

# God Really Is Great!

## Religions Poisoned Everything

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# e p i g r a p h

It's what you learn after  
you know it all that counts.

John Wooden

One cannot resist an idea  
whose time has come.

Victor Hugo  
*paraphrased*

## Preface

Christopher Hitchens' book entitled *god is not Great! How Religion Poisons Everything* challenges the popular view of God as a benevolent creator and loving father. He developed his view of God from the ideas propagated by religious institutions and his observations of the senseless evil they have inflicted on humanity. Most will agree with Mr. Hitchens when he says truth is good for the human family and conversely lies are bad. He extends this thought to equate truth with observable facts and lies with religions. Religious institutions are in fact responsible for many abuses. Chief among them is the propagation of false blasphemous ideas, or lies about God. Deep seeded false ideas may appear benign on the surface but these have resulted in evil of the most unimaginable and horrific kind which continues up to our day. He concludes religion is ultimately unfit for a civilized society.

Most people believe in an almighty loving God but are obscured by their own religion's doctrines and lack the proper foundation to believe it conclusively. Fearing the loss of their faith in God because they are unable to reasonably counter opposing arguments they simply reject any idea contrary to their belief. Instead they run back to their trusted religious leaders to interpret religious "truths" for them. Thus they are bound

tightly in the comfort and security (or sense of security) of their religion. This is a precarious condition! Everyone should be able to personally defend their faith in God with a reasonable explanation. This book intends to reinforce a reasonable faith in God while challenging the unreasonable religious doctrines. God really IS GREAT! Religions poisoned everything.

Religious institution's control of independent thought and inquiry is a presumptuous act against humanity. Religious leaders are eager to assert authority over society by interpreting and presenting religious "truths" in an effort to convert as many as possible to their group, all the while subconsciously (or consciously) hoping they relieved their new adherents partially (or completely) of their reasoning faculties to question their authority. They secure trust by instituting pompous ceremonies, erecting magnificent structures, certifying so-called "miracles", adopting grandiose titles, and donning royal, or if better suited, humble attire to ensure they will have a long and prosperous existence. Furthermore, these institutions maintain their own dictionary of religious words as they redefine common words for us and create new complex theocratic terms making it all the more difficult for someone to question their validity and possibly escape their powerful grasp of control. When all else failed, they resorted to fear, intimidation and

terror to maintain control. An ominous fate awaited anyone who dared to question religious authority during the so-called “dark ages”.

The observation of these established religious institutions is the basis by which Christopher Hitchens concludes that religion employs medieval tactics of guilt, fear, control, credulity and superstition and is therefore unfit for a modern society. Christopher Hitchens is throwing the baby out with the bathwater (pardon the cliché). For sure, the bathwater is murky and should be completely discarded and the bathtub scrubbed clean, but there still remains the baby, the possibility for a faith in God where religion and truth, religion and reason, religion and inquiry do coexist.

The Judeo-Christian Bible, Old and New Testament, will be used to show how religion can coexist with truth (observable facts), reason (logic that makes common sense), and inquiry (freedom to question). However, the Bible is not a step by step instruction manual. It can be likened to a puzzle with many pieces that need to be perfectly interlinked to view the correct picture. There are many pictures of God presented by the various religious institutions but usually the pieces simply do not fit well together and the resulting picture is confusing or worse, frightening! Others discard

inconvenient pieces leaving empty spaces and an incomplete and unsatisfying picture of God.

It is almost impossible to solve a puzzle that is assembled incorrectly by moving a piece at a time to its proper place while the other pieces are not in their correct location. It is far better to begin by disassembling the puzzle and carefully interlinking each piece to the other to reveal a beautiful picture of faith in a marvelous and great God.

It is not our intention to convince anyone of the true faith neither can the following pages adequately answer every question. Our scope is simply to present a faith in God that is reasonable, fair and loving for all.


*...test everything. Hold on to what is good. 1 Thessalonians 5:21*

God Really Is GREAT!  
Religions Poisoned Everything



I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect has intended us to forgo their use.

Galileo Galilei



## Is there no God?

*The beginning of wisdom is to acquire wisdom. Acquire understanding with all that you have. How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and the gaining of understanding should be chosen over silver.*

*Proverbs 4:7, 16:16*

There is a renewed debate today on the existence of God. Arguments for and against have been proposed by philosophers, scientists, and religious leaders. In particular, atheists maintain that claims for the existence of God show insufficient reason to believe. Persuasive arguments are made against religious claims to expose the foolishness of belief. Nevertheless, this can only discredit the organizations making these misguided claims. Those challenging a belief in God more often than not are protesting the religious organization propagating their version of God rather than opposing a belief in God's existence. Most would not oppose a belief in a wholly good, all loving, omnipotent and omniscient God but they feel the real world evidence suggests otherwise.

An often cited argument against God is the presence of evil in the world. How can anyone believe in a wholly good, all loving, omnipotent

(all powerful) and omniscient (all wise) God who permits evil to exist? Webster defines evil as that which produces unhappiness; anything which either directly or remotely causes suffering of any kind. Much of the human suffering is to a degree a direct cause of the free moral agency - the freedom people have to make good and bad choices which impact themselves, their family, their community and society in general. Other reasons for suffering are not directly linked to human choices but to natural causes.

Religious institutions have been a direct cause of suffering by providing a sense of a God-ordained mission to cleanse the world of evil. Civil leaders in collusion with religious leaders convinced people of possessing authority from God earning them their trust and unwavering loyalty. Civil powers were justified by their religious counterparts to authorize extreme cruel acts against humanity as they purified the world for God. Afterwards, religious leaders forgave the sins of those committing these atrocities. Religious justification of inhumane acts appears to have at least temporarily relieved the perpetrator's conscience of personal accountability in the afterlife. The inquisitions of the dark ages testify to the depravity of the human condition when acts against conscience are excused.

People resided in small groups known as clans prior to the existence of formal governments and religious institutions. Clans were usually members of an extended family ensuring their survival by controlling the best geographical regions. Distrust between clans often led to the killing of opposing clan members. This phenomenon continues today in the form of gangs. W.B. Miller (1992) defines a street gang as “a self-formed association of peers, united by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership and internal organization, who act collectively or as individuals to achieve specific purposes, including the conduct of illegal activity and control of a particular territory, facility, or enterprise”. Gangs are responsible for drug smuggling and sales, arms trafficking, theft, human trafficking, assault, extortion, hate crimes, kidnapping, murder, pandering, financial crimes, and the list goes on. How can an omnipotent God stand by apparently powerless to stop these gangs from inflicting pain and suffering on society?

Natural disasters also result in real suffering. Every year innocent people are injured and die in these disasters or “chance” events. The 1931 China floods claimed the lives of up to 436,000 people. It is estimated over 700,000 people perished in the 1976 Tangshan earthquake. In 1970 a cyclone hit Bhola in Bangladesh where the death toll exceeded 300,000. More recently, the

Haiti earthquake of 2010 and the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami each claimed over 300,000 lives and countless injuries. Religious leaders of all faiths attribute these disasters to God's wrath on an immoral world and are quick to justify themselves when the natural disaster largely affects people of differing faiths. Is God truly responsible for these disasters which devastate whole communities?

Sickness, physical and mental disorder and natural death results in suffering not attributed to the acts of another human being. In particular death is so different from the other calamities of life. When someone dies the situation seems so hopeless, so very final, the end of everything. If God does exist, why didn't he create the human race to live forever in health and happiness upon the earth... just like the angels in heaven?

Let us begin by using deductive reasoning to explain God and the existence of evil. Reason is considered a fundamental characteristic of human nature. It is the power of comprehending, inferring, or thinking especially in orderly rational ways to make sense of things. Deductive reasoning is a form of reasoning in which a conclusion follows necessarily from the stated premises or first principles. In our case, the first principles will be the presence of evil coinciding

with the existence of a wholly good, all loving, omnipotent and omniscient God. We will only use deductive reasoning to explain how they are not mutually exclusive.

The first principle concerning God's attributes of wholly good, all loving, omnipotent and omniscient constrains God to choose the best course of action for his creation. To understand the matter differently would diminish his attribute of omniscience (all knowing), all loving (caring) and "wholly good" (impartial, equitable). Others affirm these attributes but explain the existence of evil as God's inability to completely control evil in all respects. This thought requires the diminishing of God's attribute of omnipotence (all powerful). If we are to preserve all of God's attributes in the absolute sense, we must conclude it is not God's inability to stop evil, but a deliberate action by God to permit evil. So why does God consider experience with evil the best course for the human race?

There are two possible answers to this question - the permission of evil leads to a greater good or prevents a greater evil for the human family. A case-by-case attempt to reason the most heinous acts of evil as resulting in greater good or lesser evil is difficult and often impossible. Various explanations may be proffered; however, this is

purely conjecture and speculation. An obvious objection to our two answers is that experience with evil can result in irreversible pain and suffering which leads us to question the integrity of God's plan. We are left to rely on God's attributes leading us to blindly trust in his plan which accomplishes little to satisfy our desire for understanding. The difficulty for offering a fully satisfying answer arises from our limited knowledge of God's deliberate action for permitting evil unless God were to reveal his intentions to us. Though far from satisfactory to the inquiring mind, both arguments can reason the existence of evil being compatible with the existence of a wholly good God.

Let us consider the following familiar example to better illustrate this thought. Would a loving parent permit evil, anything that causes pain or suffering, to their own child while considering it to be the best course of action for a greater good, or the prevention of a greater evil? What child has not touched a hot stove in their lifetime even though they were warned not to do so over and over again? Yet most children continue to disobey their parent. Why doesn't the child simply obey the parent in the first place to avoid the pain altogether? Why do parents purposely hold a child's hand over a hot stove? The child may not understand their parent's intention; nevertheless, the child's lack of understanding

cannot justify their anger toward their parent. In this example, we can see the greater good, and the prevention of the greater evil, even though the child at the moment cannot explain it.

There are additional lessons we can gain from this simple example. First, real experience serves as a superior schoolmaster to simple instruction and observation. Second, the parent carefully supervised the child and ensured the suffering was temporary and the effects of the pain were not permanent; it was just enough for the child to fully understand the consequence of their decision. If the experience was too short, say the child quickly touched the hot stove; the child may not learn the desired lesson. If the experience was too long, the child could sustain permanent injury. Since imperfect parents are careful with the lessons they provide for their children, why would anyone consider an all wise, loving, and good God would be any less careful with his creation? We can reasonably conclude the present experience with evil is carefully supervised and will not permanently injure or continue indefinitely. These conclusions raise many other questions which will be considered later.

Deductive reasoning substantiates the idea for a wholly good God with the existence of evil in the world. Reason can also establish the permission



of evil as being a deliberate act of God to achieve a greater good and to prevent a greater evil for his creation. Reason cannot conclusively answer what greater good or lesser evil is achieved without additional information concerning the future condition of the human family. God provided this information in the Bible which is a detailed and admittedly somewhat fragmented explanation. The Bible has been used by many to advance various concepts of heaven and hell, mercy and justice, reward and punishment to explain God's purposes. Most of these explanations abandon reason altogether in favor of man-made creeds, pagan philosophies, and superstitious traditions.

Reason must always be employed when searching for truth on any subject matter especially those concerning God's plans and purposes. The Bible or any other book claiming a higher authority should not be used as justification for abandoning reason. On the contrary, God appeals to us to reason our condition and his proposed remedy. "Come now, let us reason together", says the LORD... Isaiah 1:18 A faith in God and in his plan must be reasonable, fair and loving for all, otherwise he would not have invited us to reason it.

*Do your best to present yourself to God as a tried-and-true worker who isn't ashamed to teach the word of truth correctly. 2 Timothy 2:15*

A man should look for what is,  
and not for what he thinks should be.

Albert Einstein



## Original Superstitious Irrational Notions

*The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. Matthew 7:25*

Anyone who has ever built a house understands the value of a good foundation. Excavators are required to dig down to virgin soil, but structural engineers recommend solid bedrock to make the best of all possible foundations. Errors in the foundation may not be repairable later on in the project, so great care is taken to ensure all of the measurements are exact and the foundation is perfectly plumb and square. The tallest building in the world today is over half a mile high, yet the scrutiny of its foundation was measured in centimeters. A building may be a spectacle now but over time there will be severe consequences if built on a poor foundation. A flawed foundation will exert excessive stress on the framework. The foundation will begin to crack leading to cosmetic defects and later to structural damage. This will lead to the entire collapse of the structure in the most severe cases. Only a careless builder would

consider building on a less than perfect foundation.

The principles in the construction of buildings are directly applicable to the development of a belief system. Carelessness in laying a proper foundation will have adverse consequences on the superstructure. The most beautiful and “secure” belief system is destined to collapse if it is built on a deficient foundation. It is somewhat amazing to see people focus on superficial topics and neglect to examine the integrity of their own faith's foundation. Surely, it is more exciting to discuss the latest end-of-world prophecy, new interpretations on the symbolic beasts of Revelation, faith miracle healing, or living a prosperous Bible based lifestyle than it is to scrutinize an old “tried and true” foundation.

Christians readily accept Bible statements such as “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22) whether or not it makes sense to them. The sacrifice of Jesus is fundamental to the Christian faith, yet most Christians cannot reasonably explain why God required the death of his only son before he could begin to forgive a single person. The question is not “what” Jesus’ sacrifice accomplished or “how” his sacrifice achieved our redemption, but “why” did God require his sacrifice in the first place? We

do not require the death of our children to forgive, so then why did God? Why couldn't an all-powerful God simply reprimand and then forgive Adam and Eve for their disobedience in the Garden of Eden? One fascinating explanation for Jesus' death proposes that God required an infinite God to die for finite humanity's sins to balance the scale of justice before he would begin to forgive. There is nothing remotely reasonable or rational in this proposal.

When people can't reason a faith principle they usually regress to their childhood beliefs. Most adults are biased toward their childhood religion. A recent survey by the Pew Forum reports that over 70% of adults remain in the religion of their parents. This should come as no surprise since religious doctrines are repeated tens of thousands of times throughout a person's young life when the capacity to reason is developing and at a time when authority figures are inherently trusted. Unreasonable religious doctrines are promoted with a "take it on faith" mantra and are naively accepted with little questioning. When irrational ideas become entrenched in a young person's mind it hampers their ability to reason in their adult life, especially on religious topics.

Furthermore, how can anyone argue any irrational belief in other faiths if the only argument for their

fundamental beliefs is blind acceptance on statements from their “holy book”? The Muslim may cling to the Koran, Buddhist can rely on the Buddhavacana (the Word of the Buddha) and the wisdom of the Hindu Sanskrit can be accepted on absolute authority. The door is opened for the promotion of superstitious, irrational and often times dangerous notions the moment reason is superseded by “holy scriptures”.

*“You certainly won’t die!” the snake told the woman. “God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened. You’ll be like God, knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:4,5*

Probably the single most controlling superstitious irrational notion is a life-at-death philosophy. This notion began in the Garden of Eden when the serpent deceived Eve by telling her she would not surely die if she disobeyed God’s law. So powerful was this suggestion that it eventually became the basis for a life-at-death philosophy for all of the world’s religions. The definition for the word “death” was soon altered; no longer would it commonly be understood as the “end of being alive”. The new religious definition became a transformation of life from one nature to another nature. The life-at-death philosophy is the basis for many other absurd beliefs. The doctrines of hell fire, immortal soul, limbo, purgatory, reincarnation, and indulgences all find their origin

in this philosophy. Some go as far as to suggest the dead are more alive than the living.

According to this philosophy, both good and bad people continue living after they “die”. The doctrines of eternal torture in literal fiery flames of hell and more recently, the equally absurd idea for a mentally tortuous place void of God is being promoted as the eternal abode for the wicked. The life-at-death notion also corrupted the human conscience. Temporary physical torture was promoted by religious leaders as an act of love since it could save a person from permanent eternal torment. Creative torture devices designed to prolong the temporal agony of pitiful religious prisoners were employed to coerce confessions “leading to eternal salvation”.

Original Sin and its penalty are two misunderstood foundational concepts. Sin in the strictest sense is lawlessness, more specifically the disobeying of God’s laws (1 John 3:4). The penalty for disobedience was clearly and succinctly communicated to Adam as being death. One rendition for original sin is the premise of “missing the mark”. This theory claims Adam missed the mark of perfect obedience and the resulting imperfection is transmitted to the rest of his posterity. Adam was created a perfect human being. As a perfect human being, Adam was able



to comprehend all of God's laws and capable to obey them perfectly. God expected nothing less from his perfect creation. Adam was told not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil else he would surely die. Adam was not deceived but disobeyed God in full knowledge (1 Timothy 2:14). The term missing the mark implies an attempt to hit a mark. Adam aimed for a very different target altogether and successfully hit the mark of disobedience. Adam did not "miss the mark" as some claim; instead he chose to disobey God knowing the consequence for his action would result in his death. Another penalty was never stated or implied by God. God deceived Adam if the penalty was not death, but rather an afterlife of eternal torment. But wait one moment, Adam and Eve did not die on that day!

The term "spiritual death" was contrived to explain why Adam and Eve did not die immediately on the day they disobeyed. Though the Bible never references the term "spiritual death", it is commonly accepted and defined as a separation from God. Adam and Eve would continue living but without a close relationship to their God. There is no need to perpetuate this erroneous concept any further once the penalty for their disobedience is correctly understood. Genesis 2:17 reads, "But you must never eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because when you eat from it, *you will certainly die.*"

The word-for-word literal translation for the latter part of this verse from Young's Literal Translation of the Bible reads: “dying thou dost die” or “dying you will die”. How true this was, Adam and Eve began to grow old the moment they disobeyed. The process of dying commenced and ultimately culminated in the death of the first couple, but did their souls continue living on in a spiritual realm?

*The living know that they will die, but the dead don't know anything... Ecclesiastes 9:5*

*Behold, all souls are mine, both the soul of the father, and also the soul of the son are mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Ezekiel 18:4*

Greek philosopher Plato considered the soul the essence of a person which is an incorporeal (not bodily), eternal occupant of our being. Early Christian writers, Origen (ca. 185-254) and Augustine (354-430) introduced the concept for an “immortal soul” into the Christian dialog. Their influence has led to today's popular Christian belief that the soul survives the death of the body and will be judged by God to determine if it will spend eternity in heaven or in hell.

There are fundamental problems with an immortal soul. Those in support believe God can never

extinguish a soul he created. The concept for an immortal soul is in direct conflict with God's attribute of being all powerful and also questions God's other attributes of all loving and all wise. This becomes more apparent when considering the parent-child analogy. If a child chooses to disobey a parent after much effort from the parent to reform the child by instruction and fair punishment (appropriate consequences for bad decisions), a wise parent would evict the child from their house. This benefits the other children in the house since the disobedient child directly affects everyone. The parent could have decided to lock the child in the basement of the house and torture him forever for his disobedience, as some suggest God does. Most would consider this extremely unwise and unloving. How much wiser and loving is it for God to evict (extinguish) the soul from his house (the universe) instead of keeping it alive in torment in a corner of his universe? The concept for a "mortal (susceptible to death) soul" supports God's attributes of all powerful, loving, just and all wise. The scripture in Ezekiel 18:4 quoted above adamantly declares God always maintains full control of the human soul and death (that is not alive) is truly the ultimate consequence for a soul who sins.

The philosophy for an immortal soul is also fully antagonistic to free will. Most, if not all religions acknowledge that the gift of life and free will are

two of God's greatest gifts to his creation. The ultimate free will choice a person can make is whether or not they want to live in God's universe under his arrangements. An immortal soul eliminates this choice. It seems irrational to think anyone would prefer death over life, but the selfish mind is quick to abandon reason. These would prefer to live according to their rules. God does not provide this option. Since God is all wise, we expect his arrangements to be the best for all of his creation. Alternate arrangements, regardless of how beautiful they may first appear only result in misery to themselves and those they come in contact.

The Bible also does not support the concept for an immortal soul. The term "immortal soul" is not found in any Bible translation, yet people refer to it as if ubiquitous in scripture. The first scripture to reference the soul (not immortal soul) is an often misunderstood scripture in Genesis 2:7. Below are various English translations of this verse.

*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. King James Version*

*Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and*

*the man became a living being. New International Version*

*Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. English Standard Version*

This is the only “formula” scripture for the relationship between body, spirit and soul in all of the Bible<sup>1</sup>. We notice all translations use the identical phrase “and (the) man became”... a living soul, a living being, a living creature. There is no mention of man “possessing” a living soul and it is absolutely absurd to speak of man possessing a living being or a living creature (the latter two being modern translations for the Hebrew word “nephesh” originally translated as the word “soul” in the Authorized King James Version).

The popular Christian concept for the soul can be written out as:

dust from the ground + breath of life + soul = man

OR

Body + Spirit + Soul = Man

If we were to replace the term soul with the modern translations for the Hebrew word “nephesh” we get:

Body + Spirit + Living Being = Man

OR

Body + Spirit + Living Creature = Man

Do humans really possess a living being or living creature as part of their existence? However, Genesis 2:7 is properly written out as:

dust from the ground + breath of life = soul

OR

Body + Spirit = Soul

OR

Body + Spirit = Living Being

OR

Body + Spirit = Living Creature

These statements are supported by reason, science and the Bible and should be easily understood and accepted if we can free ourselves from the encumbrances of religious tradition and Greek philosophy. Given this understanding we can conclude when the spirit (breath of life) leaves the body at death, the soul, living being, or living creature ceases to exist.

A life-at-death philosophy and the doctrine for an immortal soul are two original superstitious irrational notions which have found various forms of expression in world religions. These are superstitious since they are beliefs not based on

scientific evidence or observation. They are irrational because they cannot be reasoned to be the actions of an all loving, wise, just and all powerful God. They are notions because these are vain philosophies based on imagined ideas or concepts not supported by the Bible. A massive philosophical structure has been built upon these erroneous “foundational” doctrines which today are teetering on the brink of collapse.

Let us not forget God’s plan must be the best course of action for his creation. Allowing people to be born, experience pain and suffering for their brief lifespan only to die later does not seem like a very good plan even to the simplest of minds. God must have something better for humanity, a plan that is reasonable, loving and fair for all of his creation.

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*  
*John 10:10*

1. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is the only other Bible scripture mentioning all three (soul, body and spirit) but no relationship to each other is stated or implied: “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole **spirit, soul and body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For

example, one can speak about hydrogen, oxygen, and water in the same sentence. The relationship each has to the other should not be inferred if not explicitly stated.



Who are we? We find that  
we live on an insignificant planet  
of a humdrum star  
lost in a galaxy tucked away  
in some forgotten corner of a universe  
in which there are  
far more galaxies than people.

Carl Sagan



## Eden

{A spectacle of God's attributes working together  
in perfect harmony}

*Then God planted a garden in Eden, in the east. He put the Man he had just made in it. God made all kinds of trees grow from the ground, trees beautiful to look at and good to eat. The Tree-of-Life was in the middle of the garden, also the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil.*

*Genesis 2:8,9*

A master architect's goal in overseeing a high-rise construction project is the realization of his design culminating in an inauguration celebration after completion. Those unfamiliar with the architect's design will have difficulty envisioning the grandeur of the finished building during construction. Large earth moving equipment quickly turns a once peaceful landscape into a dynamic construction site of dirt, dust and debris. To the unlearned, it appears the project is heading in the opposite direction from the original intention. The master architect does not waver from his purpose, always focusing on the details necessary for achieving the goal. He is not discouraged by the unpleasant conditions during

construction because he knows everything is proceeding precisely as planned. Only after the final scaffolding comes down will all be able to appreciate the truly magnificent structure which was penned by the master architect's hand many years before.

God is the master architect of our world and the events which transpired in the Garden of Eden were meticulously planned by him. His divine plan of the ages was penned many years ago prior to the foundation of the world. They reveal God's attributes of love, power, justice and wisdom, working together in perfect harmony for the advancement of his plan which will ultimately benefit his creation. An accurate understanding of the conditions created in Eden and the subsequent interaction between God and the first human family is necessary to gain a greater appreciation of God's plan, making Eden worthwhile of careful examination. Erroneous notions surrounding Eden promoted by religious institutions has only served to malign God's true character and conceal his wonderful plan for all. Recall our earlier conclusion, an all wise, just, loving and all powerful God could only choose the best course of action for his creation, one which will lead to a greater good and the prevention of a greater evil. It all began to be revealed here, in Eden!

The Garden of Eden was God's original earthly paradise which has been variously located at the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates in northern Iraq, in Africa, and in the Persian Gulf. The word "Paradise" signifies, "a delightful garden, park, or pleasure ground." Among the many trees in the garden, two types were planted in the center of the garden and given curiously unique names. The first called the tree of life sustained Adam and Eve's perfect life. The other tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were permitted to eat from all of the trees in the garden except from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The stage is now set and the curtains are raised on what would become *The Greatest Love Story* of all time and a spectacle of God's attributes of power, wisdom, justice and love, working together in perfect balance and harmony.

*By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. Hebrews 11:3*

**Power** is defined as the ability to bring about or help bring about outcomes. God's power is not limited. The universe was created from nothing by God's infinite power. The Big Bang theory supports the Bible declaration in Hebrews 11:3 and "is a well-tested scientific theory which is

widely accepted within the scientific community because it is the most accurate and comprehensive explanation for the full range of phenomena astronomers observe”<sup>1</sup>. God’s attribute of power which brought about the universe some 13.75 billion years ago also influences and directs all of his plans. God’s plans can and will be fulfilled uninhibited and uninterrupted by anyone or anything because of this unlimited power.

*I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. Genesis 46:9,10*

**Wisdom** is a comprehension of what is true resulting in a deep understanding of reality which enables the optimum application of judgments and actions in keeping with this understanding. A simpler definition for wisdom is to make the best use of knowledge (Charles Haddon Spurgeon). We gain knowledge by experience and observation from both the past and present which can lead us to wisdom. God possesses all knowledge and wisdom is a fundamental attribute of his. He declares possessing knowledge from the past, present and future. Chance and uncertainty do not exist with God. This wisdom guarantees all of God’s decisions are optimal.

*If anyone is injured, the offender must pay a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot, a burn for a burn, a bruise for a bruise, a wound for a wound. Exodus 21:24-25*

*I will make justice a measuring line and righteousness a plumb line... Isaiah 28:17*

**Justice** is fairness or reasonableness, especially in the way people are treated or decisions are made. Justice is to civilized society as truth is to wisdom, the latter cannot exist without the former. God's definition for justice is precise, "If anyone is injured, the offender must pay a life for a life, an eye for an eye..." This definition of justice is an important element in God's plan for humanity. Justice shows no mercy, owes no special favors, and is exact and final. Though not the worldwide standard today, God assures us he will make justice the measuring line (standard) and righteousness (doing what is right) a plumb line (exacting).

*... God is love 1John 4:8*

*Love never comes to an end... 1 Corinthians 13:8*

**Love** is defined as a virtue representing kindness, compassion, and affection —“the

unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another” (Merriam Webster Dictionary). The Bible declares God is love and his love will never end. The attribute of love motivated God to create an intelligent human family, provide them a perfect home and give them the freedom of choice. Love did not enforce obedience nor interfere with their freedom. God’s love for Adam and Eve and their descendants continues regardless of Adam and Eve’s failure. Apostle Paul concludes in Romans 8:38,39 “I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love which Christ Jesus our Lord shows us. We can’t be separated by death or life, by angels or rulers, by anything in the present or anything in the future, by forces or powers in the world above or in the world below, or by anything else in creation.” God’s great love (benevolent concern) for his creation will be evident to all once the scaffolding is removed revealing a glorious superstructure.

*“Rain and snow come down from the sky. They do not go back again until they water the earth. They make it sprout and grow so that it produces seed for farmers and food for people to eat. My word, which comes from my mouth, is like the rain and snow. It will not come back to me without results. It will accomplish whatever I want and achieve whatever I send it to do.” Isaiah 55:10,11*

*God is not like people. He tells no lies. He is not like humans. He doesn't change his mind. When he says something, he does it. When he makes a promise, he keeps it. Numbers 23:19*

*So God created humans in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female. God blessed them and said, "Be fertile, increase in number, fill the earth, and be its master." Genesis 1:27,28*

The human race was not designed to die, but was made to live forever upon the earth. Adam and Eve were created perfect in God's image and therefore able to fill the earth with a perfect human race. They fell from perfection and came under the condemnation of death when they disobeyed making it impossible for them to fulfill God's purpose. At first it appears God has failed or changed his plans, but God declares his word will not come back to him without results. God's wisdom in harmony with his unlimited power guarantees the outcome. God as the master architect never lost focus on the goal. His plan remains unchanged regardless of the present unpleasant conditions. Adam's disobedience does not change God's plan. This evil world does not change God's original plan. God's adversary, the serpent or devil, has not changed his plan. God declares he will accomplish what he started (Isaiah 55:10,11). His divine plan proceeds precisely and



according to design in perfect timing for the realization of his original purpose, an earth filled with a perfect human family living forever under his blessing. The lesson Adam and Eve learned from Eden was a necessary first step toward accomplishing his goal.

The principles of right and wrong, good and evil have always existed. Adam and Eve needed to learn the value of choosing right and good over wrong and evil. Three possible approaches God could use to teach Adam and Eve were intuition, observation, and experience. God could preprogram Adam and Eve with a full knowledge of all the consequences for disobedience, that is, give them a natural intuition regarding evil. Secondly, Adam and Eve could learn by observing others while being protected from personally experiencing evil. Thirdly, God could allow Adam and Eve to freely make their choices and learn from their own personal experiences.<sup>2</sup>

The first scenario has an advantage over the other two since obeying God is inherent to Adam and Eve's nature. However, Adam and Eve could question being "forced" to believe or do things as a result of their programming. This persistent question will lead to a lack of appreciation for God's authority. The second scenario, learning by observation is often times inferior to learning by

experience. God could have chosen this method since knowledge is gained in either case. We must conclude this method was not the best course for Adam and Eve since God did not select it. God chose the experience scenario. This permitted Adam and Eve to learn and grow in knowledge by their own experiences while developing a trust and respect for their creator's benevolent authority and his perfect laws. This approach is far superior to the other scenarios but one has to question if the penalty outweighed the benefits of the lesson.

Most religious groups promote the popular doctrine of hell, or something very similar, as God's penalty. God's attributes of wisdom, love, justice and power could not establish hell, a place of eternal conscious torture, as the penalty for disobedience. There is an arrant inequity in promoting **eternal** torment as punishment for **finite** disobedience. Our own civilized justice system does not condemn the most heinous criminals to a cruel punishment as hell. Civilized humanity is more just (fair) to its most nefarious criminals than what is being attributed to a perfect and just God.

*Sin came into the world through one person, and death came through sin. So death spread to everyone... Romans 5:12*

Adam believed he alone committed suicide the moment he disobeyed. God did not inform Adam that the penalty of death (not a penalty of eternal torture) would also be passed on to his descendants. Apostle Paul writes about our inherited death sentence saying, “the verdict which followed one person’s (Adam’s) failure condemned everyone (Romans 5:16). Everyone was condemned through one failure (Romans 5:18). Humanity died as the result of one person’s (Adam’s) failure (Romans 5:15).” Everyone born of Adam inherits his condemnation at birth and is destined to die.

*Indeed, I was born guilty. I was a sinner when my mother conceived me. Psalms 51:5*

Since God is all wise, we would expect he has a reasonable explanation for condemning the world for Adam’s failure. On the surface, the condemnation of the entire human race appears to be overreaching and contrary to God’s attributes. We would not punish our own children for our personal failures. How can God’s decision to condemn the rest of the world be justified?

God’s benevolent concern for his human creation in harmony with his wisdom did establish a plan to remedy the inherited death sentence and restore humanity back to the perfection lost in Eden.

God's secret plan was first alluded to his adversary, the Serpent, when God said "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15 This secret plan would gradually be revealed to the world at the proper time.

1. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big\\_Bang](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Bang), 2012

2. Though not mentioned in the paragraph, a fourth method of learning is by information received through sources accepted as positively truthful.

To myself I am only a child playing  
on the beach, while vast oceans of truth  
lie undiscovered before me.

Isaac Newton



## God's Secret Plan

*God told his secret plans to his servants the prophets, and it will all happen... Revelation 10:7*

*For ages and ages this message was kept secret from everyone, but now it has been explained to God's people.  
Colossians 1:26*

God knew Adam and Eve would fail their trial in the Garden of Eden due to lack of experience, therefore he had a plan prepared prior to the foundation of our world to redeem and eventually restore them and everyone else (1 Peter 1:20). God kept his plan secret for a long time and only revealed the details gradually as was necessary to accomplish his grand design. This plan can be properly understood today, however many people are still misinformed concerning the principle which permitted God to justly release Adam and everyone else from the death sentence.

*I will **ransom** them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction... Hosea 13:14*

*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a **ransom** for all, to be testified in due time. 1 Tim 2:5,6*

*It's the same way with the Son of Man. He didn't come so that others could serve him. He came to serve and to give his life as a **ransom** for many people. Matthew 20:28*

*Since a man brought death, a man also brought life back from death. As everyone dies because of Adam, so also everyone will be made alive because of Christ.  
1 Corinthians 15:21,22*

A wise and economical decision in God's secret plan was to delay a similar Edenic trial-for-life for everyone else. Instead of being born with a "right to life" and placed on trial for life, God decided to place everyone under Adam's penalty of death. This decision made it possible to redeem everyone and satisfy justice with only one action, otherwise known as the ransom. The Greek word for ransom is antilutron – defined as "a corresponding price." This concept of a corresponding price is a fixed law of God's universe. It is expressed in Israel's law, "You shall give LIFE for LIFE, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" Exodus 21:23-24. One perfect man was a substitutionary sacrifice for the perfect man Adam, who forfeited his life along with the human race in him. Since everyone is condemned in

Adam to no fault of their own, if Adam is to be restored back to life, it follows that everyone will be restored to life with him. “As everyone dies because of Adam, so also everyone will be made alive because of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:22 God’s justice does not mean “just us”, yet many Christians believe they alone will benefit from Christ’s sacrifice. If this were true, most of the human race would remain condemned under Adam’s death sentence.

*No one can ever buy back another person or pay God a ransom for his life. Psalms 49:7*

*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (from the Adamic death sentence) John 3:17*

Jesus was uniquely qualified to lay down his life as the corresponding (ransom) price for Adam’s forfeited life. All of Adam’s descendants are born under his death sentence without a right- to-life; therefore they do not have a life to offer as a substitutionary price. God chose to send his only begotten son into our world to be born of a woman. A perfect human embryo was conceived within Mary by God’s power when she was a virgin. Jesus was born separate from the line of Adam and part of the human family. Mary gave birth to a perfect child who had a “right to life” so



long as he was obedient to God. His sacrifice was acceptable to God as the ransom price because of his perfect obedience unto death as Apostle Paul says, "...he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8).

*The greatest love you can show is to give your life for your friends." John 15:13*

Alternately, God could have given everyone a right-to-life at birth and placed everyone on an individual trial-for-life. Failure would lead to certain death and one could only be restored after another person, by their own free will, forfeited their own perfect life in death (life for life). Lacking sufficient experience with evil, it is reasonable to expect many would fail as Adam and Eve failed at a significant cost to restore them. Apostle Paul shows an added difficulty for this alternate proposal when he says "Finding someone who would die for a godly person is rare. Maybe someone would have the courage to die for a good person." Romans 5:7 Who would then give up their life for a bad person?

*That was the true Light (Christ), which lighteth every man that cometh into the world . John 1:9*

*He (God) wants all people to be saved (from the Adamic death sentence) and to learn the truth. (Greek: an accurate knowledge of the truth) 1 Timothy 2:4*

The ransom ensures the dead will be raised from their “sleep” condition<sup>1</sup>. Those who have not had a fair opportunity to learn the truth in this age will have an opportunity to do so after they are restored to life on earth. Apostle Paul explains this when he says, “God wants all people to be saved (from Adam’s death sentence) and (after being restored to life) to learn the truth (Greek: an accurate knowledge of the truth) 1 Timothy 2:4. Paul specifies two independent actions – salvation and learning the truth. Had Paul intended to make truth a prerequisite for this salvation he would have wrote, “God wants all people to learn the truth *to* be saved”. Apostle John says “Christ is the light (of truth) which enlightens (educates) everyone.” John 1:9 The many religions and superstitious beliefs in the world today should be more than sufficient evidence that most people do not come to an accurate knowledge of the truth in this lifetime. It is credulous to think that everyone has received this truth in their life. How can a child who dies as a baby receive the truth, or how can a mentally ill person comprehend the truth during their lifetime? John must have been speaking about a future time when all obstacles to receive and understand the truth are removed.

*Heaven must receive Jesus until the time when everything will be restored as God promised through his holy prophets long ago. Acts 3:21*

The restitution or restoring of the human race back to perfection of life in a perfect environment on earth is the natural outcome of the ransom. All of the redeemed, from the Adamic death sentence, will have an equal opportunity to receive, understand, and act upon the truth during the thousand year reign of Christ, also known as the Millennial Age.<sup>2</sup> Each person's reaction to the truth will then decide their eternal fate. "Every person who does not obey that prophet (Christ who professes the truth) will be destroyed and thus removed from the people." Acts 3:23 People will no longer have any excuse for disobedience since these now have the truth with the additional advantage of experience, unlike Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In addition to learning the truth, there will be equitable punishment meted out for all willful deliberate evil acts committed during a person's lifetime. "All of us must appear in front of Christ's judgment seat. Then all people will receive what they deserve for the good or evil they have done while living in their bodies." 2 Corinthians 5:10 "God will certainly judge everything that is done. This includes every secret thing, whether it is good or bad." Ecclesiastes 12:14 Nobody will escape God's perfect justice.

The following is a brief overview for the restitution period.

Establish God's government in the earth

*The LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be the only Lord and his name the only name. Zechariah 14:9*

*A child will be born for us. A son will be given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders....Isaiah 9:6*

*Let your kingdom come. Let your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Matthew 6:10*

Restrain the influence of God's adversary

*He overpowered the serpent, that ancient snake, named Devil and Satan. The angel chained up the serpent for 1,000 years. Revelation 20:2*

Restore earth to a paradise Edenic condition

*Let the person who has ears listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. I will give the privilege of eating from the tree of life, which stands in the paradise of God, to everyone who wins the victory. Revelation 2:7*

*Heaven must receive Jesus until the time when everything will be restored as God promised through his holy prophets long ago. Acts 3:21*

Restore *all* back from the dead

*Don't be surprised at what I've just said. A time is coming when all the dead will hear his voice, and they will come out of their tombs. Those who have done good will come back to life and live. But those who have done evil will come back to life and will be judged. John 5:28,29*

*... I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. Acts 24:15*

Reward the just

*Those who have done good will come back to life and live... John 5:29*

Punish the unjust for past evil deeds

*The sins of some people are obvious, going ahead of them to judgment. The sins of others follow them there. 1 Timothy 5:24*

*...But those who have done evil will come back to life and will be judged. John 5:29*

*All of us must appear in front of Christ's judgment seat.  
Then all people will receive what they deserve for the good or  
evil they have done while living in their bodies.*

*2 Corinthians 5:10*

*I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their  
wrongdoing. I will put an end to arrogant people and  
humble the pride of tyrants. Isaiah 13:11*

Educate all in an accurate knowledge of the truth  
*Then I will give all people pure lips to worship the LORD  
and to serve him with one purpose. Zephaniah 3:9*

*But the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the  
LORD's glory like the water covers the sea.*

*Habakkuk 2:14*

*This is good and pleases God our Savior. He wants all  
people to be saved and to learn the truth. 1 Timothy 2:3,4*

*That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that  
cometh into the world. John 1:9*

Provide an individual trial for life (as in Eden)  
*When those days come, people will no longer say, 'Fathers  
have eaten sour grapes, and their children's teeth are set on  
edge.' But each person will die for his own sin. Whoever*

*eats sour grapes will have his own teeth set on edge.*

*Jeremiah 31:29,30*

Judge the incorrigible, those selfish and willfully disobedient

*...in the LORD's presence because he is coming. He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and its people with his truth. Psalms 96:13*

*He has set a day when he is going to judge the world with justice, and he will use a man he has appointed to do this. God has given proof to everyone that he will do this by bringing that man back to life." Acts 17:31*

*...He will do this when the Lord Jesus is revealed, [coming] from heaven with his mighty angels in a blazing fire. He will take revenge on those who refuse to acknowledge God and on those who refuse to respond to the Good News about our Lord Jesus. They will pay the penalty by being destroyed forever, by being separated from the Lord's presence and from his glorious power.  
2 Thessalonians 1:7-9*

Why the delay? Since Christ Jesus paid the ransom price almost 2,000 years ago everything continues as before. The time between the

ransom and the restitution is intentional to allow the human population to grow and fill the earth, allow sufficient history with evil for a thorough experience and to develop a class of sympathetic leaders to assist in the restitution.

God told Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the earth. He desires to have the earth filled with a human family, one that has had a thorough personal experience with the consequences of disobeying his laws. The chart in Figure 1 clearly shows the world's population has increased exponentially within the last 500 years. There are more people today on facebook™ than were living on the planet just 200 years ago. The ability for people to share experiences is unprecedented. If the restitution began immediately after the ransom (AD 33), most of the human population would not have had a personal experience with evil.



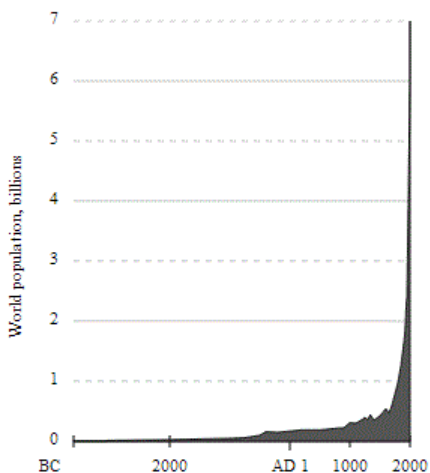


Figure 1. World population data - census.gov

All of God’s intelligent creation must learn once – for all time – the horrific consequences of disobeying his laws. People were hopeful the 20<sup>th</sup> century would usher in a golden age of peace and prosperity. In reality, this century perpetrated unimaginable acts of extreme cruelty as leaders took advantage of the growth in knowledge and technology to satisfy their own selfish desires. Jesus spoke about the latter days of this evil age saying, “There will be a lot of misery at that time, a kind of misery that has not happened from the beginning of the world until now and will certainly never happen again. If God does not reduce the

number of those days, no one will be saved...”  
Matthew 24:21,22 We are now capable of self-extermination as never before in human history. God’s plan permits evil for a time seeing a greater benefit for his intelligent creation, but this permission of evil is limited by God and *will* come to an end making earth’s gruesome history a lesson for eternity.

*Therefore, many are invited, but few of those are chosen to stay. Matthew 22:14*

*...He is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. 1 Timothy 4:10*

A special salvation is presented in the above scriptures. We have shown how God will save (restore to life) all from the Adamic death sentence – God is the savior of all people – but there is a special salvation and a special reward for those who believe today. A wonderful feature of God’s plan is the selection of individuals from among the human family which are being tested, trained and developed for future leadership roles as sympathetic kings and priests to help with the restitution of the human family (1 Peter 1:7, Revelation 1:6; 5:10). Only those called by God today have access to this special privilege and even fewer will be chosen (Matthew 22:14). Since God will not overstep a person’s free will, it has taken

around 2,000 years to find and successfully develop a relatively small group who has voluntarily chosen self-denial to follow Christ's example. They will be kings in the sense of having authority over humankind to lead humanity in the restitution and they will be priest to mediate and assist each individual to a full restoration unless incorrigible.

*A false balance is an abomination (detestable) to the LORD, but a just weight is his delight. Proverbs 11:1*

Before we leave this subject, let us consider the popular Christian doctrines for the Trinity and Incarnation against the Ransom Price. These Christian doctrines cannot balance the scale of justice and are therefore detestable to God. Both of these popular doctrines are also in direct conflict with Biblical statements on the ransom. The Incarnation doctrine states that Almighty God came to earth in the flesh to die for humanity. The Trinity doctrine states that Almighty God is Jesus and they are inseparable. It is impossible to balance the scale of God's justice by placing Almighty God on one side of the scale and finite humanity on the other. This is analogous to placing the universe on one side and planet earth on the other side of the scale. The philosophy for the ransom price when correctly understood is both practical and reasonable. We

can easily see how the man Jesus gave his perfect human life to pay the corresponding price, the ransom, for Adam's forfeited perfect life, precisely balancing the scale of justice.

We can also understand Paul's reasoning when he wrote, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness". This is a direct reference to the substitutionary sacrifice God required for the forgiveness and cancellation of the Adamic death sentence. Paul's statement does not refer to God's inability to forgive without the shedding of blood. God did in fact forgive individuals and nations (recall Jonah and Nineveh) after they repented of their wrongdoing, however their final condition was not resolved since they were still under Adam's death sentence.

A wise businessman seeks to maximize his ROI or return on investment. God is all wise and he is perfectly focused on maximizing the potential for success for his intelligent creation *after* their restoration to life during the Millennial Age while maintaining their freedom to choose righteousness (right principles) over unrighteousness (wrong principles) resulting in evil which will lead to a second death. Experience is the best schoolmaster, so God allowed Adam and Eve to follow their course of disobedience and experience the outcome. As a loving parent, God

closely supervises the experience with evil and does limit this experience when necessary. God delayed the trial-for-life for the rest of the human family to minimize the price required to satisfy justice and save the world. He is developing a special class of individuals from all the people of the world to become benevolent kings (leaders) and sympathetic priests (mediators) to assist with the restoration of the world. Each nation will have a representative from their own people with shared experiences. There will also be equitable punishment (not eternal torture) for doing wrong during a person's lifetime. All obstacles will be removed for receiving and understanding the truth. At the end of the millennial age, everyone will have had their own personal test of obedience assisted by experience and an accurate knowledge of the truth, including Adam and Eve who will also benefit from their own personal experiences. No longer will anyone die for another person's choice. Those dying a second time (after being restored to life) will do so by their own choosing. These will never ever live again.

Does this sound too good to be true?

*But as Scripture says: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9*

1. The Bible refers to the first or Adamic death as a sleep condition. When someone is in a deep sleep they are not aware of anything until they awaken from their sleep. “The living know that they will die, but the dead don’t know anything.” Ecclesiastes 9:5 “Those who are dead do not praise the LORD, nor do those who go into the silence [of the grave].” Psalms 115:17 See also Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 15:6,18; 1 Thessalonians 4:13,15; 2 Peter 3:4

2. Revelation 20:5 is the only scripture used to promote the idea for the dead being restored to life after the thousand-year Millennium. In Revelation 20:5 part of the verse as it reads in the King James Bible is spurious, spurious means that it is not in the oldest manuscripts that we have available. Spurious words are usually added by a copier of the original or of a later copy of the manuscript, and are most probably done with the best of intentions.

The spurious words in verse five are “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.” With these words removed the verse originally read: “This is the first resurrection.”

Note how well verses 4-6 read without the spurious words:

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. ~~But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.~~ This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

It will be seen that the entire three verses are really describing the reward for the faithful of Christ and have no reference to the rest of mankind.

The manuscript evidence that the first sentence of verse five is spurious is found in the most ancient of manuscripts, the Sianitic Mss. dating back to the 300's. This is followed by the Syriac Version (Aramaic) and by two Minuscules # 2053 and #2062 both from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and in both cases it is omitted in the Bible text but not the commentary.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood  
there, wondering, fearing, doubting, dreaming  
dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before.

Edgar Allan Poe





## Too Good to be True?

*Let your Kingdom come (and) Let your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Matthew 6:10*

*...I will give the privilege of eating from the tree of life, which stands in the paradise of God, to everyone who wins the victory. Revelation 2:7*

Adam and Eve were removed from the Garden of Eden – the original paradise of God – after they disobeyed God. They will be restored to life in a restored paradise on earth along with the human family. This usually comes as a surprise to many people because most religions don't teach about being restored to life on earth in the afterlife. The erroneous life-at-death philosophy makes it impossible to consider a future restoration of the human family to an earthly paradise. Would anyone want to return to earth if they are in heaven? The Bible has much to say about this future earthly paradise of God.

According to the Bible, there will be true justice and peace in the paradise of God. "Then he (Christ) will judge disputes between many people

and settle arguments between many nations far and wide. They will hammer their swords into plowblades and their spears into pruning shears. Nations will never fight against each other, and they will never train for war again.” Micah 4:3 People will have security in God’s kingdom. “They will sit under their grapevines and their fig trees, and no one will make them afraid.” Micah 4:4 The curse on the land will be removed. *In the beginning:* “The ground is cursed because of you. Through hard work you will eat [food that comes] from it every day of your life.” Genesis 3:17 *In God’s paradise:* “There will no longer be any curse...” Revelation 22:3 There will be no more sorrow or grief in God’s kingdom. “He will swallow up death forever. The Almighty LORD will wipe away tears from every face...” Isaiah 25:8 “The people ransomed by the LORD will return (return to heaven?). They will come to Zion singing with joy. Everlasting happiness will be on their heads [as a crown]. They will be glad and joyful. They will have no sorrow or grief.” Isaiah 35:10 “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There won’t be any more death. There won’t be any grief, crying, or pain, because the first things have disappeared.” Revelation 21:4 God’s kingdom will have a perfect environment. “The desert and the dry land will be glad, and the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like a lily the land will blossom. It will rejoice and sing with joy...” Isaiah 35:1,2

Many sincere people have not been given the opportunity to hear and accept this good news. God's true character and plan have been concealed and misrepresented as a result of erroneous religious beliefs and traditions. It is God's adversary who is behind these erroneous beliefs.

*As God watches (aware of the situation), we clearly reveal the truth to everyone. This is our [letter of] recommendation. So if the good news that we tell others is covered with a veil, it is hidden from those who are dying (mankind in general). The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. As a result, they don't see the light (truth) of the good news ... 2 Corinthians 4:2-4*

*And no wonder, even Satan disguises himself as an angel (messenger) of light (truth). 2 Corinthians 11:14*

*He (Satan) will use everything that God disapproves of to deceive those who are dying (mankind), those who refused to love the truth that would save them. 2 Thessalonians 2:10*

*(Jesus said) "Why don't you understand the language I use? Is it because you can't understand the words I use?...The devil was a murderer from the beginning. He has never been truthful. He doesn't know what the truth is. Whenever he tells a lie, he's doing what comes naturally to him. He's a liar and the father of lies. So you don't believe me because I tell the truth." John 8:43-45*

God's adversary appears as a messenger of truth (angel of light) and he has blinded many people with his lies. He is described as the god of this world because of his powerful influence, in particular on religion where he can effortlessly promote his lies practically uninhibited by human reason. Also known as Satan, the devil or the serpent, he was permitted to lie to Eve in the Garden of Eden and he is permitted to propagate his lies through various channels to everyone else. The erroneous life-at-death philosophy which Satan suggested to Eve in the Garden of Eden when he said, "you shall not surely die" is the cornerstone for all of his lies.

The god whom Christopher Hitchens observed from his experience with religious institutions is not the almighty God but an imposter who has lead people to exchange reason and rational behavior for superstition and irrational behavior to maintain control. This god is not great. The almighty God will soon be revealed as being truly great when the darkness of this night lifts and his true character and plan begins to shine on all. Soon the construction scaffolding will be removed and the superstructure that was penned by the master architect's hand billions of years ago will be gloriously on display for all to see at the inauguration celebration of God's kingdom.

*The one sitting on the throne (in authority) said, "I am making everything new." He said, "Write this: 'These words are faithful and true.'" Revelation 21:5*

*I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Give our God the greatness he deserves! He is a rock (immovable solid foundation). What he does is perfect. All his ways are fair. He is a faithful God, who does no wrong. He is honorable and reliable. Deuteronomy 32:3,4*

God Really IS GREAT!

Religions Poisoned Everything

## epilogue

We presented a God who is a loving father and benevolent creator using the Judeo-Christian Bible. Deductive reasoning was the method adopted to understand how the presence of evil can coexist with a good God. We reviewed the importance of foundational ideas to the development of a belief system and concluded that the acceptance of false ideas (errors or lies) pose a real threat to a civilized society. Next, we closely examined God's interaction with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden paying particular attention to the role God's four attributes influenced his actions. God's attributes of love, wisdom, power and justice were never diminished or modified by us to support our observations. We concluded with an overview of God's secret plan which includes a restored paradise on earth with a restored human race.

The scope of this book was to present a reasonable faith in God, one that is loving and fair for all. These few pages cannot answer all of your questions. By now you should have more questions than when you started. It is our hope this work has inspired you to continue your search for reasonable answers for a God who really loves us and he really is GREAT!

# The Great Commandments

Love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your strength,  
and with all your mind.

This is the greatest and most important  
commandment.

The second is like it:

Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

Jesus  
Matthew 22:37-39