

CHAPTER NINE

Jesus and the Heavenly Realms

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In Chapter Seven I showed that God kept his people in a state of blindness for more than two thousand years. It was his purpose to conceal his planetary program because of danger of interference. Mankind has lacked maturity and wisdom to deal with destiny.

In this paper I shall briefly discuss mechanisms he used. These mechanisms are illustrated by the most difficult of all mysteries: the role of Jesus as Creator and the role of Melchizedek as our future planetary ruler. Although revealed, Christians, originating with the apostles, were unable to grasp their respective roles. The time has come when this mystery should be opened.

Here and there in these discussions readers may find themselves in familiar territory. My purpose is not to repeat common knowledge but the matters discussed are so crucial to understanding I felt necessary detail could not be ignored. I shall reexamine prophecies of the Old Testament. I shall consider apostolic belief. I shall show what Jesus taught about himself and the Messiah. And I shall descend to the roots of language. All these factors influence our understanding.

In the days of long ago, before the default of Adam, "The earth had one language and one tongue," Gen 11:1. Individual tribes had different tongues but a common language, a lingua franca, was used for commerce, interchange, and civic control. The "sons of God," (Gen 6:1-4), ruled with good temperament and devout allegiance to the Creator. They used a language that was Semitic; Hebrew derives closely from it. When Adam fell the world was torn asunder. The nations drifted apart; active exchange was lost; the world forgot its common language. Although hints of these events are in the story of the Tower of Babel that story, as we have it today, is largely myth.

As time passed men also forgot the old methods of reading and writing. Then, in the era of 4,000 to 3,000 BC, they began to develop new techniques to transcribe their economic transactions, their social contracts, their myths, and their knowledge. Each group devised its own unique system, adapted to the practical requirements of locale and environment. Egyptians developed hieroglyphs suitable to stone; the Sumerians and Babylonians developed cuneiform suitable to clay tablets; the Semites of the eastern Mediterranean used alphabets. These different systems made cultural interchange difficult and tended to keep the nations apart.

Our modern alphabet derives from the Canaanite phonetic system of the second millennium BC, via the Greeks. Although a common orthography was used for the differing languages of Greek and Hebrew, down to the time of the Babylonian captivity, the two people gradually separated in their methods of writing. Jews developed the bold block script of which they are so proud today, while western European nations developed the script that has come down into our modern alphabet, not far removed from the written signs of the first millennium BC. Part of this evolution included changes in the direction of the script. Alternating direction of successive lines was replaced with the right-to-left of Hebrew and the left-to-right of western nations.

As a result of this divergence many individuals shy away from Hebrew where they might otherwise be willing to study it more quickly. They must accommodate to the different scripts as well as the opposite directions of writing. Even transliteration in student handbooks is difficult. As a consequence much understanding depends upon translations and they, in turn, become subject to the whims of the translators.

The effects of this obfuscation should not be taken lightly. Deeper knowledge was hidden behind orthography. Readings in public and private worship further obscured the names for God and effectively prevented the apostles and all later Christians from reaching clear understanding.

Another result of the ancient estrangement of the nations was the development of different notions of the roles of God and of his celestial agencies. Eventually many of these ideas degraded to pure paganism, with a host of revered gods assigned altogether human attributes. This paganism pervaded much of the Near East and the Mediterranean at the time of Abraham. When Melchizedek came he initiated a program to bring fresh ideas of God, to teach one God, to show God as a personal being, to prepare the way for Jesus, and to lay groundwork for later revelations through Moses and the prophets.

Unfortunately most of the Melchizedek teachings were lost. His influence was limited much to the Israelite clans. Even the Jews, because of emphasis on one God as the supreme ruler and creator, lost sight of the celestial host and their active function in universe affairs. The Sadducees at the time of Jesus rejected teaching on angels, while the Pharisees were confused about them. This Jewish influence pervaded new Christian belief, a natural consequence of the apostles, including Paul, being Jews. Christians today not only reject biblical teaching about celestial beings; they are downright fearful of them. They much prefer their familiar theologies devoid of the reality of such beings.

These factors have had a direct impact on cultural developments. Modern science and technology have starkly exposed the faults in our traditional views of God. Without adequate representation of his true nature, without knowledge of universe administration, and in the face of rapidly growing material conquests, men everywhere began to doubt God's existence. Christian mythology was not adequate for maturing insights. As a result the world became godless.

Jesus purposely did not enlighten the apostles on celestial affairs. Part of the difficulty lay directly with the minds of those days. Had he been too clear his teachings would have been rejected and his mission placed in jeopardy. But, more importantly, it was his purpose to maintain a state of blindness; he could accomplish that only through careful limits on his instruction.

I shall now reexamine Judeo-Christian belief about Jesus and Melchizedek. The Bible offers essential knowledge but we reject it. The time has come to bring it forth once again.

THE NAME OF OUR GOD

RSV, KJV, and other modern translations use two different words for “Lord” in the Old Testament. The one is simply Lord, without upper case letters; the other is LORD, with all upper case letters. The first is the translation of the Hebrew word Adon, meaning Lord. The second is the translation of the divine name Yahweh, meaning our Creator God. Examples are found throughout the Old Testament.

But Zion said, *“The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.”*
Isa 49:14.

In Hebrew this reads: *“Yahweh has forsaken me; my Adon has forgotten me.”*

The word Lord is proper in its translation, but the word LORD is an artifice to avoid the divine name. Why did the translators resort to this strange practice?

The use of Lord as a substitute for the divine name goes back centuries before the time of Jesus. The practice was well established when the seventy Jewish translators of the Septuagint did their famous work for Ptolemy II, king of Egypt, in the third century BC. They used *Kurios*, the Greek word for Lord, as the translation of Yahweh. Where context demanded it, they also used *Theos*, the Greek word for God, but this was infrequent. Yahweh was understood as a heavenly Lord and not the supreme God. He was equated with the Creator gods of the surrounding people: Baal of the Canaanites, Enlil of the Sumerians, Ra of the Egyptians, and so on. If the Septuagint translators had always used Theos they would have misrepresented the role of Yahweh.

Although the famous Seventy could have transliterated the divine name and written it into their text they elected to use Kurios. Why?

(The word LORD occurs in all of the books of the Old Testament. Curiously, the word LORD is used only in Chapter 9 of Daniel, while the word Lord is used once each in Chapters 1, 2, and 5. Chapter 9 uses the latter seven times. The remainder of the Chapters have neither LORD nor Lord.)

The reason was fear of the name. This fear began sometime after the restoration of Jerusalem, about 400 BC. In the accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah the name Yahweh is still used but by 300 BC it was no longer allowed.

We do not know why this fear arose. The most likely reason is that God no longer worked directly with the Jews. Their former status as God’s special people weighed heavily upon them. The Babylonian captivity had brought disgrace. They felt an appalling fall from honor; they knew they had sinned. Their loss of nationhood and of social prestige aggravated their shame. This double loss of special calling and national dignity caused them to fear the Creator. They no longer called him Yahweh. They resorted to calling him Lord, a more fearful distant respect, rather than using his personal name.

This Jewish practice, so imbued in Jesus’ Jewish apostles, together with universal use of the Septuagint among early Christians, caused the substitute to become unconscious and unquestioned. As a result neither Jew nor Christian today can distinguish clearly among the roles of celestial beings. The Father and the Son are confused with one another. The title Lord is also applied to other heavenly beings, notably Melchizedek. This lack of discernment led to much of the great blindness that now afflicts us. (In the Old Testament the word LORD is often used for beings who cannot be the Creator God. Often it is used to represent Melchizedek.)

Consider the two forms, *Lord* and *Yahweh*. The word *Lord* is a title, not a name. When we use Lord we imply a more distant relationship. We use formal titles of address, Mr. Smith or Mrs. Jones, when we do not know individuals personally. But if we are close friends we address them by their given names, Bob or Betty. If we use the word Lord for our Creator we approach him in a formal, distant, even fearful sense. Since the title Lord is an abstract word that can be applied to anyone of high rank we tend to view that being in more abstract fashion, ignoring his personal qualities and attributes. But if we use a personal name we recognize a personality behind that name. This attitude applies to human beings and it applies to our God. Yahweh is a name, the name of our Creator, the one we know as Jesus. Although he is God, and we approach him with reverence and respect, through use of his name we approach him in familiar terms, as a brother. If we use the title Lord we remain remote from him.

Why all this bother about names and titles? Does it really change our faith in God?

It may not significantly affect our faith in God but it vitally affects our relationship and our understanding. If we cannot distinguish between the actions of the Father and the Son we cannot clearly know their will for us. We will not remain close to our Creator nor understand what he is asking of us. In the present world crisis such understanding is crucial. At first sight this may not seem important but as we become familiar with his words in the Old Testament we will quickly realize the dramatic difference this makes.

As a passing example of how names affect us, consider the English name Jesus. In Hebrew it is Yohua, (or perhaps Yeshua). His parents did not say “Jesus, carry this,” or “Jesus, clean the yard.” They did not use the Greek name; they used the Hebrew name. They said, “Yohua, carry this,” or “Yohua, clean the yard.” If you think the name is not important consider your daily prayers: “In Yohua’s name we ask it.”

This change alters our feelings dramatically. We are habituated to familiar sounds and not to reality. We love the sound of Jesus because it is so familiar. Yoshua does not carry the same familiar feelings with it. But other languages may be accustomed to Yesoos, and so on.

Some readers may wonder why I use the Hebrew name Yahweh and not the anglicized form Jehovah. In medieval times English scholars used the vowel sounds from the Hebrew Adon, together with the English “J” in place of the Hebrew “Y,” to create the form Jehovah. However the name Jehovah is so misunderstood and so abused it is better avoided. The original is far better than such invented form.

Our Creator gave us his name when he first began work with the Israelite tribes. When he commissioned Moses, Moses wanted to know how he would prove his commission to the people of Israel, Exod 3:13ff. God then told Moses how he was to be identified. When the people of Israel would ask who sent him, Moses was to reply, I Will Be Who I Will Be had sent him. The Hebrew words are Ahveh Asher Ahveh. More exactly, Moses was to say that Yahweh had sent him. Then Moses was given a command

“ . . . This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations, Exod 3:15.”

How unfortunate that we forgot this commandment. We drifted from a personal relationship with our Creator. He wants us to use his personal name. He commanded that we do so. It was his way of showing how much he loved his people; he wanted them to know him personally, and to love him in return.

Where does the name Yahweh come from? It derives from a Hebrew root verb, *hayeh*, meaning to be, or to exist. *Ahyeh* is the first person future, *I Will Be*, or, *I Will Exist*. The name *Yahweh* is from the Pi’el form, *haveh*, (or *hawa*). The form actually is *Y’haweh*, shortened to *Yahweh*, pronounced *Yawa*. Literally it means *He Shall Form*, or, *He Shall Mold*. It denotes the creative aspects of God, and of his actions in the realms of time and space. Not only does he exist, he also is the one who created and who will continue to create.

In the most remote antiquity God’s name was well known around our planet. *Hawa* was the very ancient name for the Creator. It was used as a place name all over the planet but was lost in the turmoil of Adam’s default. Remnants of planetary memory still exist. We find *Hawa*, Syria and across the planet *Hawa*, Mongolia. We also find (*H*)*awa* Island, Kuwait, (*H*)*awa*, Ethiopia, and (*H*)*awa*, Okinawa. Hawaii is an inflected form of the same name. When Moses was told to use the name Yahweh it was a new designation. *Hawa* was the Creator of former world eras; Yahweh is the one who will create in the new world dispensations. He now takes a personal hand in the planet that was the home for his human incarnation.

In many places we are told Yahweh is the name of our God:

Let all who take refuge in thee rejoice, let them ever sing for joy. And do thou defend them; those that love thy name may exult in thee. For thou dost bless the righteous, O Yahweh; thou dost cover him with favor as with a shield, Ps 5:11-12.

If we use the title Lord we do not know God’s name, hence we cannot love it.

And those who know thy name put their trust in thee, for thou, O Yahweh, hast not forsaken those who seek thee, Ps 9:10.

Those of us who relate to God in a personal way, as friend to friend, feel more confidence and security. We place our trust in our Creator. If we seek him in these days of planetary danger he will not forsake us. We will have confidence and trust in him, but only if we come to know him personally. And we can know him personally only if we know his name.

If we had forgotten the name of our God, or spread forth our hands to a strange God, would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart, Ps 44:20-21.

We forgot the name of our God. We spread forth our hands in supplication to strange gods. We appealed to science to solve our problems; it became a god to us. We appealed to national leaders to solve our problems; they also became gods to us. We expected them to save the world. We gave our labor and our devotion to them, our money and our respect. Do any of us believe that God does not know this? Can anyone believe he does not know the secrets of the heart?

For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah. His servants shall dwell there and possess it; the children of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it, Ps 69:35-36.

Do Jews and Christians love God’s name today? They avoid his name and are fearful of it. They do not know their God. But those who know his name shall inherit the promised lands. Those who cannot know his name shall have no inheritance in the new world.

I am Yahweh, that is my name. My glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to graven images, Isa 42:8.

He tells us explicitly: Yahweh is his name. He will not tolerate the worship of the idols of science, of national power, or of material pleasures.

Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore, in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I, Isa 52:6.

His chosen people today shall come to know his name; when they look for him he shall be with them. They shall know that it is he who speaks and he who acts. Nevermore will there be question of who is God.

PARTIAL CONJUGATION OF THE HEBREW VERB HAYEH

The <i>kal</i> form, the basic verb stem: to be, to exist; <i>hayeh, heyeh</i>						
Person	Past		Future		Present	Imperative
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural		
I	heyehyeeth	hayeynu	ahyeh	nihyey	howeh*	heyeh
You (m)	hayehyath	heyeytem	tihyeh	tihyu	howah	(heyeh)
You (f)	hayehyeth	hayeyten	tihyee	tihyehnah	(howyah)	hayey
He (they)	hayeh	hayu	yihyeh	yihyu	howeem*	hayu
She	haythah		tihyey	tihyehnah	howoth	hayeynah
The <i>piel</i> form, to form, to mold; <i>hiwah, haweh</i>						
Person	Past		Future		Present	Imperative
	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural		
I	hiweethee	hiweenu	ahaweh	n'haweh	nihyeh	haweh***
You (m)	hiweetha	hiweethem	t'haweh	t'hawuwu	nihyeyeth	hawee
You (f)	hiweeth	hiweethen	t'hawee	t'hawenah	nihiyeeem	hawuwu
He (they)	hiwah	hiwuwu	y'haweh**	y'hawuwu	nihyoth	haweynah
She	hiwthah		t'haweh	t'hawenah		

* The *howeh* and *howeem* words combined with the very ancient *El* to form the common Hebrew names for God, *El + howeh = Eloha* and *El + howeem = Elohim*. I highlight them in the above tabulation to show their origin. Literally, they mean *God exists, or Gods exist*. These were ancient forms coming down to us through the Semitic Iberi tribes.

** *Y'haweh*, "I shall form or mold," shortened to *Yahweh*, (*Yawa*), is the name found in the Old Testament texts. This is the name our Creator gave us for his future of this world.

*** *Haweh* (*Hawa*) is the form found everywhere across our planet, a place name from very ancient times. In the imperative it means *He Forms!* or *He Molds!* The implication is not one who creates the basic building blocks of the universe but one who uses those basic building blocks to create the worlds, biological organisms, and man.

JESUS AS CREATOR

Christians believe Jesus is their Lord and personal Savior, the one who came down from heaven, was born as a lowly babe, lived, died, and resurrected that we might be saved. He is the one who overcame the grave, and who offers eternal life.

This concept of Jesus as Savior is stated time and again in the New Testament.

For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, Luke 2:11.

But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Phlp 3:20.

In other passages we are told that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, II Tim 1:10, Tit 1:4, 2:13, II Pet 1:11, 3:2, and so on.

Christians are reassured by these passages; they acknowledge that he is greatly to be praised for his saving action.

This view of Jesus is partial. He could not save unless he first created. Salvation is a work of retrieval, of salvaging that which would otherwise be lost. It is supplemental work, a task implemented in those realms which need corrective action. Without creation first there would be nothing to salvage.

Salvage is necessary only because there is a fault in creation. A mistake was made, a rebellion occurred, or a divine agent defaulted. We know a great rebellion took place; there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought the dragon and his angels, Rev 12:7. We also know Adam failed his mission.

If a rebellion took place in heaven, and if our God desired to rectify the consequences of that rebellion, he would act to bring things together again, to unite all things in himself. This would be a work of heavenly salvation.

If this planet were caught in that rebellion it also would require action to save it from loss. Our God would then unite things on earth as well as in heaven. As part of that process he might offer himself for the personal salvation of his people. Thus, his saving action. He took this task directly upon himself; he did not assign it to another divine being.

Jesus is concerned about his creation. He wishes to remove the effects of rebellion and default. He works to unite all things, both in heaven and on earth, that creation may return to its original purpose.

Creation has a purpose; God did not create merely to gratify his self-esteem. He did not make intelligent beings with free will merely to prove his great majesty and power. His salvation effort shows that he retrieves his creation to fulfill his purpose. Three aspects of his actions can be summarized as Creation, Salvation, and Consummation. Paul mentioned them briefly in Col 1:16-20:

Creation: *In him all things were created, in heaven and on earth. . . All things were created through him and for him.*

Salvation: *. . . And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven.*

Consummation: *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

These three aspects of Jesus as Creator, Savior, and Consummator are necessary for him to be God. He is the Beginning, the Now, and the Forever.

Of the three only the second receives much attention, and then only as personal salvation, the saving of the individual. His power of salvation for all creation, for the planets and stars of space, is neglected in popular theologies about his attributes and nature. Cosmic salvation is neglected because we are so ignorant about it.

In this immediate discussion I shall consider Jesus' role as Creator and Ruler. We cannot fail to recognize his celestial splendor.

The New Testament repeatedly states that Jesus is the Creator. John gave it most succinctly:

All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made, John 1:3.

He is the Son who spoke to us, who was appointed heir to all things, and through whom the worlds were created, Heb 1:2. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. In him all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or lordships or rulers or authorities. All things were created through him and for him, Col 1:15-16.

John saw a vision of twenty-four elders; they worshiped the one who sat on the throne. He was worthy to receive glory and honor and power, for he created all things, Rev 4:11. An angel standing upon the sea and the earth swore by him that created the heaven, the earth, and the sea, Rev 10:6.

Jesus not only is Creator of all things, visible and invisible, in the heavens and on earth, he also is commander and ruler of his vast dominions.

Jesus is the Son who bears the stamp of the nature of God, upholding the universe by his word of power, Heb 1:3. The writer of the book of Hebrews in 1:8 quoted Ps 45:6:

“But of the Son he says, ‘Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom’.”

Those who come out of the great tribulation will stand before the throne and will serve him day and night within his temple, Rev 7:13-17. He who sat upon the throne said he would make all things new, Rev 21:5. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He will be our God, and we shall be his people, 21:7.

But Christians are not alone in recognizing one who is Creator and Lord. Jews also know of one. The New Testament cannot be considered in isolation from Old Testament proclamations on the Creator.

Isaiah says the LORD, Yahweh, is the one who created the heavens and who formed the earth and made it, Isa 45:18. He tells us again in 42:5: the LORD, Yahweh, is God. He is our Creator, the one who made us and gave us breath.

We have those beautiful words from Isaiah 40:

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span? Who has enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in a scale? Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in?

Yahweh answers:

My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens. When I call to them they stand forth together.

The Old Testament shows Yahweh as Creator; it also shows him as Commander and Ruler.

Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. The seraphim stood above him and called to one another, saying, “Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah nearly fainted at the sight of the vision; he was a mortal who could not speak truth, nor did he live among those who spoke truth. He had seen the King, Yahweh of hosts, Isaiah 6.

Psalms 11:4 states that Yahweh is in his holy temple, his throne is in heaven. Yahweh is a great king over all the earth, Ps 47:2. He is God; he sits on his holy throne and reigns over all the earth, Ps 47:8. He established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all, Ps 103:19.

From these passages we see that Yahweh is the Creator, God of heavenly hosts, and Lord of all the earth. There can be no doubt that he has his throne in the heavens. But what is meant by “heavens?”

If both the New Testament and the Old refer to the same personality, as they must, they tell us that Jesus is Yahweh of the Old Testament. Jesus is Creator and Ruler of his universe; Yahweh also is Creator and Ruler of his universe.

But this view creates great difficulty. Many believe that Yahweh is the Father and not Jesus. Psalm 2:7 says that Yahweh created (begot) a Son. This Son will receive the nations as his heritage. If this Son is Jesus then Yahweh must be the Father. If Yahweh is Jesus then this Son must be someone else. How do we resolve this dilemma?

The question of Jesus as Yahweh is crucial to understanding. The foundations of Christian theology rest on this identification but it has remained buried through the generations.

Yahweh is a personal God and a distinct personality. This fact is indicated in many Old Testament passages.

Thus say Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel:

Will you question me about my children, or command me concerning the works of my hands? I made the earth, and created man upon it. It was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their hosts, Isa 45:11-12.

The Holy One of Israel is understood by Jews to refer to the God who made a special covenant with them. Yahweh is their Holy One.

If Jesus is the Creator, as all Christians believe, and if Yahweh is the Creator, as the Old Testament passages show, then Jesus is Yahweh. On these grounds Jesus is the Holy One of Israel. But Jesus is the Holy One of Israel on other grounds. He was born as a Jew. He became the Holy One of Israel through human birth. The Old Testament passages, when referring to the Holy One of Israel, could be understood in either sense.

Jews face crucial decisions. Was Jesus divine? What evidence speaks for his divinity? Is the historical record of his birth, life, work, death, and resurrection reliable? If ignored what are the consequences? Can Jews risk such grave error?

Decisions for Christians are different but equally crucial. They already believe Jesus is divine. Their problems revolve around the respective roles of the Father, the Son, and a more precise understanding of the relationship between the two. Who is Yahweh?

When Christians read such passages they naturally assume the Holy One means Jesus. This assumption is confirmed by the designations of Savior and Redeemer. Jesus is known as Savior and Redeemer. Isa 43:3 says that Yahweh is our Savior, the Holy One of Israel, our God. Isa 43:11 says he is Yahweh, beside him there is no Savior. 43:14 says that Yahweh is our Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. 45:15 and 21 repeat this assertion. 49:26 says that all flesh will know that he is Yahweh our Savior and our Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. Isaiah 60:16 repeats this again.

If Yahweh is the Father these references to Savior and Redeemer would not mean Jesus.

Many examples can be drawn of the difficulty that confronts us if Yahweh is the Father. In Isa 40:3 a voice cries in the wilderness, *Prepare the way of Yahweh. Make straight a highway for our God.* This would be a highway for our Father, not for Jesus. In Isa 41:17 the Father would answer his people, he would not forsake them; it would not be Jesus. In Isa 45:21 the Father would be the righteous God and Savior, not Jesus. In Isa 65:17 the Father would create new heavens and a new earth, not Jesus. But all Christians believe it is Jesus who will create a new heaven and a new earth, Rev 21:1.

If this pattern were followed in all the Old Testament passages the Father would do everything; Jesus would do nothing. Jesus would be a mere bystander, watching as the Father does all the work of the universe. Obviously, this cannot be. However, the New Testament has remarks which make us pause. In Act 17:22-31 is a statement by Paul that appears to contradict the assessment that Yahweh is Jesus. He says there is a God who made the world and everything in it, one who is Lord of heaven and earth, one who gives life and breath to men. This is the God in whom we live and move and have our being. This God commands that we now repent, for he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he appointed. Of this fact he has given assurance to everyone by raising him from the dead.

The only one raised from the dead, the one who will judge the world, is Jesus. Then the one Paul said was Lord of heaven and earth, the one who made the world and everything in it, and the one who gives life and breath to man this one must be God the Father. Comparing this against Isa 42:5 we are forced into the position that Yahweh is the Father.

How can this be? Is the Bible confused? Was Paul confused? Is the record unreliable? Are we confused in our understanding?

Jesus taught that he and the Father were one, John 10:30. He does nothing without the Father's authority, John 8:28. He is in the Father and the Father is in him, John 10:38. All that the Father has is his, John 16:15. Jesus also taught that the Father raises the dead and gives them life, John 5:21. But he also said, as the Father has life in himself so he has given the Son to have life in himself, John 5:26. The Father gave him power over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom the Father has given him, 17:2.

Could this mean we cannot distinguish between the Father and the Son? Does Yahweh of the Old Testament represent both Jesus and the Father? Is Jesus literally and figuratively the same as the Father? Or is he the full expression of the Father in the universe of time and space? Does he completely and repletely follow the will of the Father? Is there such a blending and blurring of both the Father and the Son that we cannot distinguish between them as persons, or between their respective expressions in the realms of creation?

But Yahweh is distinct. He is a discrete being, not a Godhead. In the Old Testament the word God can represent different aspects of the Godhead. But the word Yahweh is a name, it is not a title. It is not employed to represent a Godhead. It is used for a concrete and specific personality.

In Ps 40:1 the writer said he waited patiently for Yahweh. He, Yahweh, inclined to the writer and heard the writers cry. This is not the action of a Godhead; it is the action of a divine personality. Yahweh is "he," not "it," nor "them." Many examples illustrate how we lose sense unless we understand Yahweh as a concrete personality.

I will sing of thy steadfast love, O Yahweh, for ever; I will proclaim thy faithfulness to all generations. For thy steadfast love was established forever, thy faithfulness is firm as the heavens. Ps 89:1-2.

The Psalmist expresses his adoration of this God whose love and faithfulness are eternal. He does not believe this love and faithfulness come from an abstract Godhead; he believes it comes from a God who is a personality.

Thus says Yahweh, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, Yahweh of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Isa 44:6.

Yahweh is a distinct personality, proclaiming his unique role in the rulership and redemption of Israel. He is the first and the last; there is none other than he. He repeats this again in Isa 48:12-13, and many other places. Rev 21 tells us that Jesus is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

If we are to make consistent sense of the Old Testament we must regard Yahweh as either the Father or as Jesus. He cannot be both. If he is both our understanding becomes so confused we can never agree on the meaning. It becomes mystical. It loses its power to persuade our minds.

We were led into the confusion by the passage of Acts 17:22- 31. Most people believe the *Book of Acts* was written by Luke, the physician who accompanied Paul on some of his journeys, who knew Peter, and who probably obtained much of his material from their accounts. The passage records Paul's discourse to the Athenians on their worship of unknown gods. He tells them that the God who made everything does not dwell in shrines made by men. He then describes the greatness of the God who made all things.

Paul may have attempted to simplify his appeal to the Athenians, that they understand more easily the reality of a living God. But his presentation creates a dilemma. He alters the roles of the Father, the Son, and their respective powers. The Father is the one who created the worlds and gave life to men, not Jesus. Jesus is emphasized as a man and not as God. And the power to raise Jesus from the dead is placed in the hands of the Father. The power of Jesus to raise himself from the dead is not explained.

We must keep in mind that Jesus said he had the power to lay down his life, and the power to take it up again. For this reason the Father loved him, and this charge he had received from the Father, John 10:17-18.

Does Jesus lay down his life and take it up again of himself? Or does the Father do it for him? Although it is true that Jesus was in mortal form his power to raise himself was not an earthly power. It was a divine power in his right as Creator. Why did Paul not explain this to the Athenians? Why present his argument in this manner? Why alter the roles of the Father and of Jesus in this way? Other passages show that Luke was reporting correctly. Paul repeatedly asserts that it was God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead. See Rom 4:24, 6:4, 8:11, 10:9, I Cor 6:14, 15:15, and so on. Acts 17 agrees with Paul's letters.

Perhaps Paul and the other apostles were not that careful in their ascription of the powers of the Father and of Jesus. They did not use the Old Testament passages with such exactness. They used some references in one sense, referring to the Father, and others in the other sense, referring to Jesus. They never attempted to be consistent. Thus, they unconsciously confused one with the other. They left a religious legacy that bewildered the generations.

In I Tim 1:1 Paul writes that God, meaning the Father, is our Savior. He distinguishes between him and Jesus; Jesus is our hope. This difference again is invoked in I Tim 2:3- 5. Again Paul refers to Jesus as the man; he is the mediator between God and men. He also refers to Jesus as the Lord, I Tim 1:2, and so on. Jude 25 also shows God the Father as our Savior and Jesus as our Lord:

To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time, now and forever. Amen. In other passages the other view is taken. In Tit 1:4 Paul says that Jesus is our Savior. He also says that Jesus is our Redeemer. God sent forth his Son to redeem those who were under the law, Gal 4:5. Jesus is the God and Savior who gave himself to redeem us, Tit 2:14.

Obviously there was no attempt to be consistent in distinguishing between the Father and Jesus in their saving or creating roles. Yet they are presented as separate and unique beings.

These examples show the care we must exercise in accepting the New Testament literally.

If we were to engage in abstract theology we might debate the complex concept of trinity, and the threefold aspects of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We might believe that we cannot distinguish one from the other. But the New Testament writers described distinct personalities, even though they were not consistent. This inconsistency was due almost exclusively to the use of the word "Lord." Had they used the name Yahweh they would have been clear in their thinking and teaching. They would have left a more lucid legacy.

From our earlier review of the creative aspects of Yahweh we must assume Yahweh means Jesus and not the Father. I shall draw out the implications of assuming Jesus as Yahweh and how it affects our views of both New and Old Testament passages. We will then be able to weigh the traditional view and how this created such difficulty in understanding.

I shall assume that the Father is the origin of all things, from eternity past, and that the Son is the expression of the Father, his representative in the universe. God the Father is not visible to us nor could he live as a man. But God the Son became visible to us; he did, indeed, live on this earth as a man.

The Father is active in the universe, in creation; he is the source of all things. But he is represented by his Son in the details of creation; the Father does not personally shape the realms of space. The universe and all things in it came from the Father, but all things came through the Son. God is Father to all but it is his Son who actively creates and administrates in the universe. He is the one who gave his human life for our salvation. The Father gave origin; the Son performed the creative acts. (I neglect the theological considerations of eternal coexistence, since such discussion goes beyond the scope of this book.)

THE MOUNT OF ASSEMBLY

We cannot clarify the problems created by the apostles unless we look at a higher context. If we restrict our sources to the New Testament we will not arrive at understanding. Christian confusion is in the New Testament; we must go beyond it to resolve the difficulties. The apostles were not clear in their minds. They were so awed by their personal experiences they did not consider the ramifications of their views. They were so intensely preoccupied with the amazing phenomenon of God living among men the theological implications were not carefully weighed. They were firsthand witnesses to a unique event in universe history; they were primarily absorbed in teaching and preaching about that event.

This is not to say they did not recognize unprecedented theological problems. Paul especially was concerned about, and assayed to discuss them. He knew the Old Testament thoroughly, in Hebrew. But he was conditioned by the cultural habit of referring to Yahweh as the Lord. He did not provide an explanation more penetrating examination might have achieved. The *Book of Hebrews* also attempted to discuss the theological meanings, based on a few Old Testament passages, but that Book also created problems by not fully drawing out the implications. That book concentrated on proving Jesus as the divine Son predicted in the Old Testament; it did not consider a broader study of the promises.

If one accepts the New Testament as the inspired and infallible word of God one cannot question those writings. One dare not make the statements I just made. But if the New Testament is the work of men, expressing themselves according to their understanding, good or bad, it will be short of accurate revelation.

This situation makes it imperative that we reexamine the Old Testament sources. We must take a fresh look at that material. I shall begin with the starry realms. This knowledge is highly confused and demands scrutiny.

As an example, consider Ps 103:19.

Yahweh has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

It seems that Yahweh has his throne in the heavens, in the sky. However, when encountering a phrase like “the heavens” Christians pass over it casually. They usually regard the heavens as an undefined place where the Father resides and where the Son resides with him. The plural “heavens” signifies a majestic dominion of vague existence. Usually heaven is regarded as the “invisible” part of the universe, borrowed from Paul’s phrase “things visible and invisible.” No one asks if heaven is inside the universe or outside it. Questions never get that far.

The OT Hebrew word is *shamayim*, the sky, as lofty or high above. The word is plural: literally, “the heavens.” (The singular form “heaven” is not found in the OT.) It means the arch which contains the clouds, as well as deep space where the stars move. Refer to the definition by James Strong in his Exhaustive Concordance, Hebrew dictionary word #8064. It is used many places to designate the

air as in Gen 1:26, “the fowl of the air” Deut 4:17, “winged fowl that fly in the air” Prov 30:19, “the way of an eagle in the air” and so on. In other places the context shows clearly that the word means the sky. In Gen 1:8 the firmament is understood as the visible arch of the sky: “and God called the firmament heaven.” In Gen 15:5 Abraham was asked to look toward heaven to number the stars, if he could. This did not mean that Abraham was to look toward heaven where he would find the stars placed between the earth and heaven, but that the stars were in heaven. In Gen 22:17 Abraham is told that his descendants would be multiplied “as the stars of heaven.” Here heaven clearly means deep space inside the universe. Isa 13:10 says “the stars of the heavens and their constellations,” again meaning deep space. Jer 8:2 says the bones “shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven.” Many other passages could be cited.

Compare the following use of the same word *shamayim* with those above.

Yahweh is in his holy temple; Yahweh’s throne is in heaven (the heavens), Ps 11:4.

Yahweh looks down from heaven (the heavens) upon the children of men, to see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God, Ps 14:2.

For who in the skies can be compared to Yahweh? Who among the heavenly beings is like Yahweh? Psalm 89:6.

Shamayim may mean different things: the starry realms of space inside the universe, the “invisible” part of the universe, or a place outside the universe. We can go off into mysticism, or we can conclude, without error, that Yahweh resides among the starry realms of space, within the heavens.

Passages in the New Testament confirm such view. In John 14:2 Jesus told his apostles that his Father’s house had many mansions. What did he mean by his Father’s house? Did he mean the universe, the regions of space? Did he mean the “invisible” part of the universe? Did he mean a place outside the universe?

The Greek word translated as house is *oikia*, an abode or residence, a home. The Greek word translated as mansion is *monai*, also a residence or abode. The word *oikia* is used in the sense of structure; the word *monai* is used in the sense of occupancy. Jesus meant that in his Father’s residence, the structure, there are many places to occupy, to abide.

If heaven is a single entity, the home of the Father, how can there be many places to abide? Would it not be one grand residence? But if the Father’s house is the universe, the creation of space and time, there could be many celestial spheres to occupy, many places to abide. Then Jesus’ remark has a meaning we can grasp; otherwise, it does not. If the Father’s house is outside the universe, or the “invisible” part of the universe, the many mansions are beyond our comprehension. Why would Jesus refer to realms we cannot comprehend?

At another time Jesus said he had other sheep which were not of this fold, John 10:16. This remark is understood universally to mean he had sheep who were not Jews. The context in Chapter 10 is about the sheepfold and the shepherd. One naturally accepts that he was talking about an earthly sheepfold. However, the word is *aulin*; it is used about a dozen places in the New Testament. In all other cases it is translated as

court, hall, or palace. Only in this one verse is it translated as fold. See Matt 26:3, 58, 69; Mark 14:54, 66, 15:16, Luke 11:21, 22:55, John 18:15, and Rev 11:2. Strong, in his Greek dictionary #833, says it originally meant a court, as open to the wind, and thus, by implication, a mansion.

The difference in view is crucial. Does it mean court, hall, palace, or mansion, or does it mean sheepfold? If Jesus has other sheep which are not of this court, this hall, this palace, or this mansion, it makes more sense to believe he was referring to other worlds in space. This world is only one of many mansions in the universe.

When Jesus told his apostles about the many mansions he said he would prepare a place for them, that where he was they could be also. Jesus obviously was reassuring them; they would not see eternal death but would live again. They would see resurrection in the place where he would be, on the many mansions in the Father's house.

But if the many mansions are inside the universe, not outside, Jesus' remark would mean that he resides inside the universe, not outside. He was going to a place in the universe where he has prepared many mansions, many places to abide. He will take us there when we die. We will not resurrect into some mystical heaven outside the universe, nor into an "invisible" universe, but onto the mansion worlds in the sky.

His remarks do not mean we will have bodies of flesh and blood. On the contrary, Paul told us we will receive celestial bodies. Paul said the glory of the terrestrial is one, but the glory of the celestial is another, I Cor 15:40.

Paul told us specifically we would resurrect into eternal bodies in the heavens:

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, II Cor 5:1.

Elsewhere Paul mentions a "third" heaven, II Cor 12. He had an unusual experience; he also had difficulty describing it. He did not want to brag about this most amazing experience, but felt he had to tell about it. He said he knew a man who, about fourteen years ago, was caught up to the third heaven. He did not know if this was in the body or out of it. He also said this man, meaning himself, was caught up to Paradise. He saw and heard things that could not be spoken.

Where was this third heaven? Was it inside the universe or outside? Was it in the "invisible" part of the universe? If there is a third heaven there must be a first and a second.

Some persons reason that the third heaven is outside the universe. They think the first heaven is the atmosphere and the second heaven is the stars. Then the third heaven is beyond the stars. But this is a trivial explanation for an important passage. The explanation tries to avoid the implications of Paul's remark.

Suppose these "heavens" are not vast undefined regions outside the universe, or some mystical "invisible" part of the universe, but real places inside the universe. Suppose they are special worlds prepared for us. If Paul saw one of these worlds, one of

these special celestial spheres, he might have called it a "heaven." He knew there was more than one; otherwise he would not have said it was a third heaven. For him this sphere may have appeared as a heaven, a place of great beauty and grandeur.

Paul used the Greek word *ouranos* for his third heaven. It means the sky, the place of the stars. Like the Hebrew word *shamayim* its meaning has changed with translations and habitual usage over the centuries until today we do not recognize its original purpose. The third heaven was a third place in the sky.

Other passages confirm the suggestion that the kingdom of heaven is among the stars of space. Naturally, this world is a part of that kingdom, since it also is a sphere revolving in space.

Isaiah 14:12-14 says Hillel ben Shachar, literally, Morning Star—Son of Dawn, desired in his heart to ascend to heaven, above the stars of God. He wanted to set his throne on high, on the Mount of Assembly in the far north. He would ascend above the heights of the clouds and make himself like the Most High.

Although the stars of God might refer to celestial beings the context suggests the stars of the universe, the shining orbs of space. The phrase "above the stars and above the heights of the clouds" could be understood to mean outside the physical universe, but it also could be understood to mean above the clouds and the stars within the universe.

The term "far north" lends support to this idea. The far north is a specific spatial direction. We can conceive of direction within the universe, a physical characteristic of space, but we cannot conceive of direction for realms outside the universe or for the "invisible" part of the universe. The ancient writer would have had similar difficulties. He could not assign a "far north" to existence beyond our conceptual framework.

Psalm 48:1-3 also speaks of places that must be inside the universe. There is a city of our God, a holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, and a joy to all the earth. It is Mount Zion in the far north, the city of the Great King, the citadel of Yahweh our God.

Again we see that the heavenly Mount Zion is in the far north. How could it be in the far north if it were outside the universe?

This is where Yahweh, the Great King, resides.

Psalm 46:4 also speaks of the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. Rivers flow through this great city; they make glad the city of God.

If rivers flow through this city we should expect them to be real rivers, not mystical rivers. If there is a city, we should expect that city to be on a celestial sphere somewhere within the universe. How could rivers and cities be outside space and time?

The *Book of Hebrews* in the NT alluded to this city. In Heb 11:10 the anonymous writer, perhaps Paul, said that Abraham looked for a city which has foundations. The word means real, literal structures. The builder and maker of this city is God. Heb 12:22 states that Mount Zion is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, where innumerable angels assemble in festal gathering. The writer of this passage understood God as living inside space, among the starry realms.

When Jesus said he would prepare a place for us he said we would join him in the heavenly realms. Since the city of God is in the far north, with real, literal foundations, and with real rivers flowing through it, we also will live in that city among the stars. When we resurrect we will journey on to other worlds in space. These worlds are the same as those to which Abraham went, the ones to which he looked forward. As Jesus said, if it were not so he would have told us.

Still other passages show real, literal places of abode for divine beings inside the universe. In Ezekiel 28 is a description of a divine being that walked among the stones of fire on the holy mountain of God. Many different precious stones were his covering. He was the signet of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty, and blameless in all his ways from the day he was created until iniquity was found in him. His heart became proud because of his beauty; he corrupted his wisdom for the sake of splendor. He was in the garden of God, in that heavenly Eden. Then he was cast as a profane thing from the mountain of God.

This divine being inhabited a world fashioned for time. Precious stones and crystalline materials were his covering. He was on one of those administrative spheres that swing in their orbits to rule over the worlds made for human habitation. How unfortunate that astronomers cannot find these whirling administrative worlds in their telescopes.

Further support for many worlds in space is found in Gen 2:1. When God finished creating there were the heavens and the earth, and the host of them. This host refers to the blazing orbs of space and the worlds that circle them. Psalm 33:6 also says that Yahweh made the heavens by the word of his mouth, and “all the host of them.” KJV says in Heb 11:3 that the worlds were framed by the word of God. Heb 1:2 says that the Son also made the worlds.

The translations do not all agree. Literally, in Greek, Heb 11:3 states that God, by the word of his mouth, adjusted the ages. Heb 1:2 says literally that the Son made the ages. The Greek word is *eon*, a measure of time. Heaven beyond space and time would not have eons or ages as we understand them. “Adjusting the ages” must refer to the dispensations of time, dispensations of the physical universe. Places outside the universe do not have space and they do not have time that needs to be adjusted.

We have other evidence for celestial affairs conducted inside the universe. John said he saw a sea of glass mingled with fire; those who had conquered the beast stood beside the sea of glass with the harps of God in their hands. How could this huge crystalline structure with such unusual lighting be outside the universe or inside the “invisible” universe? How could the harps of God be mystical spirit forms? (These harps are not necessarily musical instruments; they may be instruments for celestial communication.)

John also saw a great Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. In that future day it will be placed upon earth to serve as a light by which the nations will walk. It too will be composed of huge crystals, with paving like unto pure gold, clear as glass, Rev 21:10-27. When that great event takes place the nations will no longer doubt the reality of God supervising his creation from inside the universe, from among the starry realms of space.

The biblical evidence shows that Yahweh resides on a celestial sphere; he rules his vast dominions from that place. That sphere has a city, it has rivers flowing across its surface, and it has residential structures of exquisite beauty, in stones of fire.

Paul said in I Cor 2:9:

No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.

How could we deny those beautiful words from Isaiah?

Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in?

Our God, Yahweh of hosts, did indeed stretch out the heavens of space; he spread them like a tent to dwell in. He not only made them for us to dwell in but he made them also that he might dwell in the midst of his mighty creation.

Lest any should be lead astray, please note that this discussion is not intended to imply that God is a physical or material being. He is not; he is a spirit being. But spirit beings may use the material constructions of space as their temporary abodes while they prosecute the programs of time. Spirit beings originate outside the realms of space and time but they reside in their creations until those far reaches of the distant future when all shall be consummated.

(C. S. Lewis built a theme of spirit beings occupying the physical orbs of space in his fictional Space Trilogy, where he said he published “in the form of *fiction* what would certainly not be listened to as fact.” The italics are his.)

When we travel to the mansion worlds in the sky we shall not complete our eternal careers. Those worlds are merely stepping stones toward Paradise and the Father. We have a grand and glorious career open before us if we can qualify. This view of the heavenly realms explains the remark by Jesus; he said that no man could come to the Father except by him, John 14:6. We must traverse a full heavenly career inside this universe under the eye of our Creator before we are ready to meet the Father.

Would we limit the majesty of God to one small world? Would he create the vast stretches of space, with untold billions upon billions of suns and galaxies merely to populate it with one small inhabited world? We cannot be the center of the universe, although we may have been uniquely honored to host the Creator when he lived here as a man.

But what strange welcome we gave him. We condemned him for political reasons and then hung him on a cross, to die in torture, like a common criminal.

THE CELESTIAL HOST

Throughout the Old Testament one finds the phrase “Yahweh of hosts,” or, as the translations would have it, “LORD of hosts.” Yahweh is Lord and God to vast numbers of celestial beings.

The phrase “Yahweh of hosts” graphically states the difference between our God and the pantheistic gods of ancient times. Those gods may have a retinue of lesser gods but the concept of a host of divine beings is not understood in the degraded mythologies. Modern godless scholars would equate Yahweh with those mythological gods; in so doing they fail to recognize the majestic presentations of the Hebrew writings and the great truths they portray. The Bible describes a living God; folklore knows only debased myth.

This is the reason the Bible has such strong appeal. People everywhere know instinctively that those writings are more than human invention. They have origin from other than human imagination. Although they may be short of explicit revelation they offer us views of time, of creation, and of the activity of celestial beings not found in other world literature. They are truly holy.

Where are the celestial hosts? Are they domiciled on universe administrative worlds? What are their functions in creation? What are their assignments? Do they work on material worlds like ours? Why is their existence necessary? Did God create them merely to gratify a creative urge? Does he need companionship? Does our Creator need other celestial beings to help in universe activities? Is it possible he does not perform every task himself?

Although biblical information is sparse it offers some insight into these questions.

The phrase “innumerable angels in festal gathering,” Heb 12:22, carries with it images of divine beings gathered in celebration. Imagine their joy in the majesty of the grand panorama of the universe and in the fact of creation. But for all their grandeur the physical realms of space must be inferior to the home of all origins, to Paradise.

Although spirit beings operate within the physical realms they are not physical. They must originate from places other than this material universe. Furthermore the physical universe could not have been created from inside the universe; all material creation had to proceed from a higher level, from outside the universe. The term heaven could rightly designate those other places and is the usual view.

However, we must give full regard to the activities of spirit beings who are associated with the management of physical affairs and the care of material creation. They remain close to their field of activities.

Many activities must be current in such a vast universe. We would not expect one divine being to be engaged in the full and detailed management of this diverse enterprise. Our Creator made the worlds but he also must manage them. He uses a vast celestial host to help him.

For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist, I Cor 8:5-6.

Paul knew there were many gods and many lords in heaven, in *ouranos*. But who called them gods; who knew them as lords? The Jews did not know celestial beings as gods; they did not call them lords. The Hebrew people knew only one Lord, Yahweh. The Greeks knew many gods; indeed they used the title lord for many of their gods. The Greek god Adonis received his name from the Semitic Adon; literally the name meant Lord. Are these the gods and lords Paul talked about? Was his reference a general designation for the mythological gods of surrounding people? If so, why did Paul give credit to them?

Or was Paul using the term as a way of identifying the many celestial beings of the starry realms — gods, so called? Is it possible the mythological gods of the pagan world were debased memory of the real gods and lords of the heavenly realms? Were those myths a remnant of tradition from times long ago?

For Paul they were not true gods and lords; they were gods and lords, so-called. They commanded respect but they were not to be worshiped. Paul knew to whom our allegiance belonged. There is one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus. All things are from the Father, and all things are through Jesus. Paul used the words gods and lords in the sense of divine beings of administrative authority and rulership. He used the phrase “the god of this world” in that same manner, II Cor 4:4. The “god” of this world was once the spiritual administrator of this planet. But now he blinds the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light.

Unbelievers are all those who do not believe that Jesus is the Lord of all creation. But unbelievers also are those who do not believe in the mighty celestial beings of the heavenly realms. We might know Jesus as our Lord and personal savior but if we do not know him in his great glory as God, Yahweh of hosts and Lord of all creation, we do not truly know him. Then we also are blinded by the god of this world.

The existence of heavenly kingdoms and the partitioning of administration was mentioned by Paul several places. In Eph 1:20-21 he describes those things the Father accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places

“far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. . .”

Paul was not speaking of earthly rule and dominion; he meant heavenly rule and power and dominion — inside the realms of space and time. In Eph 3:10 he says that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known

“to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”

In Eph 6:12 he said we do not contend against flesh and blood,

“but against principalities and powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

What is a principality? It is a smaller state ruled by a prince and usually part of a larger empire. Theologians would deflect the full significance of Paul’s phrase by saying that it is an order of angels. They would deny the rulership and focus our attention on a vague and innocuous word. We have no trouble with angels but we have many problems with heavenly rulers and authorities. Our religious notions are mystical; we would prefer to keep them that way. When we carefully examine the Greek text we find that “principalities” are “rulers”; they are heavenly “princes.” The “powers” are “authorities” who have jurisdiction over heavenly dominions.

In Col 1:16 Paul emphasized the fact of heavenly rulerships, kingdoms and dominions,

“for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities.”

References to celestial administration are not limited to Paul or the New Testament. They are also found in the Old Testament.

Several Psalms speak of Yahweh’s lordship over the gods. 95:3 says Yahweh is a great King above all the gods. 84:7 and 136:2 say he is a God of gods. Psalm 138:1 is a praise unto Yahweh, before all the gods.

Psalm 86:8 is definite:

There is none like thee among the gods, O Yahweh, nor are there any works like thine.

Many persons conclude that these passages could not refer to celestial beings. After all, there is only one God. They judge that the passages must refer to earth gods, perhaps the Canaanite gods of surrounding tribes. If there is only one God these other gods must be manmade.

Indeed, for us, there is only one God, but there are many gods and many lords, so-called, in the heavenly realms. The Psalms do not compare the grandeur of Yahweh to the idols or mythological images of this world. They compare him to the gods of the celestial realms. These celestial beings are called gods because of their divine status and their lordship in the heavenly places. They are immortal, with heavenly powers; they have a right to be regarded as godlike in their existence.

However, they are not to be worshiped. They may be godlike, but they are beings who also serve in creation. They may command great respect from us but they are not God. Only God the Father and God the Son should be worshiped. When John fell down at the feet of the mighty being he was told not to do it; that mighty being was a fellow servant also, Rev 19:10. See also 22:9.

No passage in the Bible is more graphic than that of Psalm 82. It is a remarkable revelation of the gods of the heavenly realms. It also speaks about heavenly beings who are called the Sons of the Most High, divine Sons of celestial status. (Here I follow RSV.)

1) ***God takes his seat in the divine council.***

This is not a human council, nor an earthly council. It is an assembly of the gods.

2) ***In the midst of the gods he holds judgment.***

Our God, Yahweh, is the one who judges among the gods. He is the one who rules and commands. He is the one who sets policies and puts forth mandates. He delegates power and authority. He administers his creation. He is Lord and King over all his vast dominions.

3) ***How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked.***

A question is asked of God. How long will he continue with the present state of affairs? How long will he let the rebellious Sons continue in their wicked ways? When will he unite all things in heaven and upon earth?

A plea is made:

4) ***Give justice to the weak and the fatherless. Maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy. Deliver them from the hand of the wicked.***

The humble and weak of the world need God’s help. They need a divine shepherd to deliver them from the affliction and woe of the present age. They follow their days of life without comprehension and without understanding.

5) ***They have neither knowledge nor understanding; they walk about in darkness.***

Because of the sins of his created Sons, and the sins of man, the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Then God speaks to his rebellious Sons:

6) *I say you are gods, Sons of the Most High, all of you. Nevertheless, for your great wickedness, you shall die like men, and fall as any earthly prince would fall.*

Our God will bring judgment against those fallen heavenly Sons. They shall die like men.

At last the exclamation goes forth:

7) *Arise, O God, and judge the earth. To thee belong all the nations.*

For generations the celestial host have been lumped together into one grand category called angels. There was no attempt to distinguish among them, nor to perceive their roles in heavenly administration. We know there is a celestial personality called Gabriel. We know there is another called Michael. We also know there is a whole order of beings called Melchizedek, Psalm 110. But we fail to examine the information given us. Much understanding can be obtained but we neglect to draw it out.

Gabriel is a divine being of high rank. His name appears four times in the Bible, twice in Daniel and twice in Luke. In Daniel 8:16 Gabriel is commanded to make Daniel understand the vision he had seen. In 9:21 Gabriel came while Daniel was praying in the evening. In both visits his mission was to give Daniel understanding and wisdom. The vision in Dan 8 is about a great power which is to arise; this power will be so great that it will grow as high as the host of heaven and cast some of them to the ground. It will magnify itself even to the Prince of the host. In the latter part of Dan 9 Gabriel describes the future of the people of Israel and the holy city. In this forecast Gabriel also describes the fate of our former Planetary Prince. Both visits by Gabriel concerned important events in the destiny of our planet. These are of great concern in the heavenly realms because this planet was the setting for the incarnation of the Creator and because he has taken it under his wing. We are his special ward; the entire universe watches with keen interest the events unfolding on this planet. Gabriel is an important agent in these affairs.

In Luke 1 Gabriel comes on a special errand to tell Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth will bear a son and that his name is to be called John. Later he comes to tell Mary that she will be the mother of Jesus. Here Gabriel's visits are connected with the human birth of our Creator. This assignment was not delegated to a low order being or an ordinary messenger. It was reserved to a being of high rank in the celestial realms, perhaps of rank second only to Jesus.

Michael is another divine being who is of high rank. Jude 9 calls him an archangel. The title means chief angel, a commander of the celestial host. If Jude was not informed of these matters he would not have recognized Michael as a glorious celestial being of great authority. Because of the imprint of infallibility we believe Jude was divinely inspired to call Michael an archangel. In this manner Jude sidetracked full examination of the role and status of Michael. He is of highest rank.

In Rev 12:7 John tells us a war rose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting the dragon and his angels. Although this was not a physical war as we know war here upon earth, it was devastating in the losses among the celestial host. A third of the stars of heaven, the heavenly host, were swept down by the tail of the dragon, Rev 12:4.

Again this passage leads us to believe that Michael is merely an angel. However if we examine the biblical information in greater detail we obtain a better insight into this mighty being. The events described in Revelation suggest that Michael is of the highest rank, above all other celestial beings. The celestial host were engaged in this heavenly warfare; Michael led the holy forces. His name in Hebrew means "He who is God." But what personality would deserve such a name?

(To reduce the implications of the name Michael godless scholars translate it as "He who is like unto God." However, by inference, it carries the same meaning.)

In Dan 12 we are told that Michael will rise at the time of the great tribulation. He is the great Prince "who has charge of your people." KJV says "the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people."

The phrase, "The children of thy people," suggests the offspring of the Jewish people then living in Babylonian captivity. Some may feel that Michael has charge of only the Jews, since Daniel was a Jew, and the passage refers to "thy people." But might the phrase "thy people" refer to all the people of the earth? Why would a celestial being of such high status, one who is commander of a host of heavenly beings, one who is God, be in charge of only the Jews? Why not all the people of the earth?

Who has charge of this earth? Is it not Jesus? Did he not take it under his wing when he lived here as a man? Did he not come to save the world? If the phrase "your people" refers to all the people of the earth, and if Jesus took charge of this planet, then the passage suggests that "Michael" is a heavenly name for Jesus.

This suggestion is supported elsewhere. Daniel 10:21 says Michael is "your Prince." Again, it is difficult to accept that Michael is Prince merely to Jews. If this chief of the heavenly host is a mere Prince of the Jews then Jews would, indeed, be special people.

But who is our Prince? Do we not have a great Prince who resigned his heavenly authority for a short while to live among us as a man? Is Jesus not our great heavenly Prince, Acts 3:15 and 5:31 in KJV?

If Michael is the one who will arise at the time of the great tribulation what relationship does he bear with Yahweh and with Jesus? Isaiah 33:10 says that Yahweh will arise when the people will be burned with fire. This is the time of the great judgment. Zephaniah 3:8 confirms this. It is Yahweh who will arise as a witness when he gathers the nations and assembles the kingdoms to pour out all the heat of his anger. The earth will be consumed in this raging fire.

The New Testament also says that Jesus will appear at the time of the great planetary judgment. The Son of man will come on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory; he will send out his angels with a great trumpet call, Matt 24:30, 31.

If Jesus is Yahweh, and if Michael displays the same role as Jesus and Yahweh, then these several passages show that Michael is of the highest rank. Equality appears between Michael, Jesus, and Yahweh. The three names apply: 1) to the incarnate being, Jesus, 2) to the Creator, Yahweh, and 3) to the one who administrates the heavenly realms, Michael. These are all distinguishing names for the same personality in his different roles as Savior, Creator, and Administrator-Consummator.

Paul made a curious remark. He said he refused to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, the Old Testament. He made open statements of truth that every person should consider in their conscience before God. He admitted that his gospel was veiled but only to those who had been blinded by the god of this world. This was to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. II Cor 4:4.

Paul's phrase, "who is the likeness of God," carries the same literal meaning of the Hebrew name Michael. (The phrase is "who is the image of God.") But Paul does not expand upon it. If he intended a reference to Michael there is nothing in his surviving letters to support the idea that he recognized a connection between Michael and Jesus.

Paul feared accusations that he was tampering with God's word. He recognized that if he presented open examination of the Old Testament passages this charge would be leveled against him. The same problem afflicts this work. If we dare draw out the full significance of the information God gave us we will be accused of tampering with God's word, not because we are false, but because the sleeper does not like his dreams disturbed. It is all according to that spirit of deep sleep; woe to him who may open eyes to the light of day. All persons in good conscience must decide if we tamper with God's word.

The suggestion of Jesus as Michael does, indeed, lead to great difficulty. Dan 10:13 says that Michael is only one of the Chief Princes. There are others like him; he is not unique nor alone in his heavenly rank.

The phrase "Chief Prince" means one who is a Prince of princes. This is like a King of kings. Since Michael is a celestial being, a Chief Prince, and since princes are lords, and there are many gods and many Lords in the heavens, he would be a Lord of lords. But who is King of kings, Lord of lords, and God of gods? Is this not Yahweh and Jesus referred to in so many passages? Deut 10:17, Ps 136:2-3, Dan 2:47, I Tim 6:15, Rev 17:14, Rev 19:16, and so on?