

2-2018

God is Love

Harold Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/three_one



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "God is Love" (2018). *The Three-in-One File*. 20.
https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/three_one/20

This God Is is brought to you for free and open access by the Theological Studies at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Three-in-One File by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

GOD'S LOVE



GOD IS LOVE

DEFINITION

This is at once the most universally known and universally misunderstood attribute of all. Millions have simply equated love with God, thus weakening or totally denying His other perfections. A man and woman may have an affair hidden from their spouses and justify their adulterous relationship by their great “love” for each other. But God’s love cannot be separated or isolated from His holiness and hatred for sin. Having said all this, however, it must be admitted that of all His attributes, God’s love is probably more quickly seized upon by seeking sinners than any other perfection. The smallest child can sing with great understanding, “*Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!*” Of all the attributes presented during this study, three of them (mercy, grace, love) will probably be the most difficult to explain to angels, who have never experienced them. It would be like attempting to explain the breathtaking majesty of the Grand Canyon during a magnificent sunset and the glorious sound coming from a nearby symphony orchestra to a friend who was born blind and deaf.

Love is thus that divine attribute which causes God the Creator of all things to give of Himself to His creatures. In short, love may be summarized as follows:

1. Unselfish concern about another’s welfare
2. That act of one person seeking the highest good for another person

So what does this suggest? Well, here is an individual in your church who is obstinate, fault-finding, rude and always overbearing. But God places her on your heart. Befriend her is His command. So, you begin to pray for this woman. You arrange to sit with her in the church service. After awhile she is invited to join you at lunch. And the bottom line? Simply this: Thus, the one you initially did not *like*, you now *love!*

It has been observed that the most effective way for a Christian to destroy all his enemies is, through love, to make them friends. The following poem addresses this need:

*To live above with those we love,
Oh, that will indeed be glory.
But to live below with those we know,
Well, that’s a different story!*

KINDS

There is an old saying that . . . “the Greeks had a word for it.” This is true. For example, there are no less than four words in the Greek language for the English word *love*. These are:

Eros

Astorgos

Philos

Agape

Following is a brief consideration of each word:

- **Eros:** a sexual, physical love. While eros is not used in the scriptures, it is certainly in mind by King Solomon in his Song of Solomon Old Testament book.

- **Astorgos:** It is translated “without natural affection” on two occasions:

“ . . . *undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful*” (**Rom. 1:31**).

“ . . . *unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good*” (**2 Tim. 3:3**).

Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest writes:

It is a love that is a natural movement of the soul, something almost like gravitation or some other force of blind nature. It is the love of parents for children and children for parents, of husband for wife and wife for husband, or close relations one for another. It is found in the animal world in the love the animal has for its offspring. It is a love of obligatoriness, the term being used here not in its moral sense, but in a natural sense. It is a necessity under the circumstances. This kind of love is the binding factor by which any natural or social unit is held together.

I, HLW, was a student in Dr. Wuest’s New Testament class at the Moody Bible Institute during the summer of 1952 when he spoke these words. The sad conclusion was that in the last days moms and dads would not possess the same kind of love for their young as could be seen by brute barnyard animals!

Perhaps the blackest day in our proud history occurred on January 22, 1973, when the United States Supreme Court (Roe v. Wade) handed down a seven to two decision which declared that, “a fetus was not a person under the Constitution and thus has no legal right to life.” The following year, Justice Blackmun (a proponent of abortion) spoke prophetically when he said, “This case will be regarded as one of the worst mistakes in the court’s history or one of its greatest decisions, a turning point.” And so it was . . . and will be!

- **Philos:** A love between friends (used 29 times)

Examples:

A. As used by Jesus in His parable of the lost sheep

“And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’” (Lk. 15:6).

B. As used by Jesus when warning His disciples of future persecution

“You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death” (Lk. 21:16).

C. As used in describing the friends of Cornelius

“And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends” (Acts 10:24).

D. As used in describing the reconciliation of two bitter enemies

“That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other” (Lk. 23:12).

Note: This love was not from God!

- **Agape:** a love that is not dependent upon the beauty of the one being loved

A. A human example of this love

Consider the following: When cleaning her house, a woman spots a tiny little mouse scurrying across the rug. Does she quickly take the broom to it? Actually, to the contrary, she soon corners the little creature, tenderly picks it up, then carries it to the bathroom, washes it, puts a little bow around its neck, and places it in her apron pocket with a piece of cheese!

Now, the question: Why on earth would she do all this? Certainly there was no merit or beauty in the mouse. No, the housewife did it because she willed to do it.

B. The divine examples of this love

1. In regards to Israel

“How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel” (Psa. 78:40, 41).

“But He made His own people go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock; and He led them on safely, so that they did not fear; but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And He brought them to His holy border, this mountain which His right hand had acquired” (Psa. 78:52-54).

“I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses . . . In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His

Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them” (Isa. 63:7, 9, 10).

2. In regards to all sinners

a. What we were

“As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:10-18).

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Eph. 2:1-3).

b. What He did

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-7).

C. The divine source of this love

“Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5:5).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23).

In Lovingkindness Jesus Came

*In lovingkindness Jesus came
My soul in mercy to reclaim,
And from the depths of sin and shame
Through grace He lifted me.*

Refrain

From sinking sand He lifted me,
With tender hand He lifted me,
From shades of night to plains of light,
O praise His Name, He lifted me!

*He called me long before I heard,
Before my sinful heart was stirred,
But when I took Him at His word,
Forgiv'n, He lifted me.*

*His brow was pierced with many a thorn,
His hands by cruel nails were torn,
When from my guilt and grief, forlorn,
In love He lifted me.*

*Now on a higher plane I dwell,
And with my soul I know 'tis well;
Yet how or why I cannot tell
He should have lifted me.*

OBJECTS

He Loves His Son

- **As stated by the Father**

- A. **At Jesus' baptism**

"And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Mt. 3:17).

- B. **At Jesus' transfiguration**

"While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" (Mt. 17:5).

- **As stated by John the Baptist**

"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand" (Jn. 3:35).

- **As stated by Jesus Himself**

“For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel” (Jn. 5:20).

He Loves All Believers and Each Believer

- **In regards to all believers**

“In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old” (Isa. 63:9).

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (Jn. 13:1).

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

- **In regards to each believer: Here are but six instances among the many –**

A. Solomon

Then David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in to her and lay with her. So she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. Now the LORD loved him, and He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet: So he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD. (2 Sam. 12:24, 25).

B. Daniel

“At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision” (Dan. 9:23).

“And he said to me, ‘O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.’ While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling . . . And he said, ‘O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!’ So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, ‘Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me’” (Dan. 10:11, 19).

C. John the Apostle

“Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him’” (Jn. 20:2).

D. The rich young ruler

“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me’” (Mk. 10:21).

E. Mary, Martha and Lazarus

F. Paul

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

- **In regards to how He deals with our sins *against* Him and our service *for* Him**

A. Our sins against Him

1. According to David

“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Psa. 103:12).

2. According to Isaiah

“Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; but You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back” (Isa. 38:17).

3. According to Micah

“He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic. 7:19).

Note: The second stanza of H. G. Stafford’s beautiful hymn, *It is Well With My Soul*, captures all of this . . .

“My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought—my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more! Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!”

B. Our service for Him

In a sentence, God never forgets and He will always reward!

“For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory” (Isa. 66:18).

“He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward” (Mt. 10:41).

“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works” (Mt. 16:27).

“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Heb. 6:10).

“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Rev. 2:2).

Note: This little phrase, *“I know your works”* is repeated seven times in Revelation, chapters two and three (2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).

He Loves the World

In reality, the Bible presents various aspects of this word *world*. These are:

1. **Soil**, referring to planet Earth
2. **Systems**, referring to the evil institutions of this world
3. **Sinners**, referring to the inhabitants of this world

We now consider—

- **The world of planet Earth**

Here, no less than eight “worlds” can be seen:

1. **The original earth** (Gen. 1:1, 11, 12, 24, 31) See also Job 38:1, 4, 7.
2. **The pre-flood earth** (Gen. 3:17-19; 4:8-12; 5:28, 29; 6:5-7, 11, 12)
3. **The flood judgment earth** (Gen. 7, 8)
4. **The present earth** (Gen. 9 to the Rapture) See 1 Cor. 15:51-57; 1 Thess. 4:13-17.
5. **The tribulational earth** (Isa. 13:13; 29:21; Rev. 6-18)
6. **The millennial earth** (Isa. 2:2-4; 11:6-9; 35:1-10)
7. **The fire judgment earth** (2 Peter 3:7, 10)
8. **The new earth** (Isa. 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1)

- **The world of systems, referring to those godless institutions of men.** He has of course no love whatsoever concerning those evil systems. Just prior to the millennium, God will destroy them which will include the political, economic, commercial, and religious institutions! (Rev. 17-18) See also Jn. 15:19; 17:14; Rom. 12:2; Gal. 1:3, 4; 1 Jn. 2:15-17.

- **The world of sinners**

In Romans 5:6-8 Paul lists three kinds of men. These are: (1) a righteous man, (2) a good man, and (3) a sinner. What is the difference regarding these individuals? Consider the following illustration:

Imagine three men working behind the meat counter in a busy grocery store. A customer walks up and orders a pound of hamburger. It is obvious to the three as they note his ragged clothing and unshaven appearance that he is no doubt down on his luck, so to speak. Each of the three, however, would treat him in a different manner:

1. **Actions of the righteous man:** “Well, he ordered five pounds and that is what he will receive.”
2. **Actions of the good man:** “Poor guy, he looks so hungry and pitiful. I’m going to give him an extra half pound and pay the difference myself.”
3. **Actions of the sinner:** “Lazy bum! Probably never worked a day in his life!” So the customer receives four and a half pounds of hamburger from the clerk.

With this illustration in mind, ponder Paul's conclusion as found in **Romans 5:7 (NIV)**—
"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die."

Here is the apostle, for the most part, writes that the chances of either a righteous man or a good man being willing to die for someone are at best, doubtful. Well, if these two can be ruled out, surely there would be no chance whatsoever that someone would be willing to lay down his life for a sinner! Right? Wrong!

Here is the grand and glorious conclusion:

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"
(Rom. 5:6, 8, NIV).

He Loves the Three Divinely Given Institutions

These are:

- **The institution of marriage**

"So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:20-24).

"And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate'" (Mt. 19:4-6).

"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

A. Jesus chose a wedding to perform His first recorded miracle, the changing of water into wine (Jn. 2:11).

B. Two of His parables had a wedding in mind:

1. The parable of the wedding feast (Mt. 22:1-13)
2. The parable of the ten virgins (Mt. 25:1-10)

C. The greatest, grandest, and most glorious wedding will take place at the beginning of the millennium, the marriage supper of the Lamb!

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the

fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! And he said to me, These are the true sayings of God” (Rev. 19:6-9).

Anne Ross Cousin writes of all this in her beautiful hymn:

The Sands of Time Are Sinking

*The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of Heaven breaks;
The summer morn I’ve sighed for — the fair, sweet morn awakes:
Dark, dark hath been the midnight, but dayspring is at hand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel’s land.*

*O Christ, He is the fountain, the deep, sweet well of love!
The streams of earth I’ve tasted more deep I’ll drink above:
There to an ocean fullness His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel’s land.*

*O I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved’s mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner into His “house of wine.”
I stand upon His merit — I know no other stand,
Not even where glory dwelleth in Immanuel’s land.*

*The Bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Bridegroom’s face;
I will not gaze at glory but on my King of grace.
Not at the crown He giveth but on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel’s land.*

- **The institution of human government**

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves . . . Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor” (Rom. 13:1, 2, 7).

“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work” (Titus 3:1).

“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct . . . Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13:7, 13).

“Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good” (1 Peter 2:13, 14).

- **The institution of the church**

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Mt. 16:18).

“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church” (Eph. 1:22).

“. . . to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).

“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:23-27, 32).

The following hymn of Samuel Stone aptly describes God’s love for the church:

The Church’s One Foundation

*The church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
she is his new creation by water and the Word.
From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.*

*Elect from every nation, yet one o’er all the earth;
her charter of salvation: one Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.*

*Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,
she waits the consummation of peace forevermore,
till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.*

*Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,
and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly, may live eternally.*

He Loves Israel

- **The fact of this love**

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth . . . but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deut. 7:6, 8).

“I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies, according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses” (Isa. 63:7).

- **The reason for this love**

Whatever else was involved, it was not because it was either the biggest or the best among the nations!

A. It was not the biggest

“The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples” (Deut. 7:7).

Question: Just how does Israel rank along this line? Consider:

1. The United States is 473 times bigger than Israel
2. China is 434 times
3. Russia is 823 times

Question: What about its dimensions?

It is 290 miles from north to south, 85 miles (at its widest) from west to east, and, historically speaking, 4,000 years deep!

Question: What about its population?

The total population is 7,026,000.

Question: How does this compare with other nations?

To put this figure in perspective, the following list reveals the population living in 31 of the world’s largest cities, not nations but megacities, all of which are larger than the entire nation of Israel. ¹

1. 38,140,000 Tokyo, Japan
2. 26,454,000 Delhi, India
3. 24,484,000 Shanghai, China
4. 21,357,000 Mumbai (Bombay), India
5. 21,297,000 Sao Paulo, Brazil
6. 21,240,000 Beijing, China

¹ *Data Booklet: The World’s Cities in 2016* (New York: 2016) 6, accessed October 16, 2017, http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/urbanization/the_worlds_cities_in_2016_data_booklet.pdf

7. 21,157,000 Mexico City, Mexico
8. 20,337,000 Osaka, Japan
9. 19,128,000 Cairo, Egypt
10. 18,604,000 New Your-Newark, USA
11. 18,237,000 Dhaka, Bangladesh
12. 17,127,000 Karachi, Pakistan
13. 15,334,000 Buenos Aires, Argentina
14. 14,980,000 Calcutta, India
15. 14,365,000 Istanbul, Turkey
16. 13,744,000 Chongqing, China
17. 13,661,000 Lagos, Nigeria
18. 13,131,000 Manila, Philippines
19. 13,070,000 Guangzhou, Guangdong, China
20. 12,981,000 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
21. 12,317,000 Los Angeles, Long Beach, Santa Ana, USA
22. 12,260,000 Moscow, Russian Federation
23. 12,071,000 Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo
24. 11,558,000 Tianjin, China
25. 10,925,000 Paris, France
26. 10,828,000 Shenzhen, China
27. 10,483,000 Jakarta, Indonesia
28. 10,456,000 Bangalore, India
29. 10,434,000 London, United Kingdom
30. 10,163,000 Madras, India
31. 10,072,000 Lima, Peru

No, God did not choose Israel because of its size.

B. It was not the best

Both the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Hosea write of the terrible sin of Israel:

“The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment” (Isa. 1:3-6).

“Israel empties his vine; He brings forth fruit for himself. According to the multitude of his fruit He has increased the altars; according to the bounty of his land they have embellished his sacred pillars” (Hosea 10:1).

Question: Why then did God choose Israel from all other nations?

Some years ago I had the opportunity to visit the Tower of London where all the riches of English royalty are kept. What an amazing sight it was! There were white and yellow gold, silver pearls, rubies, plus all precious stones known to mankind.

But the center attraction in all this was the Koh-i-Noor diamond, also known as the Mountain of Light. This incredible diamond weighs 105 carats and is worth over one billion dollars! But the thing that intrigued me the most was the fact that it seemed to be resting on a plain black source (a dark cloth?).

Why this, I wondered. Later, returning to the States I found the answer had been given some twenty centuries ago by the Apostle Paul. After a discourse regarding the glories of the Glorious One (Jesus Christ), he wrote: *“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Cor. 4:7).*

Of course! The darker the base, the brighter the diamond! In fact, he had previously touched on this in his first epistle to the Corinthians: *“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Cor. 1:27-29).*

Many older readers will recall the name Charles de Gaulle, a well-known French leader during World War II. But later in life he became somewhat bitter, feeling he did not get the credit and honor he so richly deserved. The following words are said to reflect his bitterness:

“I have known all the famous men of my time. This would include: Dwight Eisenhower, Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Winston Churchill, King George, etc. But the more I have learned about men, the more respect I have for dogs!”

At this point let me make a confession:

If I were God I would not use me, or for that matter, any other human being. Rather, I would call upon angels to do my bidding. They are both sinless and tireless. They never moan or groan, pout or doubt, as all too often we do. So then, as we have seen, God uses human vessels to display His glory.

- **The uniqueness of this love**

“Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors,

according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him" (Deut. 4:33-35).

- **The duration of this love**

"Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deut. 7:9).

"The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: 'Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you'" (Jer. 31:3).

- **The conditions involved in this love**

A story is told in regards to the pastor of an influential megachurch located in a large city who publicly announced at the beginning of the week the theme of his sermon to be delivered the following Sunday. Its title was: "When God Forsakes Israel." He then would list some of those conditions that would lead to the forsaking. Well, to say the least, the entire community was shocked. How could a man, who for years had faithfully proclaimed the truths of the gospel, and a professed friend and supporter of Israel, do such a thing?

Well, whatever the case, as can be imagined, the large church auditorium was packed the next Sunday. Among the crowd there was a group of Muslim men who were eagerly awaiting his words.

Also sitting at the very front were two well-known Jewish rabbis. Unlike the Muslims, however, both were shocked, confused and greatly troubled.

After the preliminaries, the pastor rose and walked slowly to the pulpit. "Thank you for coming," he began. "I know all here, whether pro- or anti-Israel, are intently interested in the future of this tiny nation."

He then asked that all in attendance listen carefully as he read from the only perfect book ever written, a book that had never been wrong in its declarations. "Here," he said, "are its words in regards to our subject this morning."

"Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (the LORD of hosts is His name): 'If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.' Thus says the LORD: 'If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the Lord'" (Jer. 31:35-37).

Upon this reading every eye and ear looked and listened to the pastor as he continued, "Those are the words of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. According to him, no less than four conditions must prevail prior to God turning His back upon Israel. These are,

A. The sun, moon and stars will refuse to give forth their light. For the next few moments let's consider this from a scientific perspective:

- 1. In regards to the sun**

Just one square inch of the Sun's surface shines with the intensity of 300,000 candles. If we wanted to manufacture enough candles to equal the Sun's total brightness, the amount of tallow needed would be 10 times larger than the mass of the Earth, and the candles, bunched together, would cover a birthday cake whose *circumference was as large as the orbit of the earth around the Sun*—almost 600 million miles.

Temperatures in the interior of the Sun are approximately 16 million degrees Celsius (29 million degrees Fahrenheit). A pinhead of this super hot material from the Sun's core would kill a person up to 100 miles away.

The Sun emits more energy in one second than mankind has consumed in the whole of its history. The Sun's power in watts is 380,000 billion billion kilowatts, which could run 176 billion billion frost-free refrigerators forever. One second of the Sun's energy is 13 million times the annual mean electricity consumption of the United States.

2. In regards to the stars

It is estimated that there are as many stars in the heavens as there are grains of sand on all of earth's seashores and deserts! Thus, each of these untold trillion luminaries would be reduced to cold and dark entities. Assuming this might occur, however, one wonders what would lead to this, for we are told the Creator not only knows the actual number involved, but has actually assigned a name for each one!

"He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name" (Psa. 147:4).

"Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing" (Isa. 40:26).

B. The universe (heavens) must be measured with a yardstick!

Question: How big is the cosmos? What is its size?

Traditional scientific estimates suggest it measures some 15 billion light years in all directions!

A light year is the distance light travels in one year. How many miles is this? Well, the speed of light is 186,282 miles per second! In other words, a beam of light can circle the earth more than seven times per second! In fact, the only thing traveling faster than light is a choice piece of gossip! (Well, maybe not.) So then to determine the distance light travels in one year we must multiply the number of seconds times 186,282 which equals nearly 6 trillion miles! Then we multiply six trillion times 15 billion which represents a number nearly as large as our national debt!

However, some now say the universe is at least 156 billion light years based on the data obtained by a space probe that is examining the cosmic background radiation, often called the echo of the Big Bang.

C. The core (center) of the earth must be explored. The diameter of the earth is 8,000 miles. So then, to reach its center, a 4,000-mile shaft would have to be dug in order to accomplish this.

D. The oceans and seas must cease their roaring and become as glass. This would mean no high tide or low tide. Even the smallest ripple would not be forthcoming.”

“So then,” the pastor concluded, “all these incredible events would have to occur before we read of Israel’s destruction. I leave the matter now to your decision.” With these final words he turned and walking slowly, left the auditorium by a side door. For a brief moment no noise or movement could be heard or seen coming from the huge crowd.

It was then that the older rabbi turned to his younger friend and whispered, “You know,” he said with a smile, “I think we’re going to be okay.” Indeed!

In closing this article, allow me, on the lighter side, to suggest another reason. This can be seen by the following poem:

How Odd of God to Choose the Jews

How odd of God to choose the Jews
And use that race to show His grace.

But odder still His plan to see
To use the likes of you and me.
For many years I’ve sought this out,
He had His reasons; there is no doubt.

But why, oh why, He chose this plan,
Bypassing angels, selecting man?
And then one day I saw the light,
The fog had lifted, no more night.

The answer came from mirror bright,
I saw myself, a pitiful sight.
So here’s the truth, it is no rumor
Our God does have a sense of humor!

The couplet, *How Odd of God to Choose the Jews*, was written by British journalist William Norman Ewer (1885-1976). I have added the remaining lines.

He Loves the City of Jerusalem

“Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is in her palaces; He is known as her refuge . . . We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness, in the midst of Your temple” (Psa. 48:2, 3, 9).

“The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!” (Psa. 87:2, 3)

“Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem! For the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem” (Isa. 52:9).

Question: If you were Almighty God and could look down the corridors of time, which of the following capitals might you have chosen to become the divine capital of the world?

- Tokyo, Japan
- Beijing, China
- Berlin, Germany
- Paris, France
- London, England
- Cairo, Egypt
- Moscow, Russia
- Washington, D. C., USA
- Rome, Italy

Answer: None of the above. His selection was a non-descript small city located 14 miles west of the Dead Sea, 33 miles east of the Mediterranean. The city is situated on an uneven rocky plateau at an elevation of 3,550 feet. It is 3,800 feet above the level of the Dead Sea. It would be here the Creator of the universe would establish His presence and power! Jerusalem would be that place.

The following is a rabbinical legend:

In the beginning of the world, God created ten portions of love, joy and beauty and then poured out nine of these upon the city of Jerusalem. But He also created ten portions of sorrow, sadness and pain, then poured out nine upon the city of Jerusalem.

Be that as it may, if one has ever visited Jerusalem (as I have on 26 occasions) and if acquainted with history, realizes that he/she is in reality walking upon one of the world’s largest cemeteries, knowing that under their feet are the dried blood stains and bleached bones which once belonged to those who died either attempting to defend the city or capture it.

With all this in mind, consider the following:

- **Biblical names for Jerusalem —**
 - A. The city of David (2 Sam. 6:12)
 - B. The Holy City (Matt. 4:5)
 - C. Salem (Gen. 14:18)
 - D. The city of righteousness (Isa. 1:26)

E. The city of truth (Zech. 8:3)

- **Number of times referred to – 700 plus**
- **First mention (Gen. 14:18-20)**

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And he gave him a tithe of all.”

- **Final mention (Rev. 21:1, 2, 10)**

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”

- **Made the capital of Israel in 1050 B.C. by David (2 Sam. 5:6-12)**
- **Destroyed by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in August of 586**
- **Was visited by Alexander the Great in 332 A.D.**
- **In regards to Jesus**

A. Dedication

B. His triumphal entry

C. His tears over the city

D. His prediction in regards to its destruction

E. Crucifixion and resurrection

- **Destroyed the second time by the Roman General Titus**
- **Hymns about the city of Jerusalem**

The Holy City

Thirty men, red-eyed and disheveled, lined up before a judge of the San Francisco police court. It was the regular morning company of drunks and disorderlies. Some were old and hardened, others hung their heads in shame. Just as the momentary disorder attending the bringing-in of the prisoners quieted down, a strange thing happened. A strong, clear voice from below began singing:

*Last night I lay a sleeping
There came a dream so fair.*

Last night! It had been for them all a nightmare or a drunken stupor. The song was such a contrast to the horrible fact that no one could fail of a sudden shock at the thought the song suggested.

*I stood in old Jerusalem,
Beside the temple there.*

The song went on. The judge had paused. He made a quiet inquiry. A former member of a famous opera company known all over the country, was awaiting trial for forgery. It was he who was singing in his cell.

Meantime the song went on, and every man in the line showed emotion. One or two dropped to their knees; one boy at the end of the line, after a desperate effort at self-control, leaned against the wall, buried his face against his folded arms, and sobbed, "Oh, Mother, Mother!"

The sobs, cutting to the very heart of the men who heard, and the song, still welling its way through the courtroom, blended in the hush. At length one man protested, "Judge," said he, "have we got to submit to this? We're here to take our punishment, but this!" He, too, began to sob.

It was impossible to proceed with the business of the court, yet the judge gave no order to stop the song. The police sergeant, after an effort to keep the men in line, stepped back and waited with the rest. The song moved on to its climax:

*Jerusalem! Jerusalem
Sing for the night is o'er!
Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna for evermore!*

In an ecstasy of melody the last words rang out, and then there was silence.

The judge looked into the faces of the men before him. There was not one who was not touched by the song; not one in whom some better impulse was not stirred. He did not call the cases singly—a kind word of advice, and he dismissed them all. No man was fined or sentenced to the workhouse that morning. The song had done more good than punishment could possibly have accomplished. (Author unknown)

The Holy City

*Last night I lay a sleeping there came a dream so fair.
I stood in old Jerusalem, beside the temple there.
I heard the children singing and ever as they sang,
I thought the voice of angels from Heaven in answer rang.
I thought the voice of angels from Heaven in answer rang.*

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem
Lift up your gates and sing
Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna to your King!*

*And then I thought my dream was changed, the streets no longer rang.
Hushed were the glad hosannas the little children sang.
The sun grew dark with mystery; the morn was cold and chill,
As a shadow of a cross arose upon a lonely hill.
As a shadow of a cross arose upon a lonely hill.*

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
Hark! How the angels sing
Hosanna in the highest,
Hosanna to your King!*

*And once again the scene was changed, new earth there seemed to be;
I saw the Holy City beside the tideless sea.
The light of God was on its streets, the gates were open wide,
And all who would might enter and no one was denied.
No need of moon or stars by night or sun to shine by day;
It was the New Jerusalem that would not pass away.
It was the New Jerusalem that would not pass away.*

*Jerusalem! Jerusalem
Sing for the night is o'er
Hosanna in the highest
Hosanna for evermore!
Hosanna in the highest
Hosanna for evermore!*

(Stephen Adams & Frederick E. Weatherly)

The writer of this song had also authored what many believe to be the greatest hymn ever written, *Amazing Grace*. In the first, Isaac Watts (1725-1809), glories in the salvation of God, while in the second he praises the City of God!

Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken

*Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God.
God, whose word cannot be broken,
formed thee for his own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
what can shake thy sure repose?*

*With salvation's walls surrounded,
thou may'st smile at all thy foes.*

*See, the streams of living waters,
springing from eternal love,
well supply thy sons and daughters
and all fear of want remove.*

*Who can faint while such a river
ever flows their thirst to assuage?
Grace, which like the Lord, the giver,
never fails from age to age.*

*Round each habitation hovering,
see the cloud and fire appear
for a glory and a covering,
showing that the Lord is near!
Glorious things of Thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He whose word cannot be broken
Formed thee for His own abode.*

He Loves the Elect Angels

Two facts may be offered to indicate God's love *for* and confidence *in* the elect angels.

- **The names they are given**

- A. Ministers**

- " . . . who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire" (Psa. 104:4).*

- B. Sons of God**

- "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding . . . when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4, 7)*

- **The assignments they are given**

- A. In regards to Jesus**

- 1. They announced His birth

- "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:11-14)*

- 2. They announced His resurrection

“Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay’” (Matt. 28:1-6).

B. In regards to the believer

“Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” (Heb. 1:14).

He Loves Sinners

Only a Sinner Saved by Grace

*Naught have I gotten but what I received;
Grace hath bestowed it since I have believed;
Boasting excluded, pride I abase;
I’m only a sinner, saved by grace!*

Refrain

*Only a sinner, saved by grace!
Only a sinner, saved by grace!
This is my story, to God be the glory —
I’m only a sinner, saved by grace!*

*Once I was foolish, and sin ruled my heart,
Causing my footsteps from God to depart;
Jesus hath found me, happy my case;
I now am a sinner, saved by grace!*

*Tears unavailing, no merit had I;
Mercy had saved me, or else I must die;
Sin had alarmed me fearing God’s face;
But now I’m a sinner saved by grace!*

*Suffer a sinner whose heart overflows,
Loving his Savior to tell what he knows;
Once more to tell it would I embrace —
I’m only a sinner saved by grace!*

“Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He teaches sinners in the way” (Psa. 25:8).

“But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Mt. 9:13).

“Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’ . . . I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance” (Lk. 15:1, 2, 7).

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15).

He Loves the Stars

Illustration:

Imagine you have been invited by a wealthy, but somewhat eccentric, man for whatever the reason to count the grains of sand in a small thimble and then choose a name for each grain. Whatever the pay, would you agree?

Well, believe it or not, this has already been done. In fact, it vastly increases the thimble project but includes all the grains of sand on all the beaches in the world! Do you doubt this? Consider the words of the psalmist and Isaiah the prophet—

“Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing” (Isa. 40:26).

“He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name” (Psa. 147:4).

So, in light of this, is it not reasonable to conclude God loves each and every star? But in this marvelous chapter we read love for stars is dwarfed by his love for the suffering—

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds” (Psa. 147:3). See also Isa. 61:1.

By the way, modern scientific finding has estimated both the number of stars and grains of sand is 1 followed by 22 zeroes! Question: Is the Bible really God’s Word? Well, let the record speak for itself:

“ . . . and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies” (Gen. 22:17).

He Loves Animals

Really? How can we understand this? What kind of love is involved? Consider:

A man may use the word love in a five-fold manner. He might say:

1. I love God.

2. I love my wife.
3. I love pizza.
4. I love golf.
5. I love my dog.

Obviously, these “loves” differ in their intensity and their very nature. In light of this, I do not think it inappropriate to suggest that God loves brute animals as humans do. In fact, God often used animals to teach humans, and to illustrate the divine attributes. Consider:

- **The ant**

“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest” (Prov. 6:6-8).

The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer; the rock badgers are a feeble folk, yet they make their homes in the crags; the locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks” (Prov. 30:25-27).

- **A dove**

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at His baptism resembling the gentleness and purity of a dove.

“And John bore witness, saying, ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending’” (Jn. 1:32, 33).

- **An eagle**

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself” (Exod. 19:4).

“But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isa. 40:31).

“But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent” (Rev. 12:14).

- **Hornets**

“I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow” (Josh. 24:12).

- **Horses**

“Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven” (2 Kings 2:11).

“And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17).

- **A lion**

“But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals!’” (Rev. 5:5).

- **A sparrow**

“Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will” (Matt. 10:29).

“Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God” (Luke 12:6).

- **A lamb**

“And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering” (Gen. 4:3, 4).

“But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ Then he said, ‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’ So the two of them went together” (Gen. 22:7, 8).

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29)

“Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man’s need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight’” (Exod. 12:3-6).

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exod. 12:12, 13).

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isa. 53:6, 7).

- **Much cattle**

“And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah’s head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, ‘It is better for me to die than to live.’ Then God said to Jonah, ‘Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?’ And he said, ‘It is right for me to be angry, even to death!’ But the LORD said, ‘You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and

perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?’” (Jonah 4:8-11).

A Wife, a Bride, and God’s Love

In one sense of the word, the activities of these two women serve to summarize the entire Bible!

- **In regards to the wife**

A. Her identity: In the Old Testament she is presented as the Nation Israel.

B. Her husband: He is God the Father.

“For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth” (Isa. 54:5).

“ . . . not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD” (Jer. 31:32).

1. His love for her

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Deut. 7:6-9). (See also Ezek. 16:4-14.)

2. Her sin against Him

“My people ask counsel from their wooden idols, and their staff informs them. For the spirit of harlotry has caused them to stray, and they have played the harlot against their God . . . I will not punish your daughters when they commit harlotry, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for the men themselves go apart with harlots, and offer sacrifices with a ritual harlot. Therefore people who do not understand will be trampled” (Hos. 4:12, 14).

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!” (Mt. 23:37-39).

- **In regards to the bride**

A. Her identity: In the New Testament she is presented as the Church

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2).

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! And he said to me, these are the true sayings of God’” (Rev. 19:7-9).

B. His identity: He is God the Son

“He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled” (Jn. 3:29).

“For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church” (Eph. 5:23-29).

- **In regards to the future**

A. The wife (Israel) shall be redeemed

“And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa. 35:10).

“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1).

“And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom. 11:26).

B. The bride (the Church) shall be raptured

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then

we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:51-53).

C. Both will reign with Christ

This is suggested by **Rev. 20:4**: “ . . . they lived and reigned with Christ for one thousand years.”

Also, note the words in **Rev. 21:10-14**:

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

Here we read:

1. There are 12 gates in this city, with each bearing the name of the 12 tribes (O.T. Israel).
2. There are 12 foundations supporting this city, with each foundation named after the 12 apostles (N. T. church).

In closing, let it be said that both O.T. David and N.T. Paul give testimony to all the above:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psa. 133:1).

“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. . . . till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:4-6, 13).

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:20, 21).

God's Love as Compared with Other Attributes

We begin this study with a major statement! In essence it states that of God's many attributes, no single attribute is more important than any other. If this were the case, God could not be God! And the reason? Simply put, it would imply imperfection, when in fact, all divine aspects are perfect in nature. Having said this, we can observe two facts:

1. Each attribute differs somewhat in its perfection from other attributes.
2. All attributes when considered together function as a beautiful unit.

We now consider twelve among the various attributes.

- **The most needed today—His Truth**

A. The reason involved

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18).

"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition . . . The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:3, 9-12).

" . . . and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:4).

B. The reservoir involved—truth comes from two sources:

1. The Word of God

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (Jn. 17:17).

"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thess. 2:13).

2. The Son of God

"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17).

"Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14:6).

"But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus" (Eph. 4:20, 21).

- **The most prominent—His holiness**

Holiness is the overriding theme of scripture's third book, Leviticus. In fact, one may correctly describe this God of both Old and New Testaments by three little words . . . *God is holy!*

"For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth" **(Lev. 11:44).**

"Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy'" **(Lev. 19:2).**

"And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine" **(Lev. 20:26).**

" . . . because it is written, Be holy, for I am holy" **(1 Peter 1:16).**

- **The most questioned or outright denied—His very existence**

"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good" **(Psa. 14:1).**

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction" **(2 Peter 2:1).**

"For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" **(Jude 4).**

A. Question asked by a believer:

"If there is no God, then who created all things?"

B. Answer given by an atheist:

*"Silly man! It was not a *who*, but rather a *what* that did it." He continues by assuring us that some 14 billion years ago a non-existent entity called gravity began to call into existence other non-existent entities which included space, time, matter, and energy! Really?*

C. Final answer by the believer:

In light of the above, who's the silly one?

"But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife" **(2 Tim. 2:23).**

"For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" **(1 Peter 2:15).**

- **The most comforting—His omnipresence**

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt. 28:19, 20).

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever” (Jn. 14:16).

- **The most reassuring—His immutability**

“And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’” (Acts 1:10, 11).

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17, NIV).

The bottom line here is God never changes! While His programs do change, His Person never does.

- **The most controversial—His sovereignty**

For centuries theologians have debated this attribute in regards to God’s sovereignty and man’s free will. Today the Calvinist and Armenian carry on this debate. Two words seems to summarize these two positions—election and whosoever:

A. Verses cited by the Calvinist

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Rom. 8:28-30).

“ . . . just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:4, 5).

B. Verses cited by the Armenians

“And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).

“To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).

Question: Can these two opposing views ever be reconciled?

Answer: The great Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon once observed: “I dislike the word *reconcile*, for these two concepts are friends—not enemies—that need no reconciliation.”

- **Most life-changing—His grace**

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (**Acts 20:32**).

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (**1 Cor. 15:10**).

“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (**2 Cor. 9:8**).

“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me’” (**2 Cor. 12:9**).

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (**Eph. 1:7**).

- **Most mysterious—His triune nature**

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (**Mt. 28:19**).

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (**2 Cor. 13:14**).

- **Most frightening—His wrath**

“Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty” (**Isa. 13:6**).

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (**Mt. 24:21**).

“Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” (**Rev. 6:14-17**).

- **Most descriptive—His glory**

- A. As recorded in the Old Testament**

“Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity” (Exod. 24:9, 10).

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!’” (Isa. 6:1-3).

“Then Micaiah said, ‘Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left’” (1 Kings 22:19).

“And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD” (Ezek. 1:26-28).

“I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time” (Dan. 7:9-12).

“His brightness was like the light; He had rays flashing from His hand, and there His power was hidden. Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet. He stood and measured the earth; He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills bowed. His ways are everlasting” (Hab. 3:4-6).

B. As recorded in the New Testament

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet . . . Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His

right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength” (Rev. 1:10, 12-16).

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this. Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald” (Rev. 4:1-3).

- **The most puzzling—His inscrutability**

Why does a good God allow evil, pain, and suffering to exist in the world that He has created? Is there a person alive today who has not cried out in the hour of great distress, Why me? Why this? Why now? In fact, to some, the only response coming from heaven seems to be, Why not? While there are a number of partial reasons given in the scripture, we know for a fact God’s story will have a happy ending.

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:1-4).

The third stanza of Isaac Watt’s great hymn, *Joy to the World*, gives musical testimony to this glorious truth:

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found . . .*

As the poet A. M. Overton has written:

*My Father’s way may twist and turn,
My heart may throb and ache,
But in my soul I’m glad to know,
He maketh no mistake.*

*My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away,
But I’ll trust my Lord to lead
For He doth know the way.*

*Tho' night be dark, and it may seem
That day will never break,
I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,
He maketh no mistake.*

*There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim;
But come what may, I'll simply trust
And leave it all to Him.*

*For by and by the mist will lift
And plain it all He'll make,
Through all the way, tho' dark to me
He made not one mistake.*

- **Finally, the most well known—His love**

A. In 1 & 2 Corinthians Paul lists 11 of the spiritual gifts. These are:

1. Tongues
2. Interpretation of tongues
3. Prophecy
4. Knowledge
5. Faith
6. Miracles
7. Healing
8. Helps
9. Teaching
10. Administration
11. Apostleship

B. He then concludes that without love they count for absolutely nothing. Thus, these gifts may be likened to mortar or cement that holds these gifts together.

C. Finally, he presents 14 things love does and does not do:

D. What loves does

1. It is patient
2. It is kind
3. It rejoices with the truth
4. It always protects
5. It always trusts
6. It always hopes
7. It never fails

E. What loves does not do

1. It is not rude

2. It is not proud
3. It is not self-seeking
4. It does not envy
5. It is not easily angered
6. It keeps no record of wrongs
7. It does not delight in evil

F. Of all the attributes love is possibly the one most experienced by humans. The smallest child feels love for his or her favorite toy and for both parents. Often in attempting to explain some concept we might say, “Well, this thing is sorta like love, that is, better felt than telt!”

TESTIMONY

Probably the most qualified Old Testament linguist of all time was Robert Dick Wilson. His skill along this line staggers the imagination. Dr. Wilson was born in 1856 and took his undergraduate work at Princeton University, graduating in 1876. He then completed both the M.A. and the Ph.D. After this, two years was spent at the University of Berlin in further postgraduate studies. Wilson taught Old Testament courses at Western Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh and returned to Princeton where he received international fame as a Hebrew scholar without peer. He was perfectly at home in over forty ancient Semitic languages! Dr. Wilson writes this about himself:

“If a man is called an expert, the first thing to be done is to establish the fact that he is such. One expert may be worth more than a million other witnesses that are not experts. Before a man has the right to speak about the history, the language, and the paleography of the Old Testament, the Christian church has the right to demand that such a man should establish his ability to do so.

“For forty-five years continuously, since I left college, I have devoted myself to the one great study of the Old Testament, in all its languages, in all its archaeology, in all its translations, and as far as possible in everything bearing upon its text and history. I tell you this so that you may see why I can and do speak as an expert. I may add that the result of my forty-five years of study of the Bible has led me all the time to a firmer faith that in the Old Testament we have a true historical account of the history of the Israelite people; and I have a right to commend this to some of those bright men and women who think that they can laugh at the old-time Christian and believer in the Word of God.

“I have claimed to be an expert. Have I the right to do so? Well, when I was in the Seminary I used to read my New Testament in nine different languages. I learned my Hebrew by heart, so that I could recite it without the intermission of a syllable . . . as soon as I graduated from the Seminary, I became a teacher of Hebrew for a year and then I

went to Germany. When I got to Heidelberg I made a decision. I decided—and I did it with prayer—to consecrate my life to the study of the Old Testament. I was twenty-five then; and I judged from the life of my ancestors that I should live to be seventy; so that I should have forty-five years to work. I divided the period into three parts. The first fifteen years I would devote to the study of the languages necessary. For the second fifteen I was going to devote myself to the study of the text of the Old Testament; and I reserved the last fifteen years for the work of writing the results of my previous studies and investigations, so as to give them to the world. And the Lord has enabled me to carry out that plan almost to a year.”

Thus did Robert Dick Wilson write. One of the stirring moments in the experience of his students occurred when, after a dissertation on the complete trustworthiness of Scripture, the renowned scholar said with tears:

“Young men, there are many mysteries in this life I do not pretend to understand, many things hard to explain. But I can tell you this morning with the fullest assurance that—

*‘Jesus loves me, this I know
For the Bible tells me so.’”*

ILLUSTRATIONS

What are some vivid examples to illustrate God’s love?

A. There is one ancient French legend that dramatically illustrates the subject of undying love.

It concerns a godly and wonderful mother who had a godless and wicked son. In spite of her love and prayers, he continued to live a life of debauchery, wallowing in the depths of sin, while she continued to pray for him. One day, in a drunken rage the son killed his mother, and to demonstrate his contempt for her and her God, actually cut out her heart!

Later, he dug a hole into which he dropped her lifeless body along with the dismembered heart. According to the legend, as he turned to leave, the son stumbled and struck the hard ground heavily. Cursing and struggling to get to his feet the young man was totally amazed to hear a voice crying from his mother’s heart, “Son,” the voice said, filled with concern, “You fell! Did you hurt yourself?”

Well, you might say, that’s only a silly legend. Not quite! Did you know in one sense of the word that ancient French legend actually happened in the spiritual realm some twenty centuries ago? In this case the wayward and wicked son was all humanity—haters of good and God.

Note how Paul describes our wretched and wicked condition:

“As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known” (Rom. 3:10-17).

But then what happened? Well, on this occasion it was a loving heavenly Father in view rather than an earthly mother. Spiritually speaking, God the Father actually allowed His sinful creatures to cut out His heart on Calvary's cross through the crucifixion of His beloved Son.

So, what's the bottom line? Did this brutal and blasphemous act against the very heart of God cause the sovereign Creator to hate and despise His sinful creatures? To the contrary. Listen to the following statements:

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6-8).

“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others . . . that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:1-3, 12, 13).

B. By far the best illustration I have ever heard is as follows:

A young man fell deeply in love with a young lady who was blind. Although very beautiful and talented, she was also bitter in regard to her affliction. But he repeatedly spoke of his undying love and proposed marriage assuring her the blindness only increased his affection but she refused saying her blindness would always remain an obstacle to any happy marriage.

Finally, however, someone donated his eyes to her and, miracle of miracles, she now could see. But imagine her shock when she realized that her lover was also blind. Now that she could see, the young man once again proposed marriage but was told she still could not enter into this arrangement for his blindness would be a painful reminder of her previous condition. The young man replied that of course he understood and wished her the very best.

A year later he received a wedding invitation from the ex-blind girl announcing her upcoming marriage to a wealthy business man, asking him if possible to attend the ceremony. She soon received his answer stating this would not be possible due to his condition, but wished her all the happiness in the world, and promised she would always remain in his prayers. After signing the letter, he added this postscript, **“Please take special care of my eyes.”**

Consider one final illustration:

When God was about to create man, says a Jewish legend, He took into His counsel the angels that stood about His throne. “Create him not,” said the Angel of Justice, “for if thou doest, he will commit all kinds of wickedness against his fellow men; he will be hard and cruel and dishonest and unrighteous.” “Create him not,” said the Angel of Truth, “for he will be false and deceitful to his brother-man, and even to Thee.” “Create him not,” said the Angel of Holiness, “for he will follow that which is impure in thy sight, and dishonor thee to thy face.” Then stepped forward the Angel of Love (God’s best beloved) and said, “Create him, our heavenly Father, for when he sins and turns from the path of right and truth and holiness, I will take him tenderly by the hand, and speak loving words to him, and then lead him back to thee.”

MUSICAL SUMMARY OF GOD’S LOVE

Hymn History: *The Love of God*

Frederick M. Lehman was a California businessman who lost everything through business reverses. He was forced to spend his working hours in manual labor, working in a Pasadena packing house packing oranges and lemons into wooden crates. Not an ideal environment for writing love songs, but this was the environment the Lord chose to use.

Mr. Lehman was a Christian who rejoiced in his salvation. He was so moved by a Sunday evening sermon on the love of God that he could hardly sleep. The next morning, the thrill of the previous evening had not left him. As he drove to the packing house, the makings of a song began to come together in his head, with God’s love as the theme.

Throughout the day, as he packed oranges and lemons, the words continued to flow. Perhaps he jotted down words on various pieces of broken crate as he went along. He could hardly wait to get home and commit these words to paper.

Upon arriving home, he hurried to his old upright piano and began arranging the words and composing a melody to fit them. He soon had finished two stanzas and the melody to go along with them, but now what was he to do? In those days, a song had to have at least three stanzas to be considered complete. (A far cry from the songs of our day that only need have three

words!) He tried and tried to come up with a third stanza, but to no avail. The words just would not fall into place.

It was then that he remembered a poem someone had given him some time before. Hunting around, he found the poem printed on a card, which he had used as a bookmark. As Mr. Lehman read the words, his heart was thrilled by the adequate picture of God's love they pictured. He then noticed this writing on the bottom of the card:

"These words were found written on a cell wall in a prison some 200 years ago. It is not known why the prisoner was incarcerated; neither is it known if the words were original or if he had heard them somewhere and had decided to put them in a place where he could be reminded of the greatness of God's love. Whatever the circumstances, he wrote them on the wall of his prison cell. In due time, he died and the men who had the job of repainting his cell were impressed by the words. Before their paint brushes had obliterated them, one of the men jotted them down and thus they were preserved."

Lehman went to the piano and began to voice the words with the melody he had just written. They were a perfect fit. It was a miracle! The song was published. (Adapted from Al Smith's *Treasury of Hymn Histories*, Better Music Publications, Inc., Greenville, SC, 1985)

Here are the words of this incredible song . . .

*The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.*

Refrain

O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure
The saints' and angels' song.

*When years of time shall pass away,
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
When men, who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hills and mountains call,
God's love so sure, shall still endure,
All measureless and strong;
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—
The saints' and angels' song.*

Refrain

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

Note: All Scriptures are quoted from the New King James Version of the Bible.