



Zarah & Pharez

Part Seven

Questions & Answers

**** You've explained in your series why those who believe that the devil never possessed any form of personal identity are outside of the Bible. But what about those who insist that, while the devil may have existed at some point in time, he was nevertheless destroyed at Calvary? Isn't that scriptural?***

While we would agree that this idea is taken from Scripture (Heb. 2:14), we cannot agree that this is what the Scriptures actually teach. If it were true that the devil was destroyed at the Cross, then the only form in which he could presently exist is as a lying vanity, and as a vain imagination in men's minds. This would be no different than saying that he never existed at all. But what does this passage actually say? Let's look at it.

○Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil...○

In order to address this properly, we would have to examine the clause "might destroy;" and we would have to explain the grammatical sense in which it was used in the text. First of all, the meaning of the word destroy, as used by Paul, must necessarily be clarified. It means *to be (render) entirely idle or useless* (Strong's Gr. #2673). Secondly, the clause itself is taken from a singular Greek verb, *katargese*, and appears in the subjunctive, aorist active mode. This is key to our understanding. You see, in the Greek language, there are two primary modes in which verbs are used: the indicative and the subjunctive. And of these modes, there are two tenses in which they appear: the present (aorist) and the perfect. A verb used in the indicative perfect mode would describe something that has occurred in the past, and that now exists in its finished state. However, a verb used in the subjunctive mode would be of hesitating affirmation. It would describe an action which is not yet complete, but is in the process of fulfillment. In other words, its completion is dependent on other events taking place, or on the passage of time. Considering that the clause *might destroy* was used in this tense, we see that the actual

destruction of the devil (that is, his being rendered to a state of idleness and uselessness) is something yet to occur.

We know that in the case of Jesus, He was very effective in rendering the devil both idle and useless. When the wicked one came to our Lord, he found nothing in Him. Satan was absolutely incapable of working anything diabolical in or through His life, because of the impeccableness of it. The simple fact of the matter is, Jesus provided nothing of the dusty Adamic nature upon which the devil could feed. Furthermore, as individuals, God has given us power over all the power of the enemy, so that nothing by any means can hurt us (Lk. 10:19). That means that we're also able to render the devil idle, through the acknowledgment of the anointing which abides in us, and the fact that we have been made the righteousness of God in Christ. But, obviously, the Lord still has a purpose for the devil being in the world, else He would take him out of it. (He's entirely capable of doing that, you know).

**** Is it possible that there might be other writings, such as those found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Lost Books of the Bible, or the Nag Hammadi Library, which could also be used to confirm the message of sonship? Since, like the Bible, they bear a testimony of Jesus, shouldn't they at least be considered for their spiritual content?***

We've heard some say that we should be open to new revelations of the Spirit, and not limit God's revelation to a single literary expression. They also say that we should draw from every ancient sourcebook available to us which would give us greater insight into the life of Jesus, regardless of the religious worldview from whence it comes. But there are good reasons why we should reject such ideas.

To begin with, the Bible is entirely sufficient, in and of itself, to establish the fundamental truths of sonship. It tells us everything we need to know concerning the life and teachings of the firstborn Son, and supplies a full and complete account of all the necessary details.

As you know, the Bible is unique, in that it's not a single expression, but a compilation of expressions which all attest to a common set of truths. Furthermore, it expresses an integral harmony in spite of its diversity. In this one-of-a-kind *Book of Books*, God has revealed His eternal purposes in a multitude of ways, and from a myriad of different sources. Over a period of more than fifteen hundred years, the Lord inspired various individuals from all walks of life, from kings, military leaders, and political statesmen, to fishermen, shepherds, physicians and tax collectors. Their writings came to us from within dungeons, prisons, and on lonely isles of exile, as well as from the palace of one of the greatest kingdoms in the history of mankind. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences, each of these sources come to the same conclusion. Their unison attests to the fact that while many hands may have been involved in the recording of the script, only One was responsible for directing them all. Throughout the history of the world, there's never been a book quite like it!

We won't go into all the details of the procedure (since that can easily be found elsewhere), but suffice it to say that careful consideration went into the final decision regarding which books should be included in the New Testament, and which should not. Needless to say, the canonization was not a haphazard process, but one that occurred gradually, taking centuries to complete. Each book under consideration had to be examined on the basis of three points: authenticity, veracity and integrity.

Briefly, the issue of authenticity raised questions concerning authorship. Was the book actually written by the individual which it claims? Or was it falsely accredited to some well-known character in early church history, in order to give the writing a greater amount of credibility? (This is known as a pseudepigraphic writing.) Next, the issue of veracity pertained to the accuracy of the information provided by the author. Was the writer actually able to speak authoritatively on the matters which he related? And were the facts of his book actually confirmable by history? And finally, the issue of integrity questioned how reliable each book could be, in regards to its preservation. Had it been preserved well enough to confirm its original message? And, if not, were there other manuscripts in existence against which it could be compared, in order to know what was originally in the mind of its author? (This procedure is referred to as textual criticism.) These questions, and more, were put to the books under examination, and those which passed the test were included in the canon.

An amazing witness to the spiritual leading of those responsible for the canon can be found in the number of books which they accepted. It's doubtful that they were aware of any special significance behind their conclusion, but they finally decided on 27 books in the New Testament, bringing the total to 66 books in all. More than mere coincidence is the fact that there were 66 knobs on the golden candlestick, the centermost source of light in the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:31-37; 37:17-22). In connection with this, David wrote, *Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path* (Psa. 119:105). Certainly, God's Word is meant to guide the footsteps of His New Covenant priests in their progression toward the Most Holy Place, lest they stumble in the dark.

A second thing worth mentioning is the discovery made by one man in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1890, a Russian agnostic by the name of Ivan Panin accidentally discovered a precise mathematical structure that undergirded and sustained the authority of the Scriptures. This structure was hidden, as it were, beneath the numerical values of Hebrew and Greek words. Allow us to explain how this works. In cultures where these languages were spoken, there were no separate symbols for numbers. Therefore, the letters of their alphabets served as their numbers. Each letter represented a specific number, which, in turn, caused each word composed of these letters to possess a numeric value. In other words, the numeric value of any word is the sum total of all its letters. Panin realized this, and examined the Bible to see whether a divine design was behind its vocabulary. What he found through this exercise led to his conversion.

Another thing that Panin recognized was that there was a divine significance in the number of times a word was used in scripture. E.W. Bullinger explained it this way:

○The actual number depends on the special significance of the word; for the significance of the word corresponds with the significance of the number of the times it occurs. Where there is no such special significance in the meaning or use of the word, there is no special significance in the number of its occurrences. But where there is a general importance in the word, apart from its direct significance, then the word occurs according to law. All such general and important words—i.e., such words on which the Holy Spirit would have us place special emphasis, or would wish us to lay special stress—occur a certain number of times. These are either 1) a square number, 2) a cube, 3) a multiple of seven, or 4) a multiple of eleven. ○ Dr. Bullinger went on to explain that the reason these numbers are associated together is because of the four perfect numbers—3, 7, 10 and 12. Three is the number of *divine* perfection; seven is the number of *spiritual* perfection; ten is the number of *ordinal* perfection; and twelve is the number of *governmental* perfection. Where ever these numbers, or multiples of them, are used, there is always a connection to these meanings. Furthermore, the product of these four numbers constitute the number of chronological perfection— $3 \times 7 \times 10 \times 12 = 2520$. This was precisely the number of years Israel endured punishment at the hand of their adversaries, and it was also the length of time Jerusalem suffered Gentile domination.

To these men, the findings proved conclusively that human minds could never have devised such a complex system. Only God could have orchestrated such precision in His Word, so as to incorporate every detail recorded therein. Panin postulated that the laws of probability regarding human orchestration of the Bible exceeded into the billions.

The numerical system is unparalleled in the confirmation of divine authorship. Singlehandedly, it's capable of showing that God predestined, not only the names of every single person that was to be mentioned in His Word, but also the precise time of their birth, and every minute detail of the events that were to happen in their lives. Not only that, but in order for the system to work as accurately as it does, each and every word had to be spelled precisely so that it would come out to its exact and pre-determined numerical value. Then, it had to be placed into the text in a precise location. Whenever we consider the fact that Old and New Testament writers had no opportunity to confer with one another, the miracle of it all becomes incontrovertible. It's as if God placed a watermark behind the words which He inspired, as an undeniable witness to the legitimacy of each book in the Bible.

However, despite the fact that only the most faithful and trustworthy writings were endorsed as being "God-breathed," and in spite of the fact that only these writings bore the numerical watermark of God, there's been no shortage of those who've sought to ascribe divine inspiration to extra-biblical or non-biblical writings. Now, there have always been claims of various sorts, and individuals who've argued for the acceptance of this book or that. But this has been especially true since the discovery of two archeological findings, the Nag Hammadi parchments in 1945, and the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. Over the years, a great amount of time and energy has been invested by liberal theologians to present these documents as being equally valid, and in some cases, superior to canonical writings.

The collection of scrolls known as the Nag Hammadi texts were discovered by an Arab peasant in December of 1945. While digging in the ground near Nag Hammadi (a city located in the uppermost part of Egypt), he happened to come across an earthen vessel which contained a number of leather-bound papyruses. These books, dating from around the middle part of the third century, contained numerous writings of various sorts, 52 of which were salvageable enough for translation. Almost all of them have been positively identified as having Gnostic origin. (It should be pointed out that while the titles of several of these books *had* been referred to in the writings of early church fathers, they were done so disparagingly. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus both denounced them as being heretical.)

Less than two years later, the documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in Qumran (an Essene community that existed along the Dead Sea). These scrolls have been determined to have been written from between 250 B.C. to 68 A.D. The library unearthed primarily existed in the form of Old Testament commentaries, apocryphal writings, pseudepigrapha, and writings related to the community's rules of order (the Essenes were very strict ascetics, even more so than the Pharisees). And while Jesus is nowhere directly mentioned in the scrolls, some believe that references made to "the Teacher of Righteousness" are generally directed toward Him. (We might mention, too, that certain key tenets of the Christian faith are conspicuously absent from the scrolls—such as the Deity of Christ, the doctrine of Original Sin, and man's need for vicarious atonement. The idea affirmed constantly throughout *the Book of Hymns*, for example, is that sin pertains only to the individual, and is not the inherited lot of man. The idea is further promoted that if a man is capable of becoming sinful by reason of his own choice and doings, he is also able to cleanse himself by the same. This, of course, would indicate that the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls saw no need for a Savior, even though they'd heard the teachings of Jesus regarding the purpose of His death, burial and resurrection. They obviously rejected His explanation, choosing rather to retain their works-based religion.)

While it's undeniable that such discoveries were significant (by giving us firsthand accounts of the beliefs and worldviews of both religious groups), it's not the same as saying that the writings themselves are true. But those who'd like to expand upon, or entirely revise the image we have of Jesus would have us to accept them without question.

A scripture passage that's often used to allow for extra-biblical testimonies is the concluding verse in John's gospel. It says, "And there were also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." (Jn. 21:25). This *does* seem to leave the door wide open for synoptic supplementation, doesn't it! But this verse needs to be considered alongside its parallel passage, in order to put it in perspective. The passage is found at the conclusion of the previous chapter in the same gospel, John 20:30-31, and serves to show the true intent of the author. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and

that believing, ye might have life through His name. ○ You see, the issue is not whether the disciples covered every minute detail of Jesus's life and miracle-working ministry in their gospels. That, by John's own admission, was never the intention. But those things which *were* necessary, yea, even essential, *were* recorded, in order that we might have sufficient grounds for believing that Jesus was who He said He was, the Son of the living God. (And it should be noted that the things which John spoke of were things which were done *○in the presence of His disciples.* ○ This is an important point to remember, whenever we begin to examine some of the non-canonical accounts).

It is true that many of the non-biblical writings speak of some of the same events and words that are found in the gospels. In fact, some of them are recorded almost verbatim. But this alone should not cause us to trust in them. Because of the details that were added to the stories, or because of those that were changed about them, we know that their writers simply sought to gain acceptance by way of association.

If anything, the similarities prove that they plagiarized their stories from the gospels, then added their own particular *○twist○* to them. In regard to the writings contained in the Nag Hammadi collection, Doug Groothuis has written, *○These writings are simply drawing on preexistent gospel material and rearranging it to conform to their Gnostic worldview. They may embellish, delete, twist, or revise gospel information, but they do not contribute historically authentic, new material.○*

The argument has been made that by including these testimonies, we would have a more complete and comprehensive record of what Jesus really taught. But the truth of the matter is, *the inclusion of these testimonies would actually result in a weakening of the true one, not in a strengthening of it.* Because of the internal discrepancies, because of the historical inaccuracies, and because of the false claims to authorship that have been proven to exist, they would do more to discredit the general teachings of Christianity (and sonship teachings, in particular) than any good they could bring. You see, by accepting one thing in them which might seem to endorse a particular view we hold, we would be forced to defend everything else that is contained therein, even those things which contradict established points of doctrine. And that would lead to an undermining of the *○good news○* which we proclaim. What could possibly be gained through this process?

Take, for instance, *The Gospel of Thomas*. Certain passages of it seem to support New Testament teachings. Others, however, show a definite Gnostic slant. Saying 26 has Jesus uttering these words: *○You see the speck that is in your companion's eye, but you do not see the beam that is in your own eye. When you take the beam out of your own eye, then you will see well enough to take the speck out of your companion's eye.○* This closely parallels what our Lord said in Matt. 7:3-5. But only four passages later, the one identifying himself as Thomas records Jesus as saying *○Where there are three deities, they are divine. Where there are two or one, I am present.○* (Saying 30). This is a deliberate attempt to distort the Master's words, and to make them say something other than what they were originally intended to mean.

Another example is found in *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*. A passage from it has Jesus saying, "You know that all my life was one great drama for the sons of men; a pattern for the sons of men. I lived to show the possibilities of man. What I have done all men can do, and what I am all men shall be." (Section XXI, chapter 178:45-46). Taken out of its context, and explained through a narrow interpretation, this quote could questionably be construed to endorse sonship's presentation of Jesus as the pattern Son. Even the last lines could feasibly be explained in a way so as to appear within the confines of truth (howbeit, not without controversy). But when we consider it alongside a passage preceding it, it becomes painstakingly clear what the author of the Aquarian Gospel had in mind. "All power in heaven and earth is mine; to you I give all power in heaven and earth...what I can do all men can do. **Go preach the gospel of the omnipotence of man.**" (Chapter 178:11, 14). Needless to say, this is diametrically opposed to the message of sonship, and in no wise reflects the teachings of Jesus.

One thing that we've noticed is that many of the NCAs (non-canonical accounts) seem to gravitate toward the "gaps" in the gospel record. But any gaps which might exist concerning the life of Jesus are there for a purpose. The Spirit speaks as loudly in those moments of silence as He does at any other time in the chronicles, and He never intended for speculation to provide what was purposefully left out. For instance, the gospels show three distinct periods in the life of Jesus: 1) His birth and infancy; 2) His entrance into puberty; and 3) the time of His maturity. Between each of these periods is a definite time division: the first division consists of a twelve year silence, and the second one, a span of eighteen years. Why is this important to note? Because each of these periods correspond to a definite spiritual experience which is destined to occur in the life of the believer; an experience which should be viewed separately, in order to establish its distinctiveness. However, whenever these "gaps" are filled, the distinctions are erased, and we lose a significant truth that the Spirit would speak to the church.

This is what happens in the so-called *Lost Books of the Bible*. Details of Jesus's young life are provided in the books of "Infancy," where fantastic reports are given of His miraculous power. One account tells of a seven-year-old Jesus who is playing with His friends. The children are making clay figures of various sorts, oxen, birds, etc. As a form of entertainment, and much to the delight of his companions, Jesus commands the figures to come to life, which, of course, they do. Another more ridiculous account involves Jesus as a baby. While en route to Egypt, Joseph and Mary are said to have encountered a couple of sisters, who are accompanied by a mule. As it turns out, the mule is their brother, who was the victim of a bewitching spell. However, when baby Jesus is placed upon the mule's back, the curse is reversed, and the man is restored to his sisters. So goes the testimony of these "lost" books.

I can remember a number of years ago when a ministry friend of mine called me with some very exciting news. He said that someone had given him a box of books, one of which told of miracles Jesus did as a little boy. Since this brother had preached for years on the healings and miracles performed by Jesus, and since he believed that there was absolutely nothing which the Lord could not do, it was easy for him to believe that there might be things which He'd done outside of the testimony of scripture, but which had

been recorded nonetheless. After all, it *was* Jesus that we were talking about! Nevertheless, I couldn't help but point out to him one glaring contradiction these accounts had with John's gospel. Following the miracle of turning the water into wine, John writes, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." (Jn. 2:11). In John's own words, he said that when Jesus transformed ordinary water into fine table wine, this event signaled the inauguration of His miracle-working ministry. It was there, in Cana of Galilee, that it all began. (Interestingly enough, John showed Jesus first working miracles at a wedding, and he concluded the book of Revelation with Him doing the same; ref. Rev. 19).

Another such "gap-filler" is what's known as "the Lost Years of Jesus." These so-called "lost years" have been the subject of several books (not to mention, a mountain of speculation), and refer to the time in Jesus' life between the ages of 13 and 29. One account of the events and details which were supposed to have happened during this time was first presented to the public in 1894 by a Russian journalist named Nicolas Notovitch, and published in his book, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*. Notovitch claimed that, while traveling through India, he learned of an ancient manuscript which spoke of the life of Jesus. Interested to find out more, he journeyed to the Himis monastery in Ladakh, Tibet, where copies of the manuscript were said to be kept. Upon his arrival, the chief Lama there was said to have brought to him these copies, and, through an interpreter, read to him the words which were recorded therein. These words were then translated from Notovitch's notebook into English, and published in his book.

Despite the fact that the only proof of the existence of this alleged Brahminic manuscript was Notovitch's word, he expected the scholarly world to believe that it had been written "three to four years after the death of Jesus, from the accounts of eyewitnesses and contemporaries, and had much more probability of being in conformity with truth than the accounts of the gospels." Thus, he attempted to place it on a more authoritative ground than even that upon which the scriptures rest, simply because of his testimony!

According to Notovitch's translation, Jesus (referred to as Saint Issa in his writings) was supposed to have traveled from Jerusalem to India with a caravan of merchants when He was but 13. There, He purposed to perfect Himself in the knowledge of the word of God and through the study of the laws of the great Buddhas. After traveling throughout the region, and after learning all that He could about the Eastern mindset and its sacred writings, He was supposed to have returned to Palestine when He was 29. The story continues through His public ministry, His crucifixion, and the subsequent evangelism by His disciples. So ends "The Life of Saint Issa."

Such a story might sound intriguing to some, even enlightening, but where, we ask, is the evidence to support it? Besides the fact that the credibility of the one who presented it has been greatly discredited (even the Lama who was supposed to have possessed the manuscript has denied Notovitch's story, and has said that no such manuscript exists), nowhere in the gospels (or any other authentic historical document, we might add) is there even the slightest suggestion that Jesus ever traveled outside of His homeland. And

nowhere in His teachings is there any inclination toward Eastern philosophies. In fact, just the opposite is true. He openly renounced them.

Recognizing these things not only disqualifies Notovitch's alleged "discovery," but also every other writing that's built on similar premises. While the Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ makes no claims to have been based on Notovitch's purported manuscript or any other (Levi Dowling claimed that he translated his "gospel" directly from the non-material Akashic Records, thus explaining why no manuscript exists), it nevertheless places Jesus on foreign soil (not only in India, but also in Greece and Egypt). The same is true of the Urantia Book (which was supposedly written by the hand of angelic beings). However, as we said, there is simply nothing to support such reckless claims.

(Before leaving this point, there's something else that came to mind. Why is it that every one of the NCAs seem to have this one thing in common...the idea that Jesus was influenced by some mystical teaching of the time, none of which the gospels ever allude to? They all attempt to make Him the follower of one religious group or another, either Buddhist, Gnostic, or Essene. The answer to this may be unimportant to some. But we believe that it explains a great deal. Every one of their writers obviously realized how influential Jesus was, and knew that as long as He stood apart from religious affiliation, His message would be unique to Christianity, and to the Christian worldview. However, if they could somehow take Him as a "historical hostage," so to speak, and if they could represent Him as being a student of their particular worldview, then they could make Him say whatever they needed Him to say in order to serve their cause. Never mind whether the stories they told were a mixture of truth and mythology. Never mind if history could bear it out. All that mattered was that their theology was promoted, and that Jesus became their chief spokesman!)

There's a third point which we'd like to mention. Most of us are aware that the gospels reveal the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies. These prophetic promises are indicators which show that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the One who was said to come. But there's another thing that should be considered. Throughout the Old Testament, there are various patterns which can be overlaid like templates over various segments of the gospel record. Examples of these would be Creation week; the Garden scenario; the Israelite's exodus out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and across the Jordan River; the layout of the Tabernacle of Moses; the order of the Feast Days; as well as the lives of Joseph, David, and Isaac. Each of these men served as types of Christ, and the record of their lives provides us with details regarding critical events occurring throughout the gospels. Stories such as the betrayal of Joseph by his brethren, the offering of Isaac by his father, the ascensions of both David and Joseph to the throne at age 30, as well as many others, all fit together like the interlocking pieces of a puzzle. Even the faces of the four living creatures in Ezekiel chapter 1 portray Christ in the four gospels, and confirm the testimonies of those who recorded them. (In Matthew, He has the face of a Lion [as the Lion of the tribe of Judah]; in Mark, He has the servant-face of an Ox; in Luke, He has the face of a Man [being referred to most often as the Son of Man]; and in John, He has the face of an Eagle, that is, of One who soars in the heavens.) Each of these images can be superimposed over the four gospels, and shown to bear striking

resemblances of our Lord. But introducing another gospel to the group would sever the similarity, and dismiss the type.

Collectively, the presence of these patterns do two things: 1) they prove the veracity of the accounts given, and 2) they show the same divine signature on both Testaments. But whenever other stories are introduced into the narrative, the stories are stretched out of shape, the patterns no longer fit, and the testimony loses its vindication. It's as simple as that.

Most importantly, however, we must realize that NCAs always change the image given of our Lord in the gospels in dramatic ways. No longer is He seen as the Messiah, the virgin-born One who was to come, who leads by His pure and impeccable life, and whose sacrificial death on the cross effectuates the salvation of the world. Rather, He's just an ordinary Joe who recognized the Christ within Himself, and who helped others to do likewise. While He may be seen as having attained a superior state of existence through the course of His lifetime, He is not in a class all His own. If His death on the cross is mentioned at all, it's usually stripped of any ethical significance it might have, and presented as the unfortunate ending to an unlucky guy. And if His resurrection is included in the account, it's presentation is usually devoid of any physical, historical, or redemptive factuality...serving merely as an example of what all men can do if they learn to draw upon the power that resides within them. The non-canonical Jesus is the disputer of Old Testament prophecies, rather than the Fulfillment of them. He is the renouncer of time-honored teachings, such as the creation account and the fall of man, rather than the Enforcer thereof. And He is oftentimes seen as the opposer of the God of the Old Testament, rather than the Personification of Him. He is often the promoter of animism, asceticism, Goddess worship and reincarnation, all of which is foreign to the Jesus of the Bible. In short, He is clearly *another* Jesus, preached from another gospel.

Therefore, to answer the question, *Since many of these writings bear a testimony of Jesus, shouldn't they be considered for their spiritual content?*, we would reply, No, they shouldn't. The reasons why these books should not be gleaned for some spiritual content they might have are:

- 1) they failed to attain apostolic recognition, or to meet with apostolic approval;
- 2) they fail to measure up under numerical evaluation;
- 3) they interrupt, and thus annul the divinely-inspired patterns which act as templates for the gospels; and
- 4) they bear a *different* testimony of Jesus than that which is found in Scripture.

In declaring the message of sonship, therefore, one needn't rely on sources outside of the Scriptures. If Paul could say to Agrippa, *I assert nothing beyond what was foretold by the prophets and by Moses* (Acts 26:22, NEB), and if he was able to provide us with some of the most profound statements concerning the hope of sonship from within those

boundaries, then certainly sonship can be preached without exceeding the parameters of the Old and New Testaments. It's just not necessary.

**** If sonship, like mainstream Christianity, accepts the canon of Scripture, does that also mean that it teaches that the Bible is God's final Word to man?***

Not at all. God is still speaking *to* man *through* man in fresh and fascinating ways. He does so, both by written and verbal word. Now, some might misconstrue that to equate to the beliefs held within the New Age movement. And some might even perceive that as license for such things as channeling and automatic writing. However, unlike the teachings of New Age, sonship insists that if the utterance is to be found acceptable, it will always agree with what God has said in the canon. (We'll address these differences in greater detail later.)

In more recent times, the canon has come to be known as "*the list of books contained in scripture, the list of books recognized as worthy to be included in the sacred writings of a worshipping community.*" Origin even defined the canon as "*the list of the writings acknowledged by the Church as documents of the divine revelation.*" However, the meaning of the word "canon" involves more than just the composition of a list. It comes from the Greek word *kanon*, (the word is Strong's # 2583) which means "*a straight rod used as a rule; a standard, boundary or sphere*". The early saints used the phrase "*the rule of faith*" or "*the rule of truth*" when referring to the canon. What they meant by that is that the canonical Scriptures serve as a rod of authority against which all other writings or utterances must be measured.

There have certainly been writings down through church history which could easily fall under the category of inspired writings. They could even be considered documents of divine revelation. Right up to this present day, books are being written which open up new dimensions of the scriptures rarely ever realized by previous generations. These classical works have revolutionized and revitalized saints in various pockets of the world, giving them a renewed vision into the things of God, and understanding into His eternal purposes.

Personally speaking, Tykie and I have been privileged to have many of these books in our library. And we thank the Lord for them all. They're like precious treasures to us, and serve to inspire us to press toward the mark for the prize of the high call of God in Christ Jesus. But despite our deep appreciation for them, they can never represent the standard of truth for us as do the Scriptures. There is just a peculiar authority which emanates from Holy Writ, which cannot be found to the same degree elsewhere. Now, this takes nothing away from other inspired writings. They definitely have their place in the Lord's dealings with our hearts. And, for what it's worth, we consider many of them to be indispensable tools for Kingdom living. But it does set the Scriptures in a class all their own. They alone set the standard for spiritual comparison.

We do need to say one thing by way of clarification. Sonship does *not* teach that God's final Word is a book called the Bible. Instead, His final Word is Jesus. For in Jesus, "*the*

Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14). The writer of Hebrews said it this way: "*God, who at sundry times in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son...*" (Heb. 1:1-2). That sums it up well. Jesus was (and is) the consummation of God's Word to mankind. Everything that He would ever need to say to us regarding life and godliness was embodied in the Person of Christ. However, when we take into account the fact that now, God's Son is not just a single Individual, but has become a corporate Man, these words take on a much broader meaning. God is *still* speaking to us in these last days through His many-membered Son, by way of prophetic utterances, as well as through anointed, Spirit-filled writings. But the ways in which we know whether what we are hearing is of God or not is by first checking it out by the witness in our spirits (our spiritual "Urim and Thummin"; I Jn. 2:27), and secondly, by comparing it with the written Word (Acts 17:10-11; II Tim. 2:15). God has given us these two immutable witnesses whereby we can know that we're following the voice of our Shepherd, and not that of the stranger (Jn. 10). We should be extremely grateful for them.

(As a footnote to this, we'd like to express our objection to a particular line of reasoning which has found its way into certain conclaves within sonship. This reasoning suggests that, while the apostles certainly wrote the New Testament with unction, their understanding was limited to the Pentecostal dimension [referred to by some as "2nd Day" order]. However, since we're entering into the realm of the "3rd Day", the realm of fulness, we have insights into things which go beyond their range of vision. This, according to the rationale, explains why certain teachings cannot be found in scripture. We are, as some have inappropriately quoted Hebrews 6:1, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and going on unto perfection". Allow us to say that such a belief does not represent the majority of sonship teachers, nor does it deserve more than a brief rebuttal. It should be obvious to anyone that this is *not* what the writer of Hebrews had in mind when he penned this, nor is it the conclusion to be reached concerning New Testament writings in general. "Leaving" the principles of the doctrine of Christ is not to be construed as "leaving off", or "leaving behind". It simply implies a moving forward in the building stages. If the foundational principles of the doctrine of Christ cannot be found as the basis of any teaching, we can confidently toss that teaching into the waste basket. It has no place in the purposes of God, and no power to produce positive change in His people.)

No doubt, God will continue to roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem. He has powerful things to say concerning the days ahead, and of that to which we look forward. Furthermore, we can expect the things which He says to come in purer and purer forms, unaffected in lesser degrees by the vessels through which they come. The human element is gradually being engulfed, as God becomes all in all! But we can be assured that He will always speak within the sphere of those things which are written, and never outside of them. We have His Word on it!

To be continued...

If you, or someone you know, would like to be added to our mailing list (sent out free of charge) you may write to:

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