

Understanding Bible Terms

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I've been in the Church of God now forty-six years. There are people in this room who have certainly been here longer than that. Forty-six years, and in those years, basically, the focus too often has been on what to think instead of how to think. We were told what the answer was and we were supposed to be able to repeat the answer. You weren't supposed to stop and think what another answer might possibly be—no, you had the answer; you just think about the answer. Sincerely, that is very much the culture of what it has been.

Then when trouble came (and it always did under such a system as that) the rally cry would then go out for unity. The cry was, we all need to stay together. Whatever you do, don't cause division; God hates division. How many times have I heard the phrase God hates division. Well, I don't think God actually hates it that much that I'm no longer part of the Presbyterian Church, and frankly I don't think God hates it that much that I am no longer part of a particular corporation of the Church of God either. I think what God hates is when we do not put Him first—that's what He hates.

The solution to unity is not simply to call out everyone to hold hands and sing "Kumbaya" and then we're going to be okay. That's simply not what God established. The cry for unity with each other—don't cause division—is not the same as the cry to put God first. Isaiah: Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, show My people their sins. That's not word for word—Isaiah 58—but it's very close. It's in the way that we would apply it in our own times. Again, calling for unity with each other is not the same as calling to put God first.

A few years back a list of personality traits for ministerial candidates was produced and it was shared around publicly where everyone could see, at least where I was serving at the time, and it said the candidates for the ministry need to be motivated, they need to be personable, they need to work without a lot of oversight—a lot of supervision—and I looked at it and thought, that's a great job description for a salesman. We need an honest, reliable person, which is good—that's a good thing. But I thought it was missing something. I thought the list was actually missing that they were to put God first and not follow a man. So I brought that up after a while, asking why those qualities weren't included on the list and I was told that that didn't need to be stated because it was understood.

I have become concerned that those things—putting God first, not following a man—have not been understood at all, have not truly been part of our history, and I hate to think to the degree that I might have contributed to that as well. Look at Jeremiah 5; it's always been an amazing scripture to me because it is certainly historical but I believe it

is also prophetic. This is what man does when man chooses for himself as compared to choosing according to God's call. Jeremiah 5:30 states:

Jeremiah 5:30 *"An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land:*

31) The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people [they love it] love to have it so. (NKJV)

They want to follow a man. When you take a man who wants to be followed and you take people who want to follow a man, you can start a whole new church right there, have your own stream of income, build a headquarters, tell everybody what to do and they will do it, up to a point. When trouble comes, just hold hands, sing "Kumbaya", and the tribulation is going to go away. Obviously we have at times had a misplaced focus.

I gave a sermon going back, [Understanding Scripture](#); it would have been after the Feast [it was given on October 20, 2018]. I gave seven points and I just want to mention the points; I don't want to go back into that material but I just want to show the flow of what I was hopefully trying to address. I said the Bible is the living word of God; it is not an English book; it's not extra-biblical—you do not have to go somewhere else for your proof (but you can certainly go somewhere else for helps); the Bible uses the Old Testament as the foundation of the New Testament; the Bible is to be read in context; it is not contradictory; it is consistent. If you have ten things and eight of them agree and you don't think the two possibly agree, then the answer is the eight, not the two. You don't pick one of the two and then reinterpret the eight—no, the eight, if they say the same thing, then think about that, because the Bible is going to match.

The New Testament is going to match the Old Testament because it's based on the Old Testament. You can't go to Pauline theology and have him reinterpret the rest of scripture—that's not how it works. The argument that the last thing said was the most true, no, it's all true, so it has to fit. If it doesn't fit, then it's either transmission, translation or understanding. But it's not what God has laid out for us, it's our perspective. So the sermon today is:

Understanding Bible Terms

Not all Bible terms; I picked some specific terms. If we're going to look at the Bible, God uses symbols and those symbols represent things—things that we need to understand. So in terms of what to think and how to think, this is hopefully how to think. Look at these terms, search them out in scripture, see how they are used, and see if these things are so—see if your Bible says what my Bible says, if we can look at it that way and agree. Let's go back to Genesis 3; the tree of life—I'm just going to give two examples that are bookends—the tree of life is introduced at the very beginning of the Bible and then the tree of life is referenced at the very end and conclusion of the Bible, because God's plan of salvation is what the Bible is all about. The tree of life is the opportunity for salvation. Look at Genesis 3:20 as a start. I'm not trying to go through all of the context because my point is simply the reference here to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:20 *And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.*

21) *Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*

22) *Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—*

23) *therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken [because they had sinned].*

24) *So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. (NKJV)*

So the tree of life, picturing salvation, an opportunity to live forever—to not have to die because of the penalty of sin—was made available, but they made a wrong choice and God said, alright, I'm cutting off access now to that option and you're going to have to go away. So salvation, in terms of the tree of life—the tree of life can be shut up and access to it denied—that's the beginning of the story. Revelation 22 is kind of the end of the story, going back to the other side. I believe that Revelation 22, the last chapter of the Bible—basically the first five verses—I believe that's what represents the eighth day in God's plan. I believe this is the eighth day: The eternal rule of God in the land ("And they shall reign forever and ever."). That's the final statement, so to speak, of what God is doing; that's the final portrayal of God's plan.

Revelation 22:1 *And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

2) *In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

3) *And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.*

4) *They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.*

5) *There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. (NKJV)*

These are summary statements. Introductory statements are in Genesis—the first three chapters—but summary statements are seen here in the final chapter of the book of Revelation. It's just showing, again, the tree of life, the opportunity for salvation is introduced and then the same reference is given at the end of the Bible where the same portrayal is being made and is being addressed. Again, as a summary statement to God's plan of salvation, that was the beginning, this is the end. The Book of Life is not the tree of life and sometimes we use them as if they are interchangeable but the Bible very clearly gives expression in scripture as to what the reference to the Book of Life would be. The Book of Life is the record of salvation.

This is very simple in expression. The tree of life is the opportunity, the Book of Life is the record. If you've had the opportunity, your name is added to the Book of Life if indeed you responded. If you turn away and reject God and it is over, then your name is blotted out. So your name is not blotted out of the tree, it's blotted out of the book. So again, one is the opportunity, the other is the record. God records those names at the point where He chooses—only God knows—but those names can also be removed. Exodus 32 is the story of the gold calf, and again, as I go into these, I'm not trying to tell the story, I'm trying to make the illustration of what is being represented—verse 30 in this case.

Exodus 32:30 *Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to the LORD [up to God—Yahweh, obviously]; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."*

31) *Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!*

32) *Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."*

That's the Book of Life. Moses literally was going to say, I will give up my salvation if you will not destroy them.

33) *And the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. (NKJV)*

So the Book of Life is the record and your name is entered in at whatever point God chooses, when you have had an opportunity and begun to respond, however God makes that decision. But if you turn against God and reject Him and sin against Him without repentance, it says your name is blotted out. If the book is opened and your name is blotted out that's judgment to the second death actually. If your name is in the Book of Life and you remain faithful then you're going to be in the Kingdom of God. Now as to this record, I'm not trying to do an exhaustive overview of all the references to the Book of Life but I do want to give a few. Look at Daniel 12—I want to address various terms today. This is a fascinating passage because of what it portrays.

Daniel 12:1 *"At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. [That would be the tribulation—the great tribulation—never been anything like it up to that point.] And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. (NKJV)*

So of course, with the great tribulation finished and the seventh trumpet blown, God's people are resurrected to rise to meet Christ in the air. They were the ones whose names were written in the Book of Life so that's consistent. Look at the book of Philippians from the record of Paul in chapter 4, verse 2. It kind of breaks here a little

bit after verse 1. Paul is reaching out, crying out for people to work together and be respectful of each other.

Philippians 4:2 *I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.*

3) *And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.* (NKJV)

So they haven't rebelled against God, they have a problem—they have an interpersonal problem. Paul says, let's deal with that; salvation is a bigger issue and we need to get along, of course, but we still have to put God first. So it just says their names are in the Book of Life. Then in Hebrews 12 is a reference now on a more general basis. In verse 18, it's interesting the passage that's placed here.

Hebrews 12:18 *For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19) and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.* (NKJV)

You've not come to Mount Sinai; this isn't the Old Covenant.

20) *(For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow."*

21) *And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.")* (NKJV)

Even Moses was scared, but he did not turn away, did he?

22) *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,*

23) *to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all ...* (NKJV)

That God is distinct from Jesus the Mediator because that follows in the same passage. It just says the firstborn are registered in heaven, in what?—in the Book of Life. The Book of Life is not in the Library of Congress. It's in God's hands and He makes His entries according to His choosing. So those are pretty consistent. Notice, too, there is a warning from Jesus Christ, if we then go on to the book of Revelation. There's a warning that just having your name in the Book isn't going to hold you—your name has to always remain. If you came to where you had the Rubicon to cross, so to speak, once you got on the other side, the war was on. (The Rubicon was the river boundary that could not be crossed legally, under arms, according to Roman law; the symbolic crossing of it came to mean passing the point of no return.) I've often considered, when my life comes to a time of crisis or a time of decision, to me it's like crossing the Rubicon. (I once told my wife, I want to get a Jeep Rubicon, as a joke—just drive it

around, just have it, but I couldn't afford a Jeep Rubicon and I couldn't afford to maintain it either.) I've often thought there comes a point that sometimes we have to make a choice and those times are critical. Revelation 3 is a warning from Jesus Christ.

Revelation 3:1 *“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, “These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: ‘I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. (NKJV)*

That would be one way of saying sleep; maybe dead is not final, it's a warning. But you're dying.

2) *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, [again, this is a warning, with an opportunity for repentance] for I have not found your works perfect before God.*

3) *Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*

4) *You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.*

5) *He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life [your salvation will be complete]; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (NKJV)*

There is a warning there to those whose names are in the Book to make sure those names stay in the Book. Make sure you are not asleep. Make sure you are not dying spiritually. Make sure that you are alive and awake before God, looking to God to put Him first.

I want to move to the day of the LORD because I think in English terminology we think of the return of Jesus Christ, and historically in the Church of God the “day of the Lord” was kind of like when Christ came back to the earth—He is the Lord—and that's one of the problems with some of the terminology. Some of the terminology in the Bible, honestly, is very, very difficult—you have the word “LORD” in the Old Testament, for God the Father, but then you have “Lord Jesus” in the New Testament, and we kind of shuffle those together. Quite frankly, many of the occurrences of “Lord” in the New Testament are God the Father as well, it's just the way the references are made. At some point you've got to look, and ask, what is the reference, what is the portrayal that is being made.

I have a New King James, that's what I read from, that's what I will be reading from, at least in the near future for my personal use, and when I read it and it says “church”, I know it doesn't mean that. It means assembly; it means *ecclesia*.

When I read the word “Lord”, I don't blame anybody reading the word “Lord” who doesn't want to read it as Lord, who reads it as Yahweh instead, to keep their mind on what it says. I don't have a problem with that—it isn't my personal choice because how

many words am I going to change? The word "God" is Elohim. Excuse me, Elohim doesn't mean God, it means mighty one or mighty ones. But they wrote God and it's thousands of times, what am I going to do? I don't have my own version of the Bible; if I did I would introduce my errors into the text and I don't want to do that. Isn't that amazing?

We were taught in the Church of God that God's name was God. What do you mean God's name is God? The word in Hebrew is Elohim. God says, you shall have no other gods before me. Alright, that means there are other elohim, right? Well, they say, there's one God—one what?—one Elohim. How can you have one Elohim, only one, and there's no other Elohim but then you can have no other elohim before Him—you can't have it both ways. You know what, that's what double think is. Double think is where you have a belief over here, you take it out of the box, you believe it, you put it back. Then you go over here and you take another belief out of another box and then you believe that and then you put it back. Those beliefs are mutually exclusive and if you believe them both at the same time, that's double think. We were taught to think that way which means we were taught to not think. We were taught to repeat.

We were also pointed to God, it wasn't all bad. I am grateful for my calling. The best years of my life were at Ambassador College; I'm telling you we had a great time and we studied, we learned, we grew, we changed. That process is supposed to be continuous. You don't arrive at the answer and now you're done. No, that's the country club—you get a membership, you pay your dues and now you have your benefits. This is not a country club and that's not how this works. Back to God and the day of the LORD; let's start with Acts 2, Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:17 *'And it shall come to pass [he's quoting, saying this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel, this big event that was taking place at the beginning of this process] in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.*

18) *And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.*

19) *I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. (NKJV)*

These are actually the heavenly signs, and Peter goes back and says God's Holy Spirit is being poured out; that's the beginning of this process, but the honest answer is, you go back to the book of Joel, where this comes from, and this is actually an end-time prophecy of the events preceding the return of Jesus Christ.

20) *The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. (NKJV)*

LORD here, in the New King James, is presented in all capital letters, which means it's a quote from the Old Testament, and refers to God the Father. So it's a day of God the

Father in the text, and it's buried in the way it's worded English, but that's where it comes from.

21) *And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD [God the Father—Yahweh] shall be saved.*' (NKJV)

That's the intent of the passage. Now, the *day of the LORD* in the book of Joel, and *the day of the LORD* in the book of Acts, and *the day of the Lord* in 2 Peter chapter 3, are the same. That's the other part of this. Take ten things, if eight of them agree, that's the answer. If two don't appear to, then those are the two that you have to go study to see what the problem might be, and maybe we know the answer, maybe we don't. What happens is, those who want to defend the faith once delivered to a man, all they have to do in their mind is find a problem or an argument or an exception, and then that throws away everything, but that's not how the Bible works. If you don't know the meaning of a particular scripture but there are eight or ten that are the same, and you know what they mean, then indeed that's where you go. Then you look to see what it is God will show us. But 2 Peter 3 is also the day of the Lord—it's the day of God the Father. That's what the word means because the reference comes from the Old Testament.

2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ...* (NKJV)

In the prophecies and the parables of the Bible, a thief in the night is when the Church is slumbering and sleeping and not ready, and Christ returns—the Master returns. So it's the timing of the return of Jesus Christ. Christ didn't come as a thief in the night in the New Testament Church time, He's not coming as a thief in the night when He would be down the road somewhere, so to speak. I can only describe it in terms of Him coming at a time of surprise—that is how His second coming is portrayed.

10 continued) *... in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.* (NKJV)

Ah, not *completely* destroyed and burned up, that's not the story of scripture. If you have ten scriptures and eight you understand, put them together and they will connect in the end.

11) *Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*
12) *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God ...* (NKJV)

The day of God is the day of the LORD, it's a quote in a reference to the Old Testament, and the reference there is to Yahweh, to God the Father. Again, Peter was speaking in Acts 2, Peter is writing in 2 Peter 3; it's the same person who knows the same thing, he is not confused. What he spoke about in the one book is what was recorded in the other book—they are the same. Let's go back to the book of Joel because the book of Joel, by subject, is the day of the LORD; that's the main focus of the entire book.

Joel 2:1 *Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: (NKJV)*

It describes the destruction. Christ comes on the seventh trumpet, when it blows. After the trumpet blows, the bowl plagues are poured out on the seat of the beast, we've known that for seventy years. Believe me, when the bowl plagues are poured out on the seat of the beast, it is a day of darkness, gloominess, clouds and thick darkness; that's what is being referenced as part of the day of the LORD. That is basically what the story of Revelation is, a description of the processes of the day of the LORD. That day is coming—it's all the same. In the book of Joel, go to chapter 1, verse 15.

Joel 1:15 *Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty. (NKJV)*

Who is the Almighty? They can't both be the Almighty. I don't care if there are people who say They're both the Almighty, that's not what the Bible says. The Almighty is God the Father. So it says, the day of the LORD, the day of God, is destruction from God the Father, the Almighty. Those all match, they all go together. Revelation 16; let's just take that one step further. You can't understand the prophecies of the day of the Lord if you don't know who the reference is to—you're just simply not going to understand.

Revelation 16:12 *Then the sixth angel [part of the day of the Lord, right?] poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.*

13) *And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.*

14) *For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. (NKJV)*

It is exactly the reference that was made in the book of Joel on the day of the LORD, the Almighty, and here it's *God Almighty*. It is God the Father. The day of the Lord is a reference to the day of God the Father intervening, obviously working through Jesus Christ, that's not up to question, but this is God the Father's reference and we need to simply understand it in the context in which the Bible has given it.

I want to go on to the term "the Creator". There was a little bit of dust in the air some years back when I gave a sermon on Remember Your Creator. Somehow or other it didn't run right down the track of our long-held, traditional understanding, but it is indeed correct, according to scripture. So Genesis 1:1—you can't get more basic than Genesis 1:1 to start.

Genesis 1:1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (NKJV)*

Now, there's a problem. We have, over the years—I've used it myself (my apologies for not knowing better): "God the Father is the architect, Jesus Christ is the builder." So the architect tells the builder, you just go out there and get that done. Then we look in the Bible, it says look somebody's doing something, that's Jesus Christ—it is not. The word Creator in the Bible is never used for Jesus Christ. It is a reference to the origin, it is a reference to the Father as the driving force, as the one who put this into place.

Let's be careful when we make up things to arrive at an answer and then what we made up becomes proof. I'll give an example of that: Is Jesus Christ the spokesman? Is He really? What verse says that? We made that up, didn't we? Oh no, that was faith once delivered. No, it wasn't. He is the Word and the Word doesn't mean spokesman. When you say, He is the spokesman, what are you now going to have to prove? Every time something is said, it must be Him saying it because if you have a spokesman you send him out there, he has to speak. Excuse me, He is not the spokesman, He is the Word. They do not mean the same thing. Ask anybody who knows the text and they'll say, that doesn't actually mean that. Well, it meant it to us—that's not good enough.

So at some point you have to say, okay, if God is the Creator and the Bible says so, then let's be very careful about referring to Jesus Christ as the Creator because there is a reason (and I want to address some of that right here), there's a logical reason. But you know what? Logic is not proof. Circumcision is not logical—it's not—but it was legal. So with our logic, it only makes sense that if there's a first resurrection there's got to be a second—well, of course, if there's a first there will be a second, but when you start connecting all the dots you might get yourself in trouble, you might make a mistake, and you'd better be careful to make sure that if God says it, we use the terms He uses. For instance, do we keep the Eucharist? Do we keep Communion? What do we keep? We keep the Passover. Why don't we keep Communion? Because God called it the Passover, and you can't just go make up your own term, which is descriptive, and might have a similar meaning, but you can't just make it up. You can't say, So and So said this, and So and So said that, or, here is why that is; no, you just don't do that, you can get in trouble. You may not always know why you're trouble, yet but you'll be in trouble.

Alright, Genesis 1—I've given the reference; 2 Corinthians 4:6 makes a distinction between God and Christ, and the one who called light out of darkness was God, it was not Jesus Christ. I've had people say, that's not true—that's not what my Bible says; I said, I don't know what your Bible is written from, but it's right there: 2 Corinthians 4:6—you won't forget that.

Let's take another one, Acts 17. I've sat and I've read this to people in a group, and I've had them look at me and watch their eyes glaze over and then frost starts coming out, you know? ((laughs)) Sorry, this is what it says—I didn't make this up! Acts 17:22. This is important. I mean, if God is the Creator in the Old Testament, then I suppose He's going to be the Creator in the New Testament; I think the Bible is going to be that consistent.

Acts 17:22 *Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;*
 23) *for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:*
 24) *God, who made the world and everything in it [God made the world and everything in it; He wasn't the architect, He was the maker—He's the Creator], since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.*
 25) *Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.*
 26) *And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth [He made—God made], and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,*
 27) *so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him [the Lord, actually—God], though He is not far from each one of us;*
 28) *for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ (NKJV)*

Are we the offspring of Jesus Christ?

29) *Therefore, since we are the offspring of God [there's no question who we are referring to here], we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.*
 30) *Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,*
 31) *because He has appointed a day on which He [God] will judge the world in righteousness by the Man [Jesus Christ] whom He has ordained. (NKJV)*

You cannot mess up that passage. That passage has the answer in the New Testament and it agrees with the Old Testament, and that is indeed what we would expect. The Creator God of the New Testament is the Creator God of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ does not change (Hebrews 13:8) and God does not change (Malachi 3:6). They do not change. They learn, but they do not change in their nature, their character, or their purpose.

So let's go back to the Old Testament and just look at a couple of references. Isaiah 40 now, verse 27.

Isaiah 40:27 *Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel: “My way is hidden from the LORD, and my just claim is passed over by my God”?*
 28) *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD [Yahweh], the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.*
 29) *He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. (NKJV)*

30) *Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall,*
31) *But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.* (NKJV)

You know, somebody interjecting a doubt in your mind, that there might be a problem over here somewhere, doesn't eradicate the entire record of scripture. If there is a doubt over here somewhere, then let's go study the doubt and see what the answer might be. But the record of scripture, beginning to end, is that the Creator is a specific reference to God the Father. Isaiah 43:10.

Isaiah 43:10 *You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me.* (NKJV)

Okay, the word *God* is "elohim". It doesn't mean there was no elohim formed before God and afterwards there'll not be anymore elohim formed. Didn't other elohim get formed? Hezekiah goes into the temple, prays to the Living God, "Please protect us from the army of Sennacherib, you are God, you alone, you are the LORD" (He is the LORD alone because that's His name), but the comparison of the one God in Isaiah is to the fact that the gods of the nations were claimed to have not been able to protect their peoples, and so the accusation was made that your God will not be able to protect you. And the comparison then is of God to other elohim. It isn't just God who is referenced as elohim—it is angels, judges, idols. There have to be elohim or God would have never said, you shall have no other elohim before me. If there were no other elohim then He didn't have to say that, so throw out the first commandment?—it doesn't apply? It does apply. The reference here is indeed that there is only one LORD. There were various elohim, so this is a matter of contrast. The argument for one God is an argument from the Greek but the Greek is based on the Hebrew and it does not match. It doesn't match. It doesn't sell in the end.

11) *I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior.*
12) *I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; therefore you are My witnesses,"* (NKJV)

There's the word elohim again, same passage, a different one, lower case in this case of course.

12 continued) ... *Says the LORD, "that I am God.*
13) *Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?"*
14) *Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "For your sake I will send to Babylon, and bring them all down as fugitives—the Chaldeans, who rejoice in their ships.*
15) *I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King."* (NKJV)

Who was Israel's Father? God. Who is our Father? God. Those relationships were a little different in scale in terms of we have God's Spirit as His children. But the Father of Israel was God the Father. The Father of Israel was not Jesus Christ—that's simply not according to scripture. So let's go back to Hebrews, because, as I said, the Old Testament is going to agree with the New Testament. You don't get to pick your favorite scripture and then interpret everything else away, that's not how this works. Hebrews 3 is going to agree with Isaiah, is going to agree with Acts, is going to agree with Genesis. When you get things in the right order, they line up and they fit, and that's the answer. When I look at a package of body of scripture and they seem to be the same but they don't fit, then I don't know the answer yet. But all of a sudden, when you put them in the right order, they go tick-tick-tick-tick and they are all in line and now it becomes consistent, and then you have the answer. Hebrews 3:1.

Hebrews 3:1 *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2) who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. 3) For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. 4) For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.* (NKJV)

You know what, if that's the Builder versus the Architect then something doesn't work anymore because the honest answer is, "Builder and Architect" is simply not in the scripture. But He who built all things is God, that is in scripture and so it matches. Put them in line—put them in the right line—and you don't have to now interpret some of them away, you can just accept what the record says. So then let's ask the question, did God the Creator create all things through Jesus Christ, the Creator? Is Jesus Christ the Creator? The argument that Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament is based in part on that, but the problem with that is, it's not in the Bible. Jesus Christ, whether you go to Hebrews or Isaiah, or you go back to the book of Acts, or you start out in Genesis, is never specifically referenced as the Creator. When you go to Acts 17, and it says, we are His offspring, the one who made all things, you can't walk around that one. I've had people literally come to me and say, if I can find one thing wrong with what you're arguing then you'll have to concede that what you're saying is not true. I'm sorry, they have a wrong spirit and they are certainly not trying to put God first. That is not how this works.

We will not understand all things but if we put God first and submit ourselves to Him, I'll tell you what, day by day we will understand more than we used to and it will fit. It will fit very, very well, thank you—it works. So the fact is, it isn't some kind of an aberrant, optional condition, but, God being the Creator (and that's the only way the Bible speaks of creation), then Christ is not the Creator, God the Father is the Creator. Was He there with God? Yes, He was, because it says He was there, and as I've added in my notes here—John 1:3, all things were made through Him, and without Him, nothing was made that was made—so the Bible states that Christ was there before anything was made.

So yes, He was there. How did God use that? I don't know, they are in perfect unity but they're not perfectly one in existence, they are perfectly one in relationship. What God revealed to us was that the title "Creator" is a reference to God the Father and that's the way I use it. Think about this: Without Christ, nothing was made that was made. So everything that was made—everything that was made (I believe is the intent of that) was made with Him in place. Don't you think that if God could have made a being (for those who argue that Christ is created, for those who argue that Christ proceeded somehow from the Father—whatever terms you pick), if God the Father could have made a being who would be perfect and without sin, don't you think He would have done that? Why the wars? Why the suffering, why the misery, why the persecution? Christ never sinned. If God could have made more Christs that would never sin, why would you create angels and why would you certainly create mankind?—if you could do it.

Christ was not created. He did not proceed from the Father. He was there before anything was created. He is eternal in His existence. He is missing a couple days in the middle, but understand what death is. Death is not the cessation of existence, death is "asleep". When you die, your spirit returns to God the Father—you do not cease to exist. You cease to exist at the second death. You do not cease to exist at the first death—you are not conscious, but the Bible does not refer to the first death as a cessation of existence, the Bible refers to it as asleep for a reason because you're going to wake up in the resurrection. You're not conscious but that spirit has not been destroyed (or however God performs His will). Colossians 1:16 *All things were created through Him and for Him.* Well now, that's interesting: The creation was created for Jesus Christ.

If you're going to pass on an inheritance to your children—your children go out and build their business, make their money, they're successful, and then you say, I'm going to give you your business—no, they already have their business. Generally speaking, as we would understand the way of things, if you're going to pass on something to someone, it's because it is yours. He made the creation for Jesus Christ. I think that is significant. I know that we can say, what about this or what about that? You know what? If there is time and we get to have opportunity over time to teach and to study and to learn and work together, then some of those things can be addressed. They certainly won't all be addressed at any one point, but Hebrews 1 ... let's go back to Hebrews 1.

Hebrews 1:10 *And: "You, LORD [the word Yahweh, because this is a quote from the Old Testament], in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. (NKJV)*

So now Christ is Yahweh and He is now the Creator because the heavens are the work of His hands—that is the argument. I'm going to tell you what, that argument is simply not true. This insertion is a reference to the God who was the God of Jesus Christ, and it says, You, LORD, You're the Creator—You, Yahweh, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

11) *They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment;*
12) *Like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail.*" (NKJV)

How do I know that's an insertion? One, because of all the references to Yahweh we have proved out over time—we can't go back and start over again, okay? This is a process whereby we have to build on pieces of the subject as we're able to teach. But go back, it says this is from the Old Testament, too, and how many times? Go back and see what it says. Where is it from? It's from Psalm 102 [verse 25]. Let's go to Psalm 102; let's just look at the psalm.

Psalm 102:1 *Hear my prayer, O LORD [Yahweh], and let my cry come to You.*
2) *Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my trouble; incline Your ear to me;* (NKJV)

Psalm 102 is a prayer and who were they praying to? Did they pray to Christ in the Old Testament, and then we pray to the Father in the New Testament, and then we pray to Christ in the Millennium? No—we don't change who we pray to, God doesn't change, the consistency is the same. Psalm 102 is a prayer to God the Father, it's quoted in Hebrews 1, verse 10, and it is the same. It is not an insertion where all of a sudden Jesus Christ's name is now Yahweh, because His name isn't Yahweh. Who did Hezekiah pray to at the house of God? The Father. Who did Paul pray to? Did Paul pray to Jesus Christ? Paul said, I worship the God of my fathers. The God of the fathers was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He is the one who glorified Jesus Christ. It fits. If you have to argue this verse or not that verse then you're not there yet. It simply doesn't work that way. Again, transmission, translation, understanding.

With that I want to give you some homework. There's no test so no one is going to be checking your answers. The premise of this sermon was not on what to think as much as how to think: How to process, what to look for, then to reason what the implication might be, so here is what I would suggest for homework. Hebrews 11 is the faith chapter, and the words *promise* or *promises* are used six times, so it's a big part of the text. That would be natural, right? Faith—faith in what?—faith in what has been promised. So the words *promise* and *promises* are very big in the text. You'll see this in Hebrews 11:39, where it says,

Hebrews 11:39 *And all these, [all these examples of all these individuals] having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise ...* (NKJV)

So here's my suggestion. I did a paper once—I wrote down all the scriptures, compiled them together to understand what the answer to this was; I think it took me a hundred hours. (I don't think it will take you a hundred hours.) I was just starting out, so I didn't even know what the answer was. I'll just ask this: What is the promise? I'll give you a hint so you don't waste time doing things I was chasing down and didn't yet understand. It is not the resurrection. Imagine that. These all died not having been resurrected.

That makes no sense, right? It is also not salvation. These all died not having been saved. Well, does it mean then they are lost, that they haven't had their opportunity? No, it doesn't mean that. It doesn't mean resurrection and it does not mean salvation. At your leisure, on your time, go look up all the places—there are a lot of promises in the Bible, there are layers of promises but there is an ultimate promise. All those layers keep going closer and closer together until you get to, I would say, two principles that are identical but in a different relationship that comes to the top. I started to go through the promises—one of my subjects—and I would lay it out, and I said, no, let's not do that, that's too easy. Why shouldn't you do some of this work? And you are, you will, you will study.

One common response to some of this material—Terry mentioned it in his last sermon and I loved the way he placed it; he mentioned it at the Feast again—some of this material we are addressing, people have said, and I've heard it repeatedly, what difference does it make? Did somebody actually make that up and then issue it out as here's the answer to the question? I mean literally, I've heard it too many times—what difference does it make? As Terry said, no one in their baptismal counseling ever asked that question because in baptismal counseling everything matters. You are looking at everything you can, trying to put in order what you need to do to humble yourself before God and look to Him first.

Nobody going through baptismal counseling says what difference does it make. How many years do you have to be in the Church of God before you can ask that question? How far asleep do you have to be? How far removed from being willing to look at God's word and believe it do you have to be? How many men do you have to follow because they have reassured you that it's in a booklet somewhere or it's our long-held teaching and understanding or it came from this man? I got a memo in the last very short time: Do you believe what it was that came through Herbert W. Armstrong before this year in history? My response was, there isn't anything I believe because Herbert Armstrong said so. There isn't anything. If I believe it, I hope it's because it is in God's word. It makes a lot of difference, brethren, to know who God is, to know who we are in His service, to understand His Son Jesus Christ, and the roles that are in place, and in the process to be able to worship God and to put Him first.