and that is exactly how it is. Each of its facets, the economic, political, military, social and spiritual realms are in the final stages of preparation for the eagerly awaited coming world leader. He is called by many names, but it will surely be the one we call Antichrist, who will solve all the world's problems and bring peace and prosperity. That he will surely do, for about 3 ½ years, according to Scripture. We now live in a society in which sin in every form, has been standardized, legalized, enforced, and lovingly embraced in one way or another across the entire world. How much longer can the patience of our sin-hating God endure before He unleashes His wrath on such a world? Scripture says, not much longer!

5. The Final Disposition of Sin: As we have seen throughout the study of God's word, sin has been a dominant, debilitating and evil force, which began with Adam's first sin. But how could this possibly be? Our Creator God, who made it a point of emphasis, as He made the various components of His creation, that it was good. Would He also create sin, which He most surely hates? If we define sin, as we did earlier in this essay and as Scripture defines it, as being anything that is contrary to God, the question has a chance of being answered, even at our lowly human intellectual level. Consider what darkness is. It isn't anything; we have simply given a name to the absence of light. What about cold? Cold, as with darkness, has no real meaning, but cold, like darkness is absolutely nothing; it is the absence of heat. It has been observed by others that sin can also be similarly characterized. It is the absence of God and godliness. From the human perspective it seems more complicated than that, because of the very many forms and degrees of intensity it can take. Heat is also measured in degrees upward from absolute zero, which is no heat, and light is also measured upward by intensity from the base of zero light; this is absolute darkness. Man exhibits degrees of absence from God as well. However, from God's perspective, when it



comes to salvation, there are no degrees; it is digital; it is on or off; one is either living in accordance with God's will or is absent of godliness; there are no degrees. Degrees of ungodliness have meaning only in the positional placement of the ungodly soul in the lake of fire. No matter how rebellious and disbelieving of the idea one may be, the entire human race, without exception, every person, has an incurable sin nature. To use the above definition of sin, there is no one who is not absent from God. Sin, that propensity to keep rejecting the presence of God in our hearts, along with a heart already full of a lifetime of such rejection, is by definition a heart completely empty, completely lacking in God, or godliness. This fact is incredibly difficult to accept, and most of the world scoffs and snarls at the idea. Scripture, God's Holy and inerrant Word, offers a means of restoration, a way to bring heat where there is none, to bring light into where it doesn't exist, and to bring God into a heart absent of Him. He only asks that first we need to recognize that we are hopelessly empty, condemned sinners, without God within us, we are lost, and that our only hope is for a Savior. It's at the moment when we realize this that God's love and mercy begins to manifest. The heat comes on, and light begins to shine. God gave His blessed Son Christ Jesus for that very purpose, for He and only He is capable of eliminating that absence of God we call sin from our souls, and fill that void with God's Holy Spirit.

Lest anyone be led to carry this analogy too far, it should be recognized that thoughts, actions and behavior contrary to God's will are far from nothing in the context of life's purpose, and individual, as well as corporate destinies. Sin in the true sense is very real, and the consequences are both earth and life shattering. The purpose of the analogy was simply to illustrate the fact that God did not create sin. As far as the consequences of sin are concerned, the condition of the world, with all of its pain and suffering, is the consequence of the collective sins of all mankind from Noah to the present. Failure to understand and comprehend this fact is the result of one's inability to recognize the intricacies, complexities and subtleties of cause and effect, as well as to accept the fact that we all have a sin nature and all contribute to that collective consequence. Therefore, to varying degrees, we are all guilty of the causes and we

are all victims of the effects. It is convenient and seemingly self-cleansing to blame God for the terrible macro conditions of the world, just as it is to find blame in each other for the painful micro circumstances in our daily lives. As long as we persist in blaming God for these ills, of which He is not guilty, we can never have that close relationship with Him that we want to have, and that He wants to have with us. It is wrong that God should suffer the wrath of His creation for not preventing or correcting the conditions which man himself has created. God offered a perfect solution through Jesus, and if he had been universally accepted, it would have ended all pain and suffering. Instead, only a few always but a remnant, have accepted the offer. Unfortunately, because of its limited acceptance, it could not provide that universal solution. Therefore, even those who have accepted do not escape the all-encompassing earthly consequences of sin. Their great and unique reward comes upon leaving this world and spending a blissful eternity with Him in the heavenlies. Also, as we shall see in time, God will end the mess man has made, and there will then be a world free of sin and its terrible consequences. There is much more to be said on this matter of blaming God for all the bad in the world. As I got on this track I realized that the topic is too extensive to be developed any further in the context of this paper. God willing, it will be the subject of a separate essay.

Having now, I pray, established the fact that God didn't create sin and that sin, having begun with Adam's choice to reject God's way, we should now see just how God planned from the beginning to finally dispose of sin, that is, to be forever rid of His absence from the human heart. For six thousand years, God has patiently, and sometimes not so patiently as we have seen, allowed rebellion from Him (sinfulness) to continue. Can any thinking person believe that He would allow this to continue forever, that He would not one day say ENOUGH, and simply end all rebellion? Scripture makes it clear that He will call a halt, and that the countdown to that moment is now in process. In order to totally eliminate sin, He has chosen to literally destroy and replace heaven and earth. That should tell us much regarding how pervasive and deep-rooted sin has become. His first choice was a worldwide flood to remove this blight. Now Scripture tells us He will end it with an all-consuming fire.

The Old Testament prophets alluded to His plan quite precisely. However, it was through Jesus' revelation of Himself in the Book of Revelation where we see most clearly the unfolding of His final resolution of the problem.

Here it is in a "nut shell." As we look around us we would have to be blind not to see that the world is drifting at an ever-accelerating rate away from the God of the Holy Bible. Scripture tells us in Luke 21:24 that God will allow this to continue, "*until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled.*" Perhaps this is when apostasy will be so firmly established, and drifting away from God so advanced, that there will be an end to conversions to Christ. Then the Rapture will occur. In the Rapture, Jesus will empty the earth of every believer. With the concurrent removal of the Holy Spirit, who will have until then restrained the advancement of the anti-god forces, the preparation for the coming world leader, Antichrist, will now proceed very rapidly. Also this worldwide pressure cooker of pent up sinfulness will explode allowing mans' godless sin filled nature to come to full bloom. Into this will enter Antichrist with his incredible Satan-given political, economic, managerial and "religious" skills. Because of this, and through the "democratic" process, he will gain control of the world power and will rule for seven years. For three and one half of those years he will provide peace and prosperity. He will continue to bring about such great signs and wonders that he will find it possible to declare himself to be god and have the world believe him. He will place his image in the Holy of Holies in the Jewish temples in Jerusalem. This act will commence what is called the great tribulation, during which about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world population will be destroyed as well as most of the earth's livable environments.

During this period to the very end of the tribulation, God will offer several opportunities to be cleansed of sin for those who are willing to come to Jesus. These will be many millions, but most will be executed by Antichrist and his agents. So while God will allow godlessness to flourish all in accordance with man's free will, His mercy will prevail for all who choose to renounce rebellion from him through Jesus. At the end of the reign of the antichrist, he will be cast into the lake of fire,

while Jesus, now having returned to earth and sitting on David's throne, will judge the "sheep and the goats" (Matthew 25:32). These will be those people who are alive at the end of the tribulation. Those who were loyal to antichrist will be cast into hell, while those who survived, who were believers along with those who served God's purpose by helping saved souls, will remain to repopulate the temporarily rehabilitated earth. Thus sin will have been dealt with most severely.

However, even after this, while Christ Jesus in the physical person, reigns here on earth for the next 1000 years, sin will yet be present. There will be those who will for the most part, secretly want to rebel, but out of fear will not. I suppose that that is why, at the end of this 1000 years God will allow Satan to again express himself on earth. Satan will somehow draw each and every one of these rebellious hearts to him. Using them, he will form a great army, which will again seek to attack Jerusalem in order to overthrow King Christ Jesus. The battle will end almost before it began, because Jesus will have simply spoken, and "fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Revelation 20:9).

From this we can conclude that all forms of unbelief, rejection, rebellion, sin, will have been stamped from the universe. All that now remains of humanity is sin-free and will spend eternity with the Triune Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the New Jerusalem, the new city on the new earth under the heavens (Revelation 21). Satan, Antichrist, the false Prophet, and all who rebelled, having failed to recognize and accept the Savior, will have his her own place in the lake of fire which is in the outer darkness. That is how God will finally dispose of all sin and have a holy people unto Himself forever. Godlessness had so permeated the entire earth that it was like the natural human heart, totally and desperately wicked. Just as He gives every redeemed man a new heart, so also He will provide a new heaven and earth.

Well, there you have it. It's probably far too long and boring to retain the attention of most, and much too short to be anywhere near a comprehensive study, which such a

complex subject deserves. Nevertheless, in the “immortal” words of Pontius Pilate when he etched on the cross “Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews,” which expressed the acrostic “YHWH,” the name of God. “I have written what I have written.”