



Shaqah

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
Colossians 2:8

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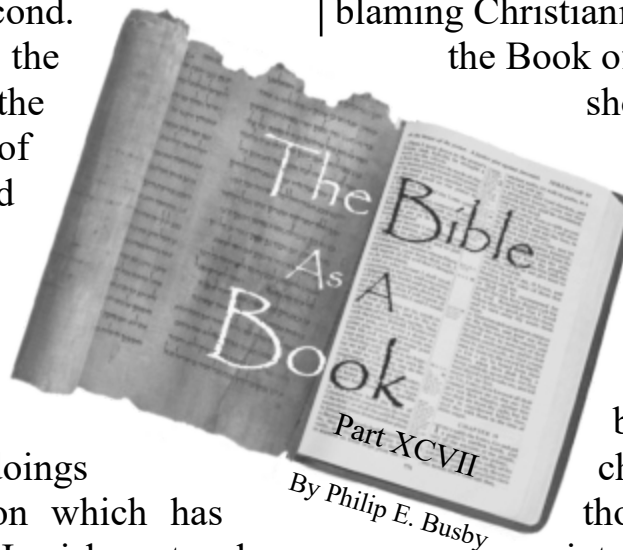
In our last segment we continued our introduction to the Book of I Samuel. As I ended last segment saying, it probably didn't feel like we accomplished a lot in the way of introducing a book, but it did more than some would think in the fact I Samuel is the first book we've reached that is split into a first and a second. Thus, we continued the subject of contrasting the fact we see this kind of split in both the Old and New Testaments but not for the same reasons. This brought us to the truth that the splits we see in the Old Testament are more the doings of the Christian religion which has gone far astray from its Jewish roots where as, the splits we see in the New Testament are truly separate books or writings. From there our last segment talked a lot on the subject of why we need to know the Bible for ourselves, how blessed we are to have it available as we do today, as well as how we should go about learning the Bible in spite of that not being the focus of much of what calls itself Christianity today. What we want to accomplish this time is to look at how a

book of the Hebrew Bible came to be split into two parts as it was compiled by the church to be what Christians now call the Old Testament.

In truth, the story goes further back than Christianity itself and while I've been blaming Christianity for causing the split of the Book of Samuel into two parts, I

should clarify this was not originally done with bad intentions. Of course, I always find myself stopping to pause when I say something like that because the history of the church is littered with both those who had good intentions, in spite of being

very wrong about their conclusions, as well as those with very bad intentions. Thus, when I say it wasn't done by the church with bad intentions I simply mean, they came by it somewhat honestly. That said, I stand by my statement that what calls itself Christianity is further removed from its Jewish roots than it should be. Having a better connection with the Jews would have kept this from happening, at least to the



degree of being the hard and fast tradition it has become. I remember saying one time in talking about the translation of the English Bible that much blood, sweat, and tears were shed in the attempt to find the very oldest manuscripts that could be found in order to do the translation from. Specifically this was done by those trying to free the Bible from the clutches of an already existing church that did not desire the masses to have direct access to the Word of God. The established church was very against the Bible being translated into languages of various people, with the excuse that such people couldn't understand the Bible for themselves. In their minds such people needed the Bible taught to them by (as many might say today), "the professionals."

Now before I go off onto that subject because I'm always tempted to explain what ignorance and arrogance such thinking was and is (yes it still exists today), what I said was that those men who went in search of the original text could have saved themselves a lot of time and effort by knocking on the door of the nearest synagogue or Jewish home in order to ask them for copies of the text or maybe the better way to say is, texts they could make copies of when it came to the Hebrew Bible. I probably made that statement in passing while talking about a much larger subject, but therein is the problem. There is just so much information concerning all these historical events it's difficult to know how to refer back to events in a shorthand kind of way. While it's true the Jews held much more reliable copies of the text which should be understood to be the Bible God gave to them, and as such the Hebrew Bible,

there is always the truth of politics and prejudices among men at every turn! Jews were very persecuted in many places they ended up around the world, and due to that were very distrustful of people they were not familiar with and who were not part of their community of fellow Jews. On top of this, they had very good reason to protect their copies of the Scriptures as there were no shortage of people who hated their "sacred texts" as much or more than the people themselves!

The divide between those who were Jewish and those who were not could in most places be so wide it was only vaguely understood by a lot of people, especially those who had been taught to hate Jews, that their sacred text was/is by and large what Christians call the Old Testament. This should seem ridiculous to us today, but then we need to stop and think about how much the church kept common people from having copies of the Bible for themselves. Along with that is the fact we come to over and over in these studies, which is that Christians did not call the text they had "The Hebrew Bible" or anything of the sort. Christians call it the Old Testament and that seems to be in perfect contrast to the fact the church teaches the primary text for Christians should be what we call the New Testament. All these things played a part in why men attempting to get the oldest and most pure copies of the Hebrew Bible did not go to the Jews. Ignorance, prejudices, and politics all played a part, and there is no shortage of that coming up through history. To really make this point I'll mention the fact that as the King James Version of the Bible was getting on up in years, there became a ferocious debate about how much

there did or did not need to be a new English translation to replace the King James' "archaic" English. This debate along with the accuracy debate is exactly why there are more English translations in existence today than most Christians are even aware of.

However, in the beginning of things the English speaking world, along with much of the rest of the world no matter what language they commonly spoke, were very blessed to have Bible translation at all. While there were many attempts to create an English one only a couple triumphs eventually existed which non-catholic churches relied upon. The greatest of these was the King James Version which many churches were perfectly happy with, but there is never going to be an end to those who believe once enough time has passed language changes and translated words of the Bible should be changed too. While the King James held the high ground against such thoughts for about three centuries, there finally came a time the voices calling for a more modern English translation to be created got loud enough the wheels began to move to make it happen. A new English version was created and immediately there were arguments about whose voices were heard and whose were ignored in the process of creating the new version; not the least of which were American scholars who had input their thoughts about the right translation of words to the European group who ultimately produced the new version. In short, the American scholars' thoughts were noted but did not make their way into the new version. This made the new version

a very European English that many American churches rejected.

This kind of thing goes on and on to explain why there is a specific version known as the American Standard and more familiar to us today, a New American Standard Version. You see how convoluted men make things and how much these petty arguments serve to strengthen the argument of those who believe a translation for the common people to read for themselves should never have been produced in the first place! However, I digress from the main point that started us down this road of conversation. At one point in all this bickering, argument, and the production of newer translations there was an English version of the Bible produced where a Jewish Rabbi was allowed on the committee that was producing it. I will refrain from naming the particular version I'm referring to because it doesn't matter to our main point here. The point is, as far down the history as we were by the time this particular English version was produced, the fact a Jewish Rabbi of all people was allowed to take part in translating the version was more than enough to cause many people to reject the version out of hand! This speaks volumes to why those originally trying to compile the best manuscripts they could to produce translations they could release to the masses didn't really think to ask the Jews. While a few known Jews were involved in at least the education of men who went on to produce translations, that fact was not widely publicized and for good reason considering the hardness of men's hearts.

One other factor in all this I should be more clear on is that Jews were also skeptical of the wisdom behind the Bible being translated into languages other than the original, but not for the same reason as the Christian church establishment (who did not use the Hebrew in any case). Unlike the church, one of the main activities in a synagogue on Sabbath was/is to read from the Hebrew Bible for the sake of reading It. That is to say, the Bible is read so people can hear the words and learn them for themselves not just be taught what they mean and have to settle for that. This is following the more pure tradition God instructed the chosen nation to follow, which was to teach the words He had given them to each generation! (Deut. 11:18-21) Thus, what the Jewish mind was worried about was not the argument of is it good for people to know the Scriptures for themselves or is it bad but the preservation of the purity of the words themselves! The argument many rabbis would make is that people should have learned Hebrew so they could read and understand the original text for themselves instead of reading a translation that could contain many flaws and misunderstandings. In other words, what might get lost in translation? That was the Jewish question and just another very good reason why Jews did not attempt to, and even at times resisted the people wanting to, gather manuscripts for the sake of translation.

Now, that brings us directly to our main point in talking about how a book like Samuel got divided into a first and second book within the Bible Christians are familiar with! I suppose there is no way to really point to the first arguments

concerning translation of the Scriptures into another language beside Hebrew (remember we are not talking about the New Testament at this point), but they would have come about among the Jews before non-Jews had a clue there was reason to discuss such things. Keep in mind, for the longest time the only way copies of the Hebrew Bible were produced was by hand; letter by letter. The argument exists even within this process of how many mistakes were made by those, educated for the purpose, men who did the copying work? Thus, the thought of translating the Hebrew Bible into another language was for a very long time a moot point. If copies were that hard to make and keep mistake free, why even think of translation? Even language drift and the same argument about words changing meaning was enough of a concern for how to keep the Bible understandable in the Hebrew language just as many have endlessly argued about the English translation(s). Just how much this did or did not affect the Hebrew words of the Hebrew Bible is something we have not a shred of evidence to know. About all we do know on that subject is that the writing of the Hebrew language is so old the literal marks made on the page for each letter and arrangement of letters to make each word did and has evolved over the millennia.

None of that is to call into question the validity of the Hebrew Bible and Its words. All copying and language drift aside, the very fact the writings have survived for as long as they have shows us God's hand has been upon it and with the entire process. Only God could bring His chosen nation through all the turmoil and strife they went through due to their

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment we didn't really move ahead in the verses so much as we talked about things related to the chosen nation in general and how God is able to use them. This came up because we were talking about how much Isaac's activity on the promised land was establishing a right to the land the chosen nation could later take advantage of. This took us into discussing how God has and will continue to use the chosen nation as a group and specifically He will continue even when they falter as many believe the nation did at the first appearing of The Messiah. Thus, we talked about how God put the nation together knowing not everyone in the nation was going to follow Him at all times and how that contrasts with other groups of people, including what considers itself the church. We also talked about the dynamics of needing individuals of real faith to truly accomplish His will and that being why God will resurrect those who have had such faith when He returns physically to this earth. From there we turned back to the fact Isaac was going to Beersheba and most likely to the grove his father had planted there as a place to meet with God. That brought us to talking about the thin line there is on so many levels between the worship of God and the worship of false gods. Along with that we discussed how that is due to the fact the human compulsion to worship God is what causes those who do not walk in faith to desire a worship of something, specifically false gods and the following of false religions in general. All that kept us in Genesis chapter 26 verse 24 and, once again, we will remain in that verse

to begin this time.

In discussing this grove in Beersheba last time, I said Lord willing we'd pick back up on the question of how much can we design houses of worship without getting so much of our own thinking in the way that we inhibit God's presence from being in them. This came up because in discussing Abraham's grove and why men of faith chose to create such a place for the worship of God, we got into the fact man has a compulsion to have specific places to worship. In other words, places to meet with God, and this is due to us losing the Garden of Eden when we took of the fruit God told us not to take. This means it's a very natural compulsion to want a place of worship but that said, a lot of the problem we have today is that in a world of sin it's getting harder and harder to find a place that's not filled with the sinful comings and goings of man in general. Of course, to say we need such a place is too strong a wording because that's the point really, we can talk to God and we are in His sight at all times and all places. Thus, it's not a total necessity that we have a specific place to worship in, but what makes it very nice to have is when it is a place that is separated from the rest of the world just for that purpose. The separated part of that statement is the key, and that's why we came to that question of how much can we build such a place before there is too much of our own sinful thoughts involved in it that we inhibit God from being there.

To a lot of people this would be a silly

question but that's because it's a lost question among people who call themselves Christians today. "Christians" don't really think about this subject anymore, and why would they? So much of what calls itself Christianity teaches that it's not even a concern to worry about the kinds of things we have in our personal lives as if those things have nothing to do with our being closer to God. Thus, the thought of how much fleshly thinking might inhibit God from being in a specific place doesn't even find its way into the conversation. In the past I often went to more extreme examples to explain such points. I would talk about obvious sinful things and places, but what calls itself Christianity today has gone so far into the world there almost aren't any of those so "obvious to them" examples left. Case in point, the church used to see alcohol as an obvious destructive force and inhibiting thing to have in our lives if we wanted to draw close to God, but now many churches see nothing wrong with serving alcohol right within the walls of the church building during times of fellowship and the like. If one thinks it's just fine to have such things inside the church itself, people certainly aren't going to see it as something that doesn't belong in their lives outside the building. In that, we see how such issues cut both ways!

The root problem is that these days we don't really consider sin from the standpoint of whether it inhibits God's presence in our lives, so we aren't going to care about what we bring into our places of worship. Because we no longer care what we bring into our places of worship, people within the church are going to care even less about what they have in their personal lives. This is how the downward cycle takes us to the state we are

in now. Because we used to care about sin and the power it had to keep us from God, not just ultimately but in the here and now, we talked about anything that was addictive being inhibiting to our walk with The Lord. However, believing in such a broad standard of belief today is considered too restrictive. In general this is why people don't believe in basic standards anymore, and in turn is why there are so few things to talk about outside blatant promiscuity. Even that is something many who claim to be Christians don't think much about having in their lives. Just as it was in the days of Noah before the flood, people are marrying, divorcing, and remarrying right alongside having physical relationships outside of marriage in general. Maybe such things are examples of things we wouldn't do directly inside our places of worship but it speaks to how far we've fallen in what the church teaches. It's ridiculous to have to go to such an extreme example to talk about the things we wouldn't bring into our houses of worship, and that's the point I was trying to get at last time as we talked about how Abraham planted a grove as a place to worship God.

Later in Biblical history, groves were forbidden by the Law of Moses and often commanded to be cut down by prophets and/or kings at times of reform within the chosen nation, and why? Because as much as a place such as a grove is an example of building something God has a bigger part in bringing to pass than the thoughts and hands of men, pagans took up the practice as a way to worship false gods which were/are mostly about the worship of nature in the first place. (I Cor. 3:6) This is the kind of thing we should stop to consider as we read through the Word of God! A man of faith planted a grove because in growing trees there is less

of man's hand in the making of the place and more of God's power as He created all natural things. Then people who wish to reject God end up worshiping the powers God created instead of God, and see groves as a perfect place to do such a thing in because it was the "power of nature" that creates such a place after the initial planting of the trees. (Rom. 1:25) In time the practice of worshiping the creation rather than the Creator by planting groves becomes more widely known than the fact people of true faith ever did it. Thus, it became a forbidden activity for people of true faith as a way to, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." II Corinthians 6:17-18

All that appears to only relate to how things people use to worship God can get used by those of false religions in time, but whether we are talking about that subject or the direct subject of how to keep our personal lives clean before The Lord, it's all very much the same thing. When it comes to language, most of us are aware humans come to see certain words as changing meaning over time. So too we see certain ways of going about things as belonging to different cultures and/or relating to a more specific activity. I remember my wife and I seeing a new church building built on what was at the time the outskirts of our city and commenting on how the design made us think of a prison, not so much a church. Is this wrong? Not necessarily but it speaks to the subject at hand. We don't want to design our places of worship to put people in the

mind of being at places associated with worldly activities. While this might be next to impossible on some levels, the point is made as to why Abraham and others of true faith in God would originally think to make a place out of totally natural things. Our goal and our thoughts should be on the fact the place is meant to be a place that invites God's presence, not one that inhibits it like the rest of the world does. This inhibiting effect includes both the literal things we have in the building as well as in the minds of those who come to the building due to what thoughts it may tend to bring up. Again, none of this is easy in a world so filled with sin, but in trying this should bring us to think about how we design the building, what we put in it, as well as what we wear when we go to it and how we act. If we don't care to really meet with the direct presence of God then none of these things matter, but if that's our goal then they matter a great deal!

The sad thing is that these understandings about why and how we go to church are not just lost, they are often directly rejected by people who are worried we aren't being inviting enough to people who don't normally go to church. If our building doesn't feel comfortable to people who think in the flesh we can't win the world for Jesus! This has been the battle cry of those "Christian leaders" who care more about numbers than they do faith for a very long time now. Again, these people don't want what a true believer wants. Thus, when we talk about how to invite the presence of God it has nothing to do with kick people out who walk into our churches for the first time without wearing the right things, etc. The focus is on teaching those who attend

regularly the ways we should act and dress to respect and invite the presence of God. If we don't do this there will be nothing real for those people who walk in for the first time to discover and in doing so consider it worth coming back! Only The Holy Ghost can bring people to Christ, so it's a waste to worry about those who aren't looking for something real. In thinking we should, we end up using the same deviant tactics the world would use to get people to buy a product whether there is any value in the product or not. While I'll admit I've known of churches so legalistic they thought kicking people out before they had a chance to learn was the right thing to do, that's not an excuse to look and act so much like the world our churches are just another building taking up space along the street.

Simply put, when our thoughts are about making everyone comfortable and keeping as many people in the pews as possible we simply are not serving the purpose the church should be serving. If we as believers don't know how to invite the direct presence of God into our lives, homes, and churches there is no reason to wonder why we don't feel God and have a connection to God in the way people like Abraham and Isaac had. We as true believers should be seeking to create an environment that is obvious to the world we have something the world hasn't got! It's what makes it such a hard subject to teach on these days because people have so long forgotten what it feels like to experience the real presence of God that they don't even understand what they're missing. The fact we've fallen this far on things so very important to our faith is also how we know the argument every believer just has to go to church somewhere can't possibly be right thinking. As I've said

before, whether we can find a group of believers to be with or not is all dependent on whether or not we are in close enough proximity to any number of others who hold like precious faith that we can be with them as a group. As we get more and more like the days Noah found himself in, this is harder and harder to obtain in spite of all the mega size groups there are out there that call themselves churches. The only comforting thought on this subject, other than the fact this world is not our eternal home, is that we are in good company living like this.

I know, that last statement seems a bit like an oxymoron but to clarify, the company we're in is not so much about space as much as it is time, and that truth relates directly back to what we were talking about in the last segment concerning the First Resurrection. You see, as Abraham walked the land of Canaan he did so at a time humanity in general was not so far removed from The One True God that people didn't know Who the God Abraham served was. This in spite of most of them not choosing to serve Him. However, Abraham being where he was did make him a true stranger in a strange land in more ways than just the fact the family he was born into didn't live there. This made him a man without a "church," but it never stopped him from seeking the presence of God both in his personal every day as well as in those special times he stepped aside from everyday life to meet with God more directly. This is why he planted a grove in Beersheba, and I keep repeating this is why his son Isaac was compelled to go to the place where his father had planted that grove. There Isaac hoped to find a place to hear God's voice, and that's really saying something when one stops to consider just how many times both Abraham and Isaac

What About God's Chosen People?

Part LXXI

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

As we continue our look at the history that shows us how the Roman Empire came to be looked at as a Christian empire, we did another sidestep last segment to talk about the issue of Christians and how much Rome's roads help the spread of the Gospel. That took us into a look at how much it's true man not only keeps pushing for what he's wanted since the Tower of Babel but how that push has caused God to act for the good of individuals who would seek faith. In that discussion we also talked about the overall way man keeps going down the road which leads away from God; taking us closer and closer to a true days of Noah experience. This led us to talk about the fact God will one day put an end to this creation not just for man's sake but for all He has created. This took us away from the history study of the Roman Empire directly but actual fits quite well with where that history study has led us. We have been discussing how much the empire had decentralized its power by having four rulers (Tetrarchy) instead of just one emperor, and the amazing fact that the city of Rome was no longer even one of the four seats of power in the empire by this point. While this showed the inescapable truth that decentralization of power is a better way to run things, it also started us down the cultural road of the empire looking for a centralizing idea, an identity if you will, that has the ability to bind the empire together in a way the ruling

government and city of Rome no longer did!

Of course, the inevitable conclusion men come to when they start putting thought into how to do this has always been to use religion to accomplish what they want. As we have talked about over and over in this study and others, God never intended man to be one big mass of drone-like individuals who all thought and did the same things. At the same time, God never wanted us to fight with each other and develop foolish thoughts about some people being better than others. This truth was easily accomplished by the fact men originally all spoke a language all other humans could understand. This wasn't just because language drift hadn't had time to do its work prior to the Tower of Babel but because there was literally something in the minds of humans we just no longer have which made language universal no matter where people went and how different (thus, needing different words to describe things) their experiences were. This wonderful gift of God gave us the ability to all go out as groups or just individuals across creation and live our lives without fear of losing our connection to one another. The fact man chose to use this advantage to make humans one big clump of drone-like individuals through the vehicle of religion is why God had to take the advantage away. I talk about this a lot because it's not the fairly inconsequential and passing subject within the story line the Bible tells us no matter how many people think that and/or don't understand its great importance. This was a major and drastic decision God made to



take away something so valuable to us as humanity just to protect the individual, and that's huge!

The fact this was going to cause all kinds of pain, which all sin does, was something God didn't just choose to ignore, but it goes to show how important the individual was/is to God. It also shows itself to be a decision only God could have made; not just because only He could remove the gift from the minds of men, but because only God could possibly calculate and weigh the pros and cons of taking this action. The other point we often cover when talking about this subject is how man didn't give up what he started at the Tower, which is that religion idea also so important to our understanding. Whether the intent was to unify a small group (like creating a culture) or make an attempt to bring the entire world back under one umbrella of thought, men took the idea with them and formed innumerable religions across the globe. All these religions have some aspect that is unique to them, but none are so different and unique as to be considered revolutionary when compared to another. All man's religions follow a blue print that was obviously put down at the Tower of Babel and then simply embellished with specifics that make them appear to be "different" one from another. Such differences were and are taken to heart so greatly by the people who hold these various religions they become the definition of the individuals who follow them. This is why religion and what we know as culture go so hand in hand with each other. This fact is why the Romans, more so than any of the empires before them, went back and forth struggling with the choice between forcing a unified religion or granting freedom of religion.

It was a bit easier in the early days of these empires to say here's our religion and it is great! If anyone is part of our empire they will follow our religion and it shall make you truly a part of the grand empire we are building. As we have covered many times, the Greeks did this best by presenting a version of religion that had mass appeal like none other, but by the time the Romans took charge of things the Greek ideas were a, been there done that kind of thing. The Romans could not compete with the Greek ideas when it came to religion, and it's why the Romans had already bent a lot of their own religious ideas or outright overlaid Greek ideas to have the religion we know as Roman. This is not to say the Romans didn't have a religion of their own before but it speaks volumes to how powerful the Greek religious thought was. In any case, this left what the Romans offered as nothing unique to differentiate themselves and justify their coming to power. Like many before them it wasn't so potent to claim their gods had given them the victories needed to be the new world empire. In so many ways it spoke to the fact the Romans had come to power through sheer brute force. This in and of itself caused Rome to be a little unstable in the religious thought department right from the start. They couldn't deny what the Greeks had accomplished on religious thought, and that's what made Rome's religious thought a very thinly veiled version of the Greeks. However, it also did something else.

The Romans being in this position cracked open the view of what we were just talking about concerning how little difference there really is at the foundational level of all religions! How much this was seen or not seen by very many people through the centuries is far from clear, but wars were and

are very often started over differences of opinions the roots of which are planted solidly in religious thought. Now comes the great and mighty Roman Empire not so much with its own religious uniqueness, and this led to an obvious thought. If the great Romans could incorporate most all the good things from Greek theology into their own cultural identity, maybe all other religious thought could do that same thing! All this, made the time of the Roman Empire quite different than other empires whose entire justification for being great is what they culturally brought to the table. It also seriously begged the question, did Rome need to use force to make people adopt their religion or like the Greeks would it have the ability to be so appealing that others would take it up on their own volition? The second thought was the question, was there enough difference between what religion was to all the various people of the world to even worry about who believed in what specific version of religion? Thus, did the Romans need to bother struggling over it at all? This second question had never been asked by a world power before but it set the tone for what we call "Western Civilization." This idea that who believes what might not be as important to governing power as was once thought would define a large part of what Western Civilization was and became up to this very day. How amazing a thought is that!

Understand I'm not saying the issue went away all together, it's just that we now struggle less over whose religion should be considered supreme than we do over how much religion matters to what we call secular politics. Either way, the thought is important at this point in the study for two main reasons. First, the Romans lack of

centralization in governing the empire at this point left them asking and needing to deal with the question of what to use for a cultural cohesion within the empire. Second, the ideas of Christianity were spreading fast and effecting all the different religions and thus, cultures within the empire. As I have started out each segment of this study for a long time now, our main goal at this point is to understand how the last great world empire (Rome) became known as a Christian empire. Here we are at the doorstep of answering that question. We know Christianity, at least as a religion, would eventually be deemed the right choice for what religion should reign supreme in the Roman Empire, but the why this happened isn't just about the fact Christianity was chosen from among all the religions that could have been. If you strip away the fact Christianity was eventually used as what we might today call the "state religion," as well as the idea Rome was generally searching for a unifying cultural idea, we are left with the question of why, after all the time the Roman Empire had existed, not having a grand state religion, would there ever be one so specific as Christianity became? The answer many might give to this is the idea a specific man who became emperor wanted it but that doesn't really explain why it stuck. The idea of pushing some sort of religious idea on the people of Rome had been tried a few times by singular emperors but it never continued to hold any sway after their death. So maybe a clearer way to see the question at hand is to ask, why did the state religion idea have such staying power this time, even with the empire being just ripe for falling into many smaller pieces?

The answer actually has everything to

do with Christianity itself. Not the religion but the pure version that existed before the religion! Christian ideas were growing far and wide. It was spreading through the populations of not just the empire but the world. This was happening in spite of the fact Christianity, in its pure form, comes with no forcefulness toward other religions. That is to say, there is nothing within true Christian doctrine that tells us to take up arms or attempt to make people follow the teachings. Christianity simply existed and by being what so many people were coming to believe, other religious thought was becoming, shall we say, obsolete. Now, that's what Christianity was meant to do! It's a core ideal that in many ways has been lost due to the way Christianity was eventually shaped into a religion, and an aggressive one at that. Protestants can certainly argue they recognize aggression should never have taken place but the truth is, the battle rages on both inside individual churches as well as between what we know as denominations or sects of churches as to just how aggressive we should be as Christians. Of course, many would say, we're never talking about the kind of force used by the Catholics during things such as the Catholic Inquisition, but in saying that one needs to be aware those historical events didn't come about overnight. No, they came about for the same reason we are talking about this subject at all in relation to the Roman Empire. Asking how much aggression should we use leads to some aggression, and once that's agreed upon we can argue over having even more and why? Because for all its popularity no amount of aggression works to make the religion of Christianity the universal religion human thinking leads people to seek. Thus, the question is always on the table as to how far we should go. The more power the church

obtains as an organization the more force can be used and so on we go. This is how the Catholics made it to things such as the killing of those who would not disavow beliefs the "church" did not approve of.

Putting that aside for the moment, the point here is that pure Christian belief spreads and does what it was intended to do by winning people over to it. Remember the overly redundant conversations we've had about the Greek religious thought being so popular not so much because it was forced on people but because it just appears to represent the pinnacle of religious thought? It was clean and streamlined in its system compared to more "primitive" religions, and it was supported by a language that was one of the very last languages to widely exist among men which held superpowers when it came to communicating human thought; powers our languages today can only pay homage to in some small ways. In spite of that being so obviously true at the start of the Christian message going out to the world, the Christian message was becoming popular in ways only Greek religious thought could hope to challenge. However, this has nothing to do with how streamlined and organized Christianity was/is. Pure Christianity is simply the truth, and the truth sets people free. (John 8:32) Pure truth doesn't have to be aggressive toward other religions because it satisfies the soul in ways secular religions can't hope to compete with. This is what God knew would be true and part of why The Messiah was sent to the earth when He was! The fact God loved the world so much He would come down in the form of a man and offer Himself to us as the solution to all the problems we could never figure out and many more we didn't even know existed, resonated with where the minds of humanity

had come to by that point in our history.

The fact God in human form would be so humble as to allow the world to reject Him even to the point of putting Him to death was an utter astonishment in ways our modern religious thoughts can't begin to grasp, but it was crystal clear to the religious minds of men in those days. The resurrection of Christ is certainly of great importance, but within our doctrine today the astonishment of how Christ came to be killed in the first place is all but lost. That is to point out, it's not just about the death and the resurrection; it's about how did God in human form come to have this happen at all? I realize part of what makes this a hard subject to really get into with the emphasis it should have is that Christian teaching today passes off the idea as simple; it's what Christ came to do, right? No, not right. I just said it above, Jesus came to be the solution to problems we couldn't solve. However, He also came humbly offering Himself to be that, leaving it up to us to choose if we'd accept Him or not. Yes, we can argue till we're blue in the face about how God knew we wouldn't accept His help and instead kill The Messiah, but that's just a technicality. The point is, Jesus didn't have to die to be something amazing in this world or to fulfill a necessary item on God's to do list. Maybe that sounds a bit sarcastic but there is no easy way to talk about how wrong Christian doctrine is to teach people The Messiah came to die and that's what He did!

This subject is so big I don't even know how to handle it here without losing our main point, but that's the problem with doctrine being just a few degrees off the dial from correct. If something's one hundred and eighty degrees off we say you're dead wrong and here's what's right. That's a lot easier than

turning the dial back just a few degrees! We simply cannot know what it would have meant to this world should the chosen nation have accepted Jesus in mass; religious leaders and all. We can speculate, and I certainly have at times, that their following of The Messiah would eventually have been seen as a threat by the Romans and the Romans would have arrested Jesus and killed Him all on their own. This is a likely scenario but stop and ask, what if they too had looked at what the chosen nation was becoming due to The Messiah's leadership and said, we want that for the empire? You see the right thought is not how unlikely it was that things might have come out differently than they did, the right thought is just understanding Jesus came to give us the opportunity for it to happen. This is why it's not totally wrong to say, Jesus came to die. The most likely outcome of Jesus coming and offering Himself in the humble unforced way He did was that someone would want Him dead and God accepted that fact. However, that doesn't mean death and resurrection was all Jesus was sent to accomplish or that it had to be that way.

In other words, we only say Jesus' great work was His death and resurrection because that's how it came out but as I emphasize all the time, God already had the power to save us. The Messiah coming and offering Himself and the result of that being someone putting Him to death simply gave God the opportunity to demonstrate His power in a very tangible, physical, real time way! The higher understanding is that God coming as He did in the form of a man was a win win situation for God. If all humanity accepted Him, God could physically be here right now leading us in the paths of righteousness. If humanity put Him to death, God would get that opportunity to show what salvation from

a sin-filled world looks like! Satan was beaten from the start and it mattered not if he accepted that fact or not. Now, to the point at hand. These facts and understanding them brings clarity to why Satan had tried to prepare for God's actions by putting elements of death and resurrection within the false religions of the world! A whole lot of people calling themselves Christian today have no clue this is true, but the people of the time period in which Jesus appeared knew it very well, and the fact they knew it so well completely backfired on Satan in ways he could not have imagined!

Instead of these ideas causing people to believe what Christians taught was just another religion (which was Satan's great hope on the matter) they caused people to be all the more prepared for hearing the truth that the man Jesus had in fact accomplished it in real time! You can't use enough exclamation marks for this kind of good stuff! You see there are many religions which hold the idea some god, if not the god, of the religion died at some point and for various reasons came back to life. Satan knew/knows the dynamics of the way God is able to save us better than any human can really grasp. Thus, steering people to worship the creation rather than The Creator was a perfect place to start for Satan because he then could base this death and resurrection idea on the exact natural phenomena Job speaks of when considering life in general as he suffered the strife Satan was allowed to put on him. Job says, "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth

boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Job 14:7-10

These are the words of a man so close to God almost nothing, even death itself, could shake his faith, and yet he holds that faith knowing man is not like the plants that return. However, humans who do not have Job's kind of faith and understanding could easily pickup on the hope of a tree and apply it to humans! This is what Satan hoped to take advantage of, and that's why the hope of some new life after death is built into false religions the world over. With most humans worshipping creation as the power that controls their lives these basic facts about how God created our natural world, our physical world, to work is easily attributed to, "the power of their gods!" Things live and when they die they go back into the system as nutrients for new things to feed on and live. In both the fact plants put off seeds that grow new versions of themselves as well as the simple fact dead things become food for current living things there is the thought that living is nothing more than a cycle. In other words, no end just new beginnings! While this thought is incorporated in some way into every religion across the world as applying to humans, how obvious it is varies wildly. The most obvious ones are the religions that believe in what is commonly call reincarnation. The idea is that people die and that's just an inescapable fact of living. However, the belief tells us everyone simply comes back.

In some belief systems a person always comes back as a person, meaning they remain human. In other systems a person can come back as most anything living. The most

popular thought is that humans come back as animals which would mean any animal could actually be the new physical form of some human who died prior to that animal's birth. While thinking about that consider what it means to point out few religions around the world are this blatant in the way they take up the cycle of life idea. In most religions it's not so straight forward as dying and returning to this earth to physically live yet another life cycle. However, what is popular is that the gods have this kind of power. It's a very popular variation of the reincarnation idea that at least some god the culture believes in was cut down or dies in some way and in doing so somehow enters a new life or resurrects and more often than not, with more power than before. This is where the tree idea incorporated into Christmas originally comes from. The idea was/is within cultures from both northern and southern parts of the world, but traditionally the idea of an evergreen tree stuck for Christmas because Christmas was proclaimed by the church whose seat of power was in the North; thus more effected by the pagan traditions that exist(ed) in the North. Southern traditional stories use a palm tree but northern people did not have palm trees. Due to the cold climate most other kinds of trees northern people have also go dormant in the fall, meaning the signs of life within those trees is not so obvious during the time the pagans celebrated the winter solstice which is the time of year the church chose to place the celebration of Christ's birth.

Thus, pagans of the harsh North used evergreen trees for the story because the story is intended to give hope of life continuing at a time in the year when it seemed to the pagan mind nothing but death and decay existed. This is hard for our modern thinking

to wrap our heads around, but we as humans all still feel this inside to some degree. The daylight hours get shorter. Plants go dormant or simply die from the cold and it can all be crazy depressing, especially for people who think only fleshly thoughts! This fact is why some cultures actually believed some kind of celebration at the winter solstice was/is necessary as a way to convince "the gods" a return to life was needed and thus bring on the days getting longer and the weather getting warmer to the point "life returned." In any case, the concept was/is all the same. We have to survive the winter to get back to spring and summer once again. Celebrating something at the winter solstice has always been a way for humans to say, we have reached the shortest day(s) and things are now on the upswing! This is what made it a popular time for pagan religions to talk about death turning to new life for their god(s). They would tell their children and often encourage themselves with stories of life being able to be restored because the gods had gain the power to do so by suffering the process themselves. In so many ways this is where Christians get the wrong thought God so loved the world He sent His son to die because that was the only way God could obtain the power to save us from death! That last sentence is so important I feel like repeating it until I run out of space. It's key we understand our wrong thinking as Christians does not come from a misunderstanding of what God has said. No, our wrong thinking comes from thinking fleshly thoughts instead of listening to what God actually has said! This means we can, and in so many ways very much do, hold wrong thoughts because it's what false religion has taught for millennia. However, we also can come up with these very same thoughts all on our own because our flesh can

think the same thoughts that developed false religion in the first place!

Getting back to the tree story, the simple version of the stories involving the tree focuses on the return of life by telling tales of a god who was cut down but grew again or returned as a new tree. Sure there are details of such stories specific to certain cultures/religions but those details don't matter. Thus, I'm being very simplistic with all this and the basic story in the North that holds sway at Christmas was the tradition of the Yule. One of the main ideas was that you go out and get a very large log, preferably large enough to feed a fire throughout the evening (and even the night if possible) pretty much all on its own. This "Yule log" represented, or as is the case in a lot of idol worship, was a god who had died; giving its body to keep the family warm and able to survive the harsh cold. The children would eventually go to sleep as the Yule log burned, and while the children slept the parents would bring into the house a freshly cut evergreen tree. They would prop it up so it was as if it was growing right there in the house where the people lived. They would also hide food items (very often stored specifically for the purpose of this celebration) within the tree's branches. This was typically those things that could be stored and used during the winter; dried fruits, nuts, etc., but any item they could get their hands on, especially something that seemed exotic or special in some way, was used. By the time the children woke up in the morning the Yule log had been burned to nothing, meaning it was gone, but what had taken its place was a fresh green tree bearing gifts of life the children could find and more often than not eat!

In the ancient world where the climate was very cold this might of marked the one day out of the winter people would go to bed at night having full stomachs; for only on this one day of celebration did they get to consume enough of the stored for winter food supplies that such a thing could happen. It was the one day of the winter where scarcity was replaced with abundance and they would give thanks to their pagan god(s) for the abundance. If you read stories of families of the not so distant past or know family traditions even within your own family, there is a high likelihood you have heard about saving up food and various other items that could be used for a celebration specifically during this mid winter observance; be it called Christmas or something else entirely. In the United States it is no secret that families tend to over spend during this time on gifts, food, decorations, etc., to the point they have large bills that will have to be paid over time and with interest. Most of these families will tell you things like, "It's all totally worth it to make the holidays special!" In this we see how much the basic thoughts ancient people had hasn't faded one bit even in parts of the world where many people enjoy an abundance every day of the year that ancient people could only have dreamed of having!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***



clearly had God speak to them as they went through their lives. If men who had such a thing in their lives still found it important to seek out special places and times to be with God, how much more important should it be for each of us?

Now before we move on I just want to take a moment and point out not everyone has the opportunity to even seek out such a specific place. We already covered the must go to church somewhere thought but aside from that, most of us don't have the means to do something like Abraham did at Beersheba, and I say that in reference simply to the idea there Abraham built a place. Doing such a thing is far outside the realm of possible for most individuals, and I understand how much this drives the compulsion and thought an individual must go to church somewhere. All of what we have discussed being true, the overriding factor is that the place has to be a true place of worship or going there is just a ritual, and rituals can be far more damaging to our faith than just not being able to have or go to a special place. Like Noah who was going it on his own and busy building the ark God instructed him to build in order to survive the coming flood, many of us will have to live with what we can in the here and now but here's the key, God knows how true this is for each individual! When Samuel was told to go and anoint a new king, God reminded him that it's man who looks on the outward appearance but God sees the heart. (I Sam. 16:7) This is true for more than just picking a king; this is true of every individual, and it also speaks to God's ability to know when we don't have a special place to go to or be in. It's why Jesus prayed God The Father send The Holy Ghost to us. (John 14:15-17)

The Holy Ghost can truly be in the one place we can prepare to meet with God even when there is no other, and that's in our hearts. In this day, more than ever before, it's important we each allow The Lord to prepare our hearts to be a sanctuary for His presence. This is true if for no other reason than it might be the only sanctuary we have. As the world waxes worse and worse it often will be the only place of refuge from the world that most of us have left.

Getting more directly back to our verses in Genesis, we see what a blessing it was that Abraham had the ability to craft this space in Beersheba in that it made a place Isaac knew he could go back to. I'll lay down the argument of whether that space was or was not the reason Isaac went to Beersheba but in any case, verse 24 makes it clear going there did have great value! Going back to our segment before last, we are told God appeared to Isaac the same night he arrived. It is often the case that to hear God's voice the clearest we must seek to hear, and there is more than one example throughout the Word of God that even great men of faith put forth great effort to seek God before they heard His voice, much less had God appear to them directly. I can't emphasize enough how much what happened to Isaac speaks to what a giant in faith Isaac was! Isaac had done and continually did what we talked about above; he prepared his heart to be a sanctuary for God to reside in. He had not allowed what he went through and suffered at the hands of men to turn his heart from God no matter if that turning came from hardening his heart toward God or simply being distracted from hearing God through all the noise this world threw at him. What we're seeing here is not an example of how some people didn't have to seek God in order

to hear His voice, it's an example of a man who walked through life seeking God with his whole heart at all times. This is the kind of faith that eventually brought a man like Enoch to walk with God so closely in this world he walked right out of this world. (Gen. 5:21-24, Heb. 11:5-6) It's the kind of faith that brought Elijah to be so heavenly minded he was of no earthly good, causing God to hand his ministry off to Elisha before taking Elijah from this world in a chariot of fire! (II Kin. 2:1-15) Again and again I say it, faith is the only reasonable explanation for God's salvation to be granted to us!

God is Holy, and while the proper understanding of the word holy is, dedicated or set apart for the will/work of God, when it comes to God Himself saying He is Holy it is a way of explaining that God is dedicated to the work He began when He created us and all we know! This has everything to do with what we spent most of this segment talking about. We as humans can stray from the truth of faith being an ever growing relationship we strive and seek to have with God but that has never caused God to waver from the truth, that's what He created us to be. We can decide the more important thing or even the equal to faith thing is making people comfortable so they'll stay in the church but God has shown all through His Word, that's not how He operates. Every human life is important to God but for salvation to come to your life, God and a relationship with Him (the purpose for which He created us) has to be important to us! God never stops loving us and that's the real pain those who do not take up faith in Him cause God, but God remains steadfast in His choice to reach out to us in His grace and wait for us to take hold of the faith He's offering. It's

exactly the same dynamic as what we talked about above concerning the way we operate the church. True believers aren't called to do the thing that is most popular, most comfortable, the thing that draws the largest crowd. True believers are called to be the example of what a true believer should be, and any churches we build should be a reflection of that deep desire. When that's our goal those whom The Holy Ghost is working with will have a place, a people, maybe even just a person, to go to and find what The Holy Ghost is prodding them to find.

In our world of such deep sinfulness we have left those people out in the cold, and why? Because they are the minority more and more as each year passes. They are the few who do not want what Cain wanted, which was to go out from the presence of God. (Gen. 4:9-16) They are those who want to board that ark of safety God has asked those who already listen to Him to build. With our day being more and more like that of the days of Noah such people won't fill a mega church or even a small church. In many places such people might not fill a humble living room where those of like precious faith meet, but it's for those few God allows this world to continue. You see, we should be who we need to be so we are there for God to bring such people to. Maybe like Noah there aren't any left, but that was still not the point of Noah pounding away for 120 years to do what God told Him to do, and it's not the point now! The point is that God will not be moved from His intent for this creation; the creation of mankind as a whole, and why? Because when the end comes and God in His Righteousness must terminate all that we know, those who have dedicated

themselves to walking in faith aren't left with nothing! God didn't choose a path for mankind and hope man would want to follow it because it's what God wanted. God laid out a path for mankind before He ever formed Adam's physical body from the dirt of this earth and breathed the breath of life into him. (Gen. 2:4-7) God designed a life and a way, an existence for mankind, and then created mankind to live that existence. Living in that existence is the only way to find fulfillment and meaningful and lasting purpose!

Now let me reemphasize the most important thing I've said in this issue. No amount of humans choosing the pleasures of sin for a season over faith in God can change the fact real purpose for your existence can only be found through faith, and maybe more consequential to our understanding is the fact many have already lived and died before you and chosen faith over sin. (Heb. 11:24-40) Not only was it true from the start that God was not willing to waver from what He began at creation, and through creation but we are far outnumbered by those who have already went on before us! Those thousands upon thousands who came in generations before us who chose faith over sin for a season are counting on the promises of God. God isn't going to turn from those who loved Him, followed Him with a whole heart, in order to accept those who have turned from Him and refused His purpose for their existence. Let God be true and every man a liar! (Rom. 3:3-4) It would literally be the most dishonest act in all of eternity for God to turn back now, and rest assured He never will! Those who died walking in true faith will receive the promise of a new life where the existence God created man to live is the only point of living. It's always been true, and when it comes to that non-temporal place

Jesus went to prepare for us, only those who desire to live it will be allowed through the gates. To do anything else would be to corrupt that place with the same bad choices and desires that has corrupted this place!

In Isaac we are seeing a man so desirous for the presence of God that his very act of going to Beersheba with a heart ready to stand in that kind of presence brought God to him the very first night he was there! That's the kind of relationship God wants with each and every one of us. The amazing thing and the grace of God is that He has never said we have to achieve that level of faith to be granted the gift of salvation. That said, it does have to be the desire of our heart and the path we not only set our foot on but have vigilantly walked, being sure that if we begin to drift to the right or the left we do what it takes to bring our feet back on the narrow way! Yes, God's grace is sufficient for you but it's not all accepting. (II Cor. 12:7-10) The ability to walk the path that leads to eternal life is something you're capable of but you have to want to walk it. No formulation is going to get you there. No amount of sitting in a church pew is going to get you there and it simply does not matter how far down what calls itself the church goes, following them down won't get you there. Just because people claim to be what being a Christian is doesn't make them Christ like. God is gathering to Himself a church without spot and without wrinkle, one individual at a time through time. (Eph. 5:20-33) As we see it from our vantage point of time this is a future event yet to happen, but God works outside of time. Thus, as hard as it may be to wrap your head around it, understand the gathering has already begun and has been going on since the day Cain killed Abel! (Gen. 4:1-8)

This is exactly why when those of the early church were concerned that people within the group were dying and yet Jesus had not returned, Paul tells them not to worry for those living, breathing, and walking this earth right up to the time Jesus splits the eastern sky will in no way prevent the dead. In fact, they are already ahead of us. They breathed their last breath and the next thing they knew/know is being with The Lord as He returns to this earth! "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." I Thessalonians 4:16-18 Again, this is the Holiness of God! He will not turn back from it because in ways those of us living in this fishbowl of time can't really grasp, the events are already happening. The wheels are in motion, the ship has sailed, the fuse has been lit. Pick your English or non English idiom, but I hope you get the point. The dynamics of faith, sin, and salvation were written in stone before man was ever created. No amount of kicking and screaming and crying about God being unfair or not saving everyone who claimed to serve Him being unjust will change the Holiness of God!

This truth speaks again to the point that the first thing God said to Isaac that night was that He was the God of Isaac's father Abraham. In this statement there are many things, and we have talked about a couple, but another point in God beginning

with these words is the simple fact He was pointing out to Isaac something I'll paraphrase like crazy to explain here. God was saying to Isaac, your father is already dead and gone from the earth but I'm still His God! Your father Abraham still walks with me even now. I am His God and he is my beloved. God was confirming to Isaac and all of us that Isaac's father fought the fight, finished the course, and kept the faith. (II Tim. 4:1-8) Now it was Isaac's turn to do the same. God promised Isaac He would always be with Isaac and just as important, the promises God had made to Isaac's father passed on to Isaac. God would bless Isaac with what he needed to accomplish the task God had laid out for him. God would multiply Isaac's seed, and why? "... for my servant Abraham's sake." Genesis 26:24 That means more than the casual reader of the Bible will ever understand! It's what I've been driving at for almost three whole segments at this point! God is Holy, which means He is unmovable and unshakable in His purpose. What God set out to create He created. Men like Abraham took hold of that truth and all that it means, and in so doing walked his way right out of this world to the fullness of what God has promised. Because God is Holy, dedicated to His purpose and plan for this creation, the fruit of His labor was already more than a blossom on the branch. Men like Enoch, Job, Abraham, and countless others had made it so. God was and is going to continue in that purpose for their sake. Whether you and I will be a part of that truth or not is totally up to us!

Until next time, Shalom!

unwillingness on many occasions to hear and follow God's direction (just as we all fail to do), yet the nation still exists today. The fact this would be impossible for man to accomplish on his own is one of the biggest arguments people try to use who believe or want to teach the Jews today aren't the chosen nation of people God formed beginning with Abraham and brought out of Egypt under Moses' leadership. However, the continuous history of the nation is just too obvious for such people to be right. The point here is, if God kept His chosen nation in existence all this time it's absurd to believe God has not maintained the purity of the words He gave them. It's literally one of the major reasons God ever created the nation in the first place! (Rom. 3:1-2) Thus, there is no real point in arguing over the nation's success in keeping copies of God's Word as pure as they possibly can. In fact, discovery's such as the Dead Sea Scrolls have confirmed the amazing job the nation has done over the last couple millennia, and with that kind of evidence the Hebrew Bible is the most confirmed writing from the distant past that exists in all of human history!

Getting back more directly to the point at hand, Jews have been resistant to take the words outside the Hebrew language and for very good reasons. That said, it did eventually happen in a major way. You see, there came that time I so often point to in the chosen nation's history and the world's history as a whole where the Greeks showed up on the imperial stage. By becoming an empire and major world power they obtained a position to spread their culture in both forceful and not so

forceful ways. The important part of all this I point to specifically is that force may have been used but the Greek's thinking and the language that went along with it became popular due to what it was far more than the fact it was forced on any specific number of people. It's why we hold onto it to this very day! This is a taste of what the Hebrew language and the chosen nation's culture in general could have accomplished among men if the chosen nation had really followed what God blessed them with from the start. However, that takes us into another very large subject which has to do with how much God has had to work with what man has been willing to give, and there's a big difference between what the things of God have accomplished versus what He could have accomplished if men would follow His direction. I'll add to that the point, this has been true since literally the very beginning!

What this means is that God has remained true to the purpose He created man for from the start so all those who desire the purpose they were created for can still find it but how different a world we would be living in if more people, much less all people, had been sold out to God from day one! The fact that didn't happen and God is still true to His original promises means God has had to meet us where we are, so to speak. One of the greatest examples of this truth is the formation of the chosen nation itself. Another great example of this is the fact Jesus came at a time the Greek language had become the major language of the world. People can argue all they want about what language the words of each book of the New Testament were originally written in, but the language

that was popular enough to preserve those words was Greek! It's why when talking about Bible translation we often make the flat statement that the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew and the New Testament was translated from Greek. The truth is, much of the Old Testament was originally translated from Greek as well, at least when it comes to the words we know as English speaking people and other languages primarily of Europe. As more and more Hebrew manuscripts from the past came to light, they were used to correct flaws and errors within the text but the point is, because it was so popular among men God used Greek to preserve much of His Word and assure those words made it throughout the earth.

Maybe more important to the subject I'm trying to speak to here is the fact this use of Greek happened in a very organic humanistic way and it's why the imperial history matters to the student of the Bible. It's so important that we understand the Greeks swept through a large part of the world and God's chosen nation was part of what got swept up. All the arguing we see between Pharisees and Sadducees in the New Testament and which The Messiah had to deal with on so many levels and in so many ways, existed because the Greek Empire had an effect on the chosen nation. You can argue about what language was mostly used among the chosen nation but the base argument among the highly educated community was Hebrew versus Greek. Just how much the language got argued is not even that clear because Greek was considered by the world to be the

language of scholars and the well taught. Thus, where the largest divide existed between those of the Pharisees and those of the Sadducees was in the realm of theology itself. The Pharisees believed, and in so many ways did much better than the Sadducees, in the older way of thinking; the thinking that came about due to understanding the Law God had given the nation. On the other hand, the Sadducees represented the side of the argument that said the old ways should be overwritten by newer "understanding," and that newer understanding was Greek which was very much so a human centered thought rather than God centered. This persists to this day among the higher education establishment of Christianity and most Christians don't even know it. The question that taints almost everything in the religion is the question of, do we take the Bible and the existence of God Himself at face value or do we look at a large part of it, if not all of it, as being legend and superstition?

This is the kind of sludge you find at the bottom of the rabbit hole when you go deep diving into the Christian religion. The common everyday Christian has no idea how much of what they are being taught isn't just riddled with mistakes intentionally or unintentionally placed there by the early Christian establishment that thought they could guide people better than direct faith could. It's also bloated with utter nonsense inserted by those who do not in their hearts really believe God is God. In its purest form and terminology it's basically Gnostic Christianity (though few would see that description as applying to them) which at its

base is the belief God is more of just some power than an actual all powerful sentient being. Then there is an astonishing amount of people in the higher education circles that consider themselves Christian which believe in humanism far more than anything resembling faith. The most frightening thing is, these people have been training the pastors who preach from our church pulpits for centuries now! Just as was going on between the Pharisees and the Sadducees there is a huge and illegitimate mingling of people on both the spiritual thinking side and the humanistic thinking side who are guiding what is called Christianity, and this is true no matter if you're talking about Catholic or Protestant!

God knows us better than we know ourselves and so He knew the Greek language and thinking would persist because it lays out the best framework for the things man was attempting to accomplish at the Tower of Babel. That's another thing most people, not just Christians, don't understand because they've never stopped to think about it. Greek was so good at that task and man is so unchanging in his determination to have what was determined directly after the flood of Noah's day, the Greek empire could die but the language and theology would remain. It remains and is still taught as an important subject, at least in college level learning, and it matters not if the people learning it believe any of the Greek gods were gods in any way or not. It's not about the belief there is actually power in some outside entity, it's about the dream man can be and in so many ways already has grown to be the true power! This is the kind of thinking in a nutshell the Sadducees

believed in. The Law was not commandments from The One True God as much as a road map to men becoming gods. This is the way the disbelief in God hides. One doesn't have to declare their personal belief or lack thereof in God's existence to be part of what seems like the larger debate about getting us from where we are to where we need to be. It's all part of the argument of what man can become, and if you look close enough at what the Christian religion teaches you'll see this clearly. The best way to see it is to understand what I point to all the time, which is the fact the teaching is about going on to a better place.

The conversation about going on to a better place can easily include the idea that God will be there, and why not - God is here too! The belief "the better place" includes God in some way doesn't affect the basic humanistic thought and dream that going on to a better place equates to reaching a higher level in the game of existence. In the ways God isn't left out of the teaching completely, He becomes a pawn and a power to be used to better one's self; to truly become more than you are. This broaches the subject again about how there is a thin line between the truth and the lies Satan has helped man come up with and believe. It is and has been God's intent we be more than just what we are, but the difference in the how that happens in human thinking versus God's true plan is that man thinks he can obtain what he needs and eventually not need God, whereas the truth tells us we will always need God to make any and every stride it's possible to make! That's the few degrees off from the truth I'm talking about when it comes to what Satan wants us to believe and the problem is, it's something humans have

shown they want to believe. This is why when Satan told Eve she wouldn't die by taking the fruit and God just didn't want them to do it because it would make them like Him, Eve took that as a positive thing instead of the negative thing it was! (Gen. 3:1-7)

Eve looked at the fruit and saw it was something to be desired because it could make man wise, meaning more than the creature he currently was. This was true, all but the desire part, because it would give man something he didn't have before. The problem was information is power but when you don't know how to use power, it can destroy and kill. That's what God was warning them about when He told them the tree was there but they should never eat of its fruit. It was up to us because choosing for ourselves is a large part of the journey to being what God wants us to be. However, choosing to take the information we didn't/don't know how to use properly took us down not up. Not turning back to God immediately and understanding how big a mistake we had really made in obtaining the information for ourselves is the way we continued to go down until God had to send a flood to wipe out all but eight humans. Continuing to make that mistake within the framework of organized religion is why God had to confound our language. Continuing to believe getting back to what we lost at the Tower is why we still have such organized religious thinking today in spite of being in a world that more and more denies the very existence of the God Who created us.

It's also why when men found a language that seemed to really work along with the religious framework the people who spoke that language constructed, we jumped on it and have been unwilling to give it up for over two thousand years at this point. Sure it's not a language commonly spoken by any particular people (speaking of ancient Greek not the modern language by the same name), but it is studied and used by those who lead the "human cause," for lack of a better term. This is also why the Greek language was adopted by many within the chosen nation and in particular those of higher education. This is also why it's possible a part of what we know as the New Testament was written in a language other than Greek (though I personally doubt this myself), yet the manuscripts used to translate the New Testament from in later centuries was Greek. The more compiled and cohesive collection which became the books of the New Testament were preserved in Greek and as I mentioned above, a lot of the Hebrew Bible was as well. This is in no small part due to the fact many within the chosen nation abandon Hebrew in favor of Greek. It was the more widely spoken language and at that time speaking a widely known language had more value than it had ever had before. The result was not just the humanistic Sadducees but a vast number of everyday Jews who eventually did not know enough Hebrew to study the Scriptures!

Let's stay in God's Word!