

The Innocence of God
And How it is Reflected in His Relationships with Man

By

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Dedicated to:

My Father

Phillip F. Benedict

Who was patient with his family and children,

Provided for them,

And gave them a strong spiritual influence and example to follow.

My Mother

Linda B. Benedict

Who believed in her family,

Dedicated her hours to making their lives more comfortable,

And prayed nonstop for them.

And

My brother-in-law Joshua Gulick

With whom I discussed some of the concepts found in this manuscript,

And provided me with an awesome sounding board.

Thanks to each one.

T. Russell Benedict

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About the author

All scripture quotations listed at the end of each chapter, that are referenced in the main material, are quoted from either the King James Version of the English Bible (KJV) or the Net Bible (NB), a new and modern English translation with very extensive study and translation notes, available for free on the web or from the author's website

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Prologue

“Whom shall I send, and who shall go for us?” In my mind, these questions could just as easily be paraphrased to say, “Who will speak for me? Who will tell them of me?” These words, spoken by God in the Biblical book of Isaiah chapter 6 verse 8⁽¹⁾ have haunted me for a long time...

Something struck me awhile back in a conversation I was having with a friend about the character of this God that we talk about in church every Sunday. We were discussing the presence of evil in this world, and why I believed that not everyone could or would be automatically admitted entrance into heaven some day. And as we talked, something dawned on me. The mere innocence of God simply will not allow Him to admit some people into heaven. It's like as if you could expect a young virgin, in all her purity, to willingly allow a convicted and unrepentant pedophile and rapist to live with her in her home. It was a new revelation to me to look at God this way.

And as I pondered these thoughts more, I began to see how innocence is displayed in many of God's other attributes and character qualities too. Each one of the revealed character traits of God has roots in His innocence, and is affected by it. And suddenly, many things I never understood about God before began to make more sense to me. This intrigued me. Could I at last begin to understand on a much deeper level this God whom I know, listen to, and talk with every day of my life?

So this book is simply me speaking up for my God. It is my attempt to understand my savior and friend better, and to stand up for Him in a world that constantly misunderstands and often hates Him. God is innocent. God is innocent in His purity. God is innocent. Get a handle on that, and buckle your seatbelt. Once you begin to grasp the

nature of His innocence, you will begin to understand Him better, and that knowledge will change your world.

And out of respect for God, and to make our conversation about Him more personal, I will use one of the personal names He is referred to by in scripture,⁽²⁾ “Yahweh,” throughout the remainder of this book. There is a good reason I have chosen to do this.

Would you always call a family member by what they are, instead of by their name? Would you address your children, all of your children, by the word, “Child,” every time you spoke to them? Would you forever call the family dog, “Dog,” even though it has a real name? Would you always call your wife, “Woman,” or your husband, “Man,” every time you spoke to them, even though they have a real name that they prefer to be called by?

In my home, a person gets called by their species designation instead of their given name only when they are in trouble. Is God in trouble all the time that I should only call Him “God,” His species designation, and never by any of His other more personal names?

So Yahweh is one of the names of God, the only true supreme God, and He also has other names that He likes to be called by, instead of just always simply “God”. Out of respect for Him, His feelings, and His innocence, I have simply chosen to call Him by the personal name, “Yahweh,” where applicable, in this manuscript.

So come now, and let us reason together,⁽³⁾ and further explore this intriguing aspect of the character of Yahweh: His innocence....

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1. Isaiah 6:8 (KJV) - *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.*

2. Yahweh is usually translated as LORD in all capitals in most Biblical translations, and roughly means “the one who keeps his promises.”
3. Isaiah 1:18 (KJV) - *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

Chapter 1

Innocence. Does it even apply to God?

Before we go any farther, we need a good working definition of this innocence that I am talking about, because Yahweh in order to *be* God, is all-knowing,⁽¹⁾ and many people automatically assume that an all-knowing God can't be innocent because He supposedly must already know everything there is to know about everything, including evil. But let's dig into this flawed logic a little bit deeper, since we are reasoning together here (Yahweh's words, not mine).

According to the online encyclopedia at Wikipedia.com,⁽²⁾ innocence is NOT just simply ignorance (this would be "false etymology" according to them). Among other things, their definition of Innocence includes 1. "a term that describes the lack of guilt of an individual," 2. a term that connotes "a blissfully positive view of the world, in particular one where the lack of knowledge stems from a lack of wrongdoing," 3. a term "often also used to connote an ignorance or lack of personal experience."

When we look at God's character in light of these definitions, it's easy to see where Yahweh's omniscient knowledge does NOT include that knowledge that comes from personal experience committing evil.⁽³⁾ He is likewise eternally positive in His outlook on life.⁽⁴⁾ He is also completely guilt free (being sinless). In light of these things, He must therefore be innocent by the definition above.

Ironically enough though, the innocence of Yahweh as a whole, is one of the core qualities that is never really even specifically talked about in scripture. Why not?

Well, for one, it's also a trait that, by its very nature, doesn't really even recognize its own existence, until pointed out or made aware of by outside input (or compared to something not innocent). Does an innocent child know that he or she is innocent and untainted? By the same token, I have wondered sometimes if Yahweh Himself never completely recognized His own innocence, until we as humans explored the depths of evil and depravity for Him. At the risk of sounding trite, I sometimes wonder if it may simply have never occurred to Him. Yes, I know He knows everything. Yes, He is God. But innocence by its very nature does not recognize innocence in itself, without something to compare itself to.

But even with those thoughts aside, in looking a little deeper, beneath the surface of scripture, the innocence of Yahweh *is* revealed, in very powerful ways. Let's look at one in particular. "He was led like a lamb to the slaughtering block," quotes Isaiah 53:7,⁽⁵⁾ looking ahead to the innocence of the Jewish Messiah (Christ) and His being crucified. Acts 8⁽⁶⁾ likewise directly applies the Isaiah quote to Christ after the fact of His death.

The picture of a lamb, as used in Scripture, is one of innocence, unblemished and spotless.⁽⁷⁾ There's a *lot* of significance attached to the innocent lamb sacrifice in connection with the Jewish sacrificial law as it is spelled out in multiple places in the Old Testament. The sacrifice of Christ's life for us was only valid because He was personally innocent of all wrongdoing; multiple writers in the Bible make this very clear to us as well.^(3, 7)

And by extension, if Christ is one with the greater whole of Yahweh's being,⁽⁸⁾ then if Christ is innocent, so is the greater whole of who Yahweh is. Either Yahweh is completely innocent, or not innocent at all. If part of Him is innocent, then all of Him is innocent. The only time any one part of Yahweh ever came close to personally knowing

what sin felt like was when Christ took the *consequences* of our sin (without committing any sin Himself or knowing what *that* felt like) upon Himself at the cross of Calvary.⁽⁹⁾

1. I Corinthians 2:10 (NB) - *God has revealed these to us by the Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.*

I John 3:20 (NB) - *that if our conscience condemns us, that God is greater than our conscience and knows all things.*
2. <http://www.wikipedia.com>
3. I John 3:5 (NB) - *And you know that Jesus was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.*

I Peter 2:22 (NB) - *He committed no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth.*
4. I John 1:5 (NB) - *Now this is the gospel message we have heard from him and announce to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all (no negative thing).*
5. Isaiah 53:7 (NB) - *He was treated harshly and afflicted, but he did not even open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughtering block, like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not even open his mouth.*
6. Acts 8:32 (NB) - *Now the passage of scripture the man was reading was this: "He was led like a sheep to slaughter, and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth."*
7. I Peter 1:18-19 (NB) - *You know that from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors you were ransomed – not by perishable things like silver or gold, but by precious blood like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb, namely Christ.*

8. John 1:18 (NB) - *No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known (referring to Jesus).*
- John 5:18 (NB) - *For this reason the Jewish leaders were trying even harder to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own Father, thus making himself equal with God.*
- John 10:38 (NB) - *But if I do them, even if you do not believe me, believe the deeds, so that you may come to know and understand that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.*
- John 14:9-11a (NB) - *Jesus replied, "Have I been with you for so long, and you have not known me, Philip? The person who has seen me has seen the Father! How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own initiative, but the Father residing in me performs his miraculous deeds. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father is in me...*
- John 17:21a (NB) - *that they will all be one, just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you.*
- John 17:5 (NB) - *And now, Father, glorify me at your side with the glory I had with you before the world was created.*
9. Psalm 130:8 (NB) - *He will deliver Israel from all the consequences of their sins.*
- I Peter 2:24a (NB) - *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree...*

Chapter 2

In many ways, Yahweh is a simple God, and simple to understand, once you understand
the true nature of Innocence

How many times have you heard someone cry out in their darkest hour, that they don't understand Yahweh? How many times have YOU shed tears, struggling to understand some horrible event or thing that has happened? Is there something Yahweh has allowed or done that just doesn't make sense to you, and the hurt or pain of it is a knife in your soul? And in it, Yahweh just doesn't make sense to you. Can you identify?

How many times have we heard the verse quoted about how Yahweh's thoughts and ways are so far beyond ours, and that sometimes He really is beyond understanding? ⁽¹⁾ And while I agree, it is only to a point. I myself have often pointed at an ant on the ground, while talking to someone, and asked how they would best choose to communicate to that ant. ⁽²⁾ Because our thought processes are so much more advanced than an ant's, communication is virtually impossible. And in some ways, Yahweh's mind is that much higher above us too, so much so that our simple thought processes are to Him as an ant's thought processes are to us.

I mean, think about it. Let's listen in on one possible ant's thoughts.

"Gotta find food. Gotta find food. Gotta find food. Winter is coming, and the scent trail of my brother says there is food this way, so I will follow it. The queen must eat. The colony must survive. Gotta find food. Gotta find food. Gotta find food."

And of course, in some ways, our own thoughts typically, at the root level, revolve around much the same things. Food. Shelter. Sex. Work. Companionship. Honestly, what percentage of our time is spent thinking about these things (or lack thereof)? For some

people, the majority of their time is spent worrying about these things. Some would argue that we really aren't that much different than the ant.

But on another level, we do see a bigger picture around an anthill, and more easily, than what the ant does. We can grasp abstract concepts and emotions that an ant could never hope to understand or experience. The ant knows his trail home. He knows to climb the anthill to find the entrance that leads underground to safety, food, and warmth. But beyond the borders of his little ant world, he knows nothing. He knows nothing of cars. He knows nothing of choosing to love or hate someone or something. He knows nothing of heavy earth moving equipment, except for when his home gets bulldozed maybe, and then he is left wondering what happened. He is simply a tiny small player in a vast cosmos of humanity.

Likewise, on a much bigger scale, Yahweh sees a bigger picture around us that we can't even begin to comprehend. And when we get bulldozed, like that ant, by some cosmic bulldozer, we are left wondering, "Why me?"

But Yahweh is God, and He sees that universal big picture that we could never even begin to comprehend or appreciate. He is that far above us. But He also wants us to rise above the mundane things to look at bigger stuff too, like He does.⁽³⁾ Even so, I do still understand why some people get lost in their own insignificance, and in their own unworthiness, so much so that they can't even begin to understand how or why the God of this universe would even care to stoop down and talk to them in their pale insignificant little lives.

And if this were the end of the story, that we were merely ants riding along on some cosmic bowling ball that someone out there was playing marbles with, life would be pretty meaningless and worthless. Heaven help us *ironic chuckle*.

But fortunately, we aren't just ants riding along on some big bowling ball. We are loved by the infinite Yahweh. We are the jewels in the crown of His creation; He as much as tells us so.⁽⁴⁾ He loves us. He loves us so much that He chose to experience life here on earth with us for a time.⁽⁵⁾ He found a way to communicate to us.

But how do we understand and truly communicate with a God that is so far above us that He knows/calls every single star out there by name?⁽⁶⁾

In the book of Genesis, the first recorded book of the Bible, it tells us that Yahweh created man, male and female, in His image.⁽⁷⁾ That little phrase, "in His image," unlocks a whole slew of mysteries for us. Among other things, it means that our emotions were also created by Him, "In His Image". Thus, we know that Yahweh is an emotional God. He experiences, and has experienced, all pure forms of every single emotion that we ourselves feel. I'm not talking about twisted emotions, or pure emotions that have been defiled and twisted into things of darkness, but the pure, simple emotions that we feel, like Love, Joy, Happiness, Sadness, Sorrow, Remorse, Anger, etc. We feel these things, because HE can, has, and does feel these things.⁽⁸⁾ How could He create emotions "In His Image" with which He was not already familiar with Himself?

This goes for pure character traits as well, like Integrity and Honesty. And there are others as well, including the absence of each of these. The absence of integrity is in itself a character trait, and a lying mouth lacks honesty, but you get the picture. Goodness is a character trait that is sometimes reflected in us because of Yahweh's goodness (part of His image). Evil is simply what you get in the absence of goodness.

And that brings us to Innocence.

Innocence is in us, because it was in Yahweh first. And once we begin to understand that character trait, both about ourselves and about Yahweh, suddenly doors of

our understanding our God better, begin to be opened. And once we truly understand *Yahweh's* Innocence, He suddenly starts to make more sense. He suddenly becomes more simple, or uncomplicated.

I am not, however, suggesting at all that He is simpleminded. It's just like when you meet someone new, if you understand the basic principles by which they live their lives, you can usually understand them pretty easily, and sometimes even predict their actions. They aren't so complicated to understand anymore. Do you know what I mean?

Likewise, everything *Yahweh* does is also guided by a number of principles. Some of these things are even revealed in Scripture.

Think about one of the more common ones for a moment. There's even an old, old Sunday School Song that talks about it. "Praise Him, Praise Him, All you little children; God is love, God is love."⁽⁹⁾ Anyone remember it? Everything *Yahweh* does is guided by His love for us. Love drove Him to the cross.⁽¹⁰⁾ Love keeps Him there in our lives, even sometimes when we don't want Him to be. Love drives Him to prepare a place in heaven for some of us someday.⁽¹¹⁾ Everything He does is guided by His love for us.

Or how about another one? Truth. *Yahweh* is truth.⁽¹²⁾ Knowing *Yahweh* is to know truth. Why do we place (or at least we used to) our hands on the Bible in a court of law and swear to tell the truth, and nothing but the whole truth? *Yahweh* can't, and won't, lie.⁽¹³⁾ *Yahweh* cannot deceive as we understand and experience deception. *Yahweh* is true to His word.⁽¹⁴⁾ He is true to His love for us. He is truth incarnate. Everything He does is true, and is truthful, and can be trusted as honest.⁽¹⁵⁾ So all of His actions will reflect truth somehow too. It's simply not in His character to deceive anyone.

Once you understand the principles that a person operates by, their words and actions suddenly begin to make more sense. They become easy, or simple, to understand.

Uncomplicated. I'm not suggesting that we will ever fully understand Yahweh's mind,⁽¹⁶⁾ but we can make progress in that direction.

The one huge character trait of Yahweh that is so often overlooked, and yet which guides and is intrinsic to His very nature, and thus His actions, is His Innocence. It's in many ways, one of the missing puzzle pieces in our quest to understand the divine. Yahweh's Innocence. If we can truly understand this and appreciate it about Him, He, and His thoughts/actions, all suddenly begin to make more sense. He becomes a little bit more uncomplicated.

Are there any Scripture references to back this up?

Indeed!

Last year, as I read through the beatitudes in Matthew chapter 5, when I got to verse 8 that says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God,"(NB) something struck me. To be pure is also to be innocent. The pure and innocent in heart see and recognize Yahweh and His footsteps around them much more easily than the jaded skeptic can or ever will. To be pure in heart IS to recognize Yahweh, and His fingerprints in the world around us. Purity and innocence in us let us recognize the purity and innocence in Him, just like the verse says. It's not a future tense thing, it's a right now thing, in the present.

It's using deductive logic and reasoning, I know, but if we want to understand Yahweh better, according to this verse, we need to develop purity (a form of innocence) in ourselves. Once we start living in it (purity and innocence), we will, according to this verse, see and recognize Him, and thereby, recognize everything about Him, including His work, fingerprints and voice,⁽¹⁷⁾ that much more easily.

Likewise the verse ⁽¹⁸⁾ that says, “You (Yahweh) prove to be deceptive to one who is perverse.” Or how about the one ⁽¹⁹⁾ that says Yahweh “catches the wise in their craftiness”? Think about it. A crafty and devious man does not understand the simple man, and the simple man, in his mere simplicity, will often thoroughly confuse the crafty one.

Yahweh is an uncomplicated God, albeit an all-knowing, and all-wise one. And one of the biggest keys to understanding His simplicity is found in understanding His purity and innocence.⁽¹⁸⁾

But let’s get a better handle on some of the nuances of Innocence, before we start exploring some of Yahweh’s other character traits and how they relate to His Innocence.

1. Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV) – *‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

2. Proverbs 6:6 (KJV) - *Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:*

3. Matthew 6:8 (KJV) - *Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

Matthew 6:25-34 (KJV) - *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;*

they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

4. Malachi 3:17 (KJV) - *And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

Isaiah 62:3 (KJV) - *Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.*

5. John 1:11-14 (KJV) - *He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*
6. Psalm 147:4 (KJV) - *He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.*

7. Genesis 1:26-27 (KJV) - *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*
8. Hebrews 4:15 (NB) - *For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin.*
9. I John 4:16 (KJV) - *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*
1 John 4:8 (KJV) - *He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.*
10. John 3:16-17 (NB) - *For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son (Christ), so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him.*
11. John 14:2 (KJV) - *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*
12. John 1:14 (NB) - *Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory – the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth.*
John 14:6 (NB) - *Jesus replied, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life...”*
13. Titus 1:2 (KJV) - *In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;*

Hebrews 6:18 (KJV) - *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

14. Isaiah 55:11 (KJV) - *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

15. Psalm 22:4 (KJV) - *Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.*

16. Romans 11:33-34 (NB) - *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how fathomless his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?*

17. John 10:27 (NB) – *My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

18. Psalms 18:25-26 (NB) - *You prove to be loyal to one who is faithful; you prove to be trustworthy to one who is innocent. You prove to be reliable to one who is blameless, but you prove to be deceptive to one who is perverse.*

Titus 1:15 (KJV) - *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*

19. I Corinthians 3:19 (NB) - *For the wisdom of this age is foolishness with God. As it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness.”*

Chapter 3

The Innocence of the Children

When you think of innocence in general, it's usually the children that we think of as being the most innocent members of human society. Agreed?

In a functional society and perfect world, children haven't been touched by war or deception yet. They haven't lost their innocent love yet. They haven't been molested, and they still know how to love unconditionally. They still trust. They still believe. They still know how to dream. They have a keen sense of fairness.

What else can you think of that is reflected in the innocence of the children?

Do you remember the story of the children coming to Jesus? ⁽¹⁾

He was sitting down somewhere, probably doing something that He loved to do: teach. And a group of mothers (or one mother with multiple children), wanted to let their children meet Jesus, the famous miracle worker, and maybe even get Jesus to bless their children. And here are the disciples, so proud to be associated with, and riding the coat tails of, such a famous person. They basked in His glow. People gave them respect because they were in Jesus's "inner circle". I mean, think about it.

At least three of the disciples were fishermen by trade, pretty low down on the social totem pole. They always stank. Their clothes were always fishy, and their hands were grubby. People generally avoided them. And yet, Jesus had asked them to follow Him, and help lead the thousands of people that daily and weekly flocked to see Him work miracles.

Another one of the disciples was a tax collector, despised by everyone. Today's equivalent would be someone working for the IRS. They have this stigma attached to them, and at best, no one wants to associate with them either. At worst, people actively make their lives difficult. If the disciple Matthew (former tax collector) had had a car, his tires would have been slashed on a daily basis. That's the life he led before meeting Jesus. People avoided him.

And yet with Jesus, he had class. He was looked up to. People asked for his opinion on things. Being associated with Jesus gave him new meaning in life, and it likely brought to him a host of new emotions that he had never felt before. Acceptance. Respect. Honor. And others.⁽²⁾

Most of the disciples had similar stories. Before Jesus, they were nobodies. Now they lived in Jesus's shadow, and loved it. They were 'Somebodies'.

And on this particular day, Jesus was teaching, and the disciples were crowd mingling, basking in the glow that people directed towards them and Jesus.

And here come these kids. Remember, they didn't have daily showers. So here comes this rabble of dirty faced, noisy, grubby little boys and girls, all playing tag and pestering the dogs around the edges of the seated group, annoying and distracting people that were trying their best to listen to the teacher. And suddenly their moms (or mom), in a lull in the teaching, round up the kids and herd them towards Jesus. And at least one of the disciples immediately went into body-guard mode, trying to head these mothers and group of kids off at the pass.

But Jesus saw them coming too, and called off the dogs, so to speak. Something in Jesus went out to the children. He obviously had a heart for them. He as much as told the disciples in the ensuing conversation that if they didn't start acting more like those kids

themselves, they wouldn't get to go to heaven with Him. Can you imagine their shock and chagrin? Ouch! ⁽³⁾ To be publicly reprimanded, by the coat tails they were riding, what a turn of events! But what was it that Jesus saw in the kids that was so precious to Him?

He verbally identified one of the traits he liked in them: their Faith. But what is it about a child that even allows them to have Faith? Isn't it their innocence? He loved them; it's true. He valued their faith; that's true too. So logically, he also valued the character trait in them that allowed them to even have faith.

But something in Jesus didn't just value their innocence. I think He also identified with it, on a deeply personal level. How else do you explain His very personal and almost shocked response to the disciples? To be told that it's better to have a millstone, weighing possibly hundreds of pounds, tied around your neck, and to be drowned in the deepest ocean, than to mislead a single child, ⁽⁴⁾ is pretty severe and drastic. Jesus response was personal, and not just "teaching mode". He identified with the children. There was something in each of these children that He resonated with, and personally identified with. Personally, I think that He identified with their innocence.

What about other places in scripture where it talks about children?

Well, Jesus talked about children multiple times...

Elsewhere, children are likened to arrows in a man's quiver, ⁽⁵⁾ that he is preparing to shoot out into the world to make a mark on it, and a man with a full quiver of them is called "Happy".

Yahweh is multiple times called the Defender of the Fatherless (children) and the Widows. ⁽⁶⁾

In what others ways can you think of children being referred to in the Scriptures?

And what is the biggest unspoken thing about children, the one theme that lurks behind every reference to them, that makes them so precious? Isn't it their innocence, where it's either innocent faith, innocent trust, innocent love, etc and so forth?

Children are like blank slates in so many ways. Yes, they bear the sin of Adam in them,⁽⁷⁾ but they still usually come into the world willing to love, and be loved, unconditionally. They don't know yet what a broken promise is. They aren't twisted by hate or malice or anger or bitterness or envy or the negative form of jealousy or anything like that yet. They often love giving gifts, and making people smile. In short, they are in some ways, the closest thing we have as a picture of what the character of Yahweh is like. And above all, they are innocent, just as Yahweh is innocent.

After looking at that list we just made about traits defining innocent children, let's now look at Yahweh.

Yahweh knows how to love, and be loved unconditionally. He doesn't know how to break a promise. He loves giving gifts and making people smile. He is not twisted by hate, anger, malice, envy, negative jealousy or bitterness. He is innocent, unmarked in His character by any sinful or negative thing.

And what response should that produce in us?

Crimes against children bear much harsher sentences typically, than crimes against adults. Why is that? Isn't it because the crime has betrayed the innocence of the child in question?

So let talk about some "Rubber meets the road" issues a moment, and see where understanding this childlike nuance of Yahweh's innocence IS relevant to us today, before we continue on with our discussion of some of Yahweh's other character traits.

Why, when we so harshly condemn crimes against children, do we then turn around and blow off crimes against Yahweh as no big deal? We cheat and steal from Him when we don't tithe of our income to His work.⁽⁸⁾ If we did the same thing to an innocent child, we would be roundly condemned, but we do it to Yahweh every day! He is just as innocent as the children!

He also gives us gifts,⁽⁹⁾ indeed even the very gift of life, because in His innocent love, He wanted to make us smile. And yet we then turn around and rob Him! How pathetic!

Or how about the issue of swearing using Yahweh's name?⁽¹⁰⁾ We wouldn't dare dream of using an innocent child's name as a curse word. But Yahweh is even more innocent and pure than the most innocent child, and we have turned His name into a curse word, and think nothing of it. Just how long do you think we can get away with it, before Yahweh in His innocent sense of fairness and justice and love, turns His face away from us, crying in rejection and hurt, before then getting angry and putting a stop to it?

Or here's one that strikes even closer to home for some people.

Yahweh created man and woman. He created a man to enjoy the physical beauty of his wife. In His simple innocence, He designed it so that every man could have his own wife to admire, enjoy and even to feel lust for, and vice-versa. Now, can you imagine His innocent shock and dismay when we began to take other men's wives (and women's husbands) and post their unclothed pictures in public for other men and women to envy and lust for? Isn't this a tragic twisting of the simple innocent gift of marriage sexuality that Yahweh originally gave us?⁽¹¹⁾

Let's explore this theme a little bit further, but couch it in different terms.

Let's say that You were a master mechanic, and that you had a son (or daughter) whom you loved unconditionally. And because you loved this son, you built him the coolest, fastest, most powerful race car in the world, designed to set records, blaze down race tracks, and in general, give him/her the thrill of a lifetime driving this high performance, high maintenance, work of art. All of your friends would marvel at the skill and wisdom with which you built this precision machine, and admire the love that would make you just simply give this car to your son.

Now, let's suppose this son, instead of taking care of this machine, took it out street racing. He destroyed personal property with it. He put low octane gas in it. He hit pedestrians with it. He took it mudding in the muddy fields after heavy rains. He forgot to wash it. But he never took it to the track. He didn't tune it up regularly. He never set any world records with it. He never knew the thrill of going over two hundred miles an hour down the backstretch. And he eventually either wrecked it or had it confiscated and was thrown in jail.

Now how would you feel?

In many cultures, the dishonor this son has heaped upon the gift, and upon you as his father, would be punishable by death for that son.

Out of simple, pure, and undefiled love, you gave him a machine that cost you time and money to build. You even gave him an owner's manual to know how to take care of it. In short, you designed it to give him the thrill of a lifetime, but he blew it. He, in essence, spit in your face by completely dishonoring your gift. He disrespected the innocent love with which you gave it to him. Long story short? You would feel betrayed beyond belief.

Now back to our previous example.

Yahweh gave us these incredible sexual machines called our physical bodies, simply because He loved us. He designed them to be precision works of art, designed to thrill us, carry us, and take us to heights beyond measure. But in order to do so, we must keep these machines within the boundaries of the racetrack of a monogamous marriage. To ignore our owner's manual (the Bible) and take these sexual machines off track, outside of marriage, into the mud pits, out street racing, etc and so forth, it dishonors the one who gave these awesome gifts to us out of His child-like innocence and pure love for us. We dishonor and betray Him and His innocent gift to us when we satisfy our sexual appetites with anything other than the spouses that race with us on the racetracks of our marriages.

How about some more toe-stepping-on?

Does what you eat, drink, and/or smoke keep you from being as healthy as you could be, and enjoying life as much as you might be doing? Yahweh gave us life to enjoy life! Simply put, if we aren't taking good enough care of ourselves in order to enjoy life fully, we dishonor His original intentions for us!

And this example of dishonor and honor, concerning the gift of life that Yahweh gave each of us, applies to every other area of our lives as well. In His simple, honest, sincere, and innocent love for us, Yahweh gave us life. When we don't follow His instruction manual on how to get the most out of this life, we dishonor, dismay, and deeply hurt Him in all His child-like innocence. Ponder that, if you dare.

But remember, Yahweh is more than just a child. He is all-powerful,⁽¹²⁾ and all-knowing. Even in His innocence, He knows all and sees all. But His child-like purity and innocence is still there. It will never change. Betraying the innocence of a child behind their back is one thing, but to betray the innocence of someone that knows full well that you are betraying them, to their very face? That's harsh.

If you want to lay a foundation of understanding the innocence of Yahweh, start by studying and learning from the innocence of children. What you learn will surprise you.

1. Matthew 18:1-6 (KJV) - *At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'*
Matthew 19:13 (KJV) - *Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.*
Luke 18:15-16 (KJV) - *And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.'*
2. Mark 10:29-30 (KJV) - *And Jesus answered and said, 'Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.'*

3. Matthew 18:3 – See above

4. Matthew 18:6 – See above

5. Psalm 127:5 (KJV) - *Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*

6. Isaiah 1:17 (NB) - *Learn to do what is right! Promote justice! Give the oppressed reason to celebrate! Take up the cause of the orphan! Defend the rights of the widow!*

Psalm 10:14 (NB) - *You have taken notice, for you always see one who inflicts pain and suffering. The unfortunate victim entrusts his cause to you; you deliver the fatherless.*

Psalm 10:18 (NB) - *You defend the fatherless and oppressed, so that mere mortals may no longer terrorize them.*

Psalms 68:5 (NB) - *He is a father to the fatherless and an advocate for widows. God rules from his holy palace.*

7. Genesis 8:21 (NB) - *And the Lord smelled the soothing aroma and said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground because of humankind, even though the inclination of their minds is evil from childhood on. I will never again destroy everything that lives, as I have just done.*

Proverbs 22:15 (KJV) - *Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*

I Corinthians 15:21-22 (NB) - *For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also came through a man. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.*

8. Malachi 3:8-12 (NB) - *Can a person rob God? You indeed are robbing me, but you say, 'How are we robbing you?' In tithes and contributions! You are bound for judgment because you are robbing me – this whole nation is guilty. "Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse so that there may be food in my temple. Test me in this matter," says the Lord who rules over all, "to see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until there is no room for it all. Then I will stop the plague from ruining your crops, and the vine will not lose its fruit before harvest," says the Lord who rules over all. "All nations will call you happy, for you indeed will live in a delightful land," says the Lord who rules over all.*

9. Matthew 5:45 (KJV) - *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

Matthew 7:11 (NB) - *If you then, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!*

10. Exodus 20:7 (NB) - *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold guiltless anyone who takes his name in vain.*

11. Hebrews 13:4 (KJV) - *Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

12. Revelation 1:8 (NB) - *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God – the one who is, and who was, and who is still to come – the All-Powerful!*

Revelation 4:8 (NB) - *Each one of the four living creatures had six wings and was full of eyes all around and inside. They never rest day or night, saying:*

*“**Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God, the All-Powerful, Who was and who is, and who is still to come!**”* (Bold added for emphasis)

Chapter 4

Innocence and Love

Is there anything more beautiful than a child giving someone undeserving, something simple, out of innocent love?

Let's go to I Corinthians 13,⁽¹⁾ the so-called "Love chapter" of the Bible. And then let's make a list.

Love is patient.

Love is kind.

Love does not envy.

Love is not proud.

Love does not boast.

Love suffers long (is patient).

Love keep no record of wrongs.

What else?

Or let's ponder Mathew 25:31-46,⁽²⁾ and the story of the goats and the sheep being separated at the end of time. Who are the people that Jesus says love Him? Are they not the ones who feed the poor, give to the hungry, visit the prisoner, and take care of the orphan and widow?

I Corinthians talks about characteristics of love. Mathew 25 talks about love in action. We can learn many, many things from both passages.

But how do they relate to Innocence?

Love in its purest form, is innocent. It has no expectations. It gives of itself, "just because." It asks nothing in return.

How many of us are capable of that kind of love, towards everyone in our world? Honestly. Do we show that level of love for everyone around us? I know that I do not. Do you show that kind of love towards the street bum, doing whatever it costs to get him back on his feet? Christ loved even the street bum with such a depth of sincere, innocent love that He went to the cross to save his life. The Master Creator sees and recognizes the beauty hidden in even a wrecked life. I have trouble sometimes; I'll be honest. But to the creator, every single one of us, bearing His design and created in His image, is beautiful, even in our wretchedness, and is worth trying to save, even at the cost of His own physical life on Earth. Can you comprehend that kind of love? I know that I do not. I would like to in some ways, but it scares me too.

That kind of love is innocent. It is uncorrupted. It cannot be tainted, or it would cease to exist. I have seen children sometimes display a love that approaches that level of innocent commitment, but not often, and even more rarely in adults. I glimpse it occasionally, when displayed in the life of a father or mother for their child, or in someone that has born the brunt of Human cruelty and found their refuge in Christ.

Here's another thought for you. To love is to bleed. If wounded love did not bleed or cry, it would morph into something else, and no longer be innocent. Pure love, in order to retain its essence and purity (and its innocence), has to bleed. To love someone unconditionally, through thick or thin, is to hurt when they are hurt, or when they make poor choices and hurt themselves or others. The pain of wounded love, when "stuffed" inside and not allowed release, always morphs into something worse: usually bitterness, anger, and even hatred.

It's ironic to note that Christ in His love for us, bled, literally. Medically, because the blood around His heart had already separated into blood and water (plasma) when He

was speared on the cross,⁽³⁾ we even know that His cause of death was actually heart failure, or more figuratively, a broken heart (and not suffocation – the usual cause of death in crucifixion cases).

He didn't have a choice in some ways. In order to retain His identity as the God of Love, He had to bleed for us. Our sin drove Him to bleed in His anguish over our fallen condition. If He had not released His anguish in tears and blood, His love would have corrupted itself into something much darker. It just works that way. Frankly, I am glad that He chose to bleed.

I believe it was Mother Teresa that once said something to the effect that, “The irony of love is that if you love until it hurts, then there is no more hurt, but only more love.” I think she had a handle on what innocent and pure love is, and the love with which Yahweh loves us.

Think of the purest, most undefiled, unconditional, innocent form of love that you can (I find myself thinking about an innocent child's love once again). Then just for kicks, go back to I Corinthians 13 again, and ponder the “Love is” list again, but this time, consider each trait with a healthy dose of innocence thrown in. Doing this adds new meaning to each trait. Then recognize that this is the kind of love that Yahweh feels for us, and wishes that He could display towards us. Innocent love.

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1. I Corinthians 13:4-8a (NB) - *Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag, it is not puffed up. It is not rude, it is not self-serving, it is not easily angered or resentful. It is not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*

2. Matthew 25:31-46 (NB) - *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be assembled before him, and he will separate people one from another like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘I tell you the truth, just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it for me.’ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels! For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not receive me as a guest, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they too will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not give you whatever you needed?’ Then he will answer them, ‘I tell you the truth, just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not*

do it for me.' And these will depart into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

3. John 19:34 (KJV) - *But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.*

Chapter 5

Innocence and Holiness/Purity

We've touched on it several times already, the link between holiness and purity. They are intimately related. Without one, we cannot have the other. But let's explore why.

Think of the purest white that you can, white so white that even snow pales in comparison. It's a white that even the slightest smudge of dirt would show up like a glaring blemish upon. You dare not even touch it because even the dirt from a fingerprint would ruin it. It's so white that it's beautiful.

Or think of the nicest house that you have ever been in. Have you ever stepped foot into someplace that was so nice, and so clean, that you were afraid to even walk into the place for fear of leaving a footprint, or bumping something and knocking it out of place, or just somehow spoiling it by your very presence? It's a "clean" that is almost untouchable, and even majestic.

Or think of the most beautiful song you ever heard. Would you dare to add another note to its crystal clarity, or change one of the instruments? Would you presume to "improve" on it in some way? Would you even try to play it yourself, for fear of hitting a wrong note? It's a song so beautiful that only a master musician would even attempt playing it, or could do it justice.

Or think of the most beautiful painting you have ever seen or admired. It would probably be behind glass, and no one could touch it for fear that the oil on your skin would somehow soak into the paint and change its hue over time. You couldn't use flash photography on it for the same reason.

What do all these things have in common?

Isn't it their purity? And their untouchable beauty?

The purity of true innocence is a beautiful and majestic thing. It is beyond compare. It is untouchable. Priceless. And when applied to Yahweh, and His love, it is called holiness.

On a different note, think of the conflict that every parent goes through on the first day of school for their innocent kindergartner. The parent knows, as even I did when I let my own daughter first go to school, that the world can be a cruel place, and we want so desperately to shield the innocence of our children from its cruelty. Yet we know, deep inside, that the world is going to touch our children, and by the time they are teenagers, we may not even recognize their innocence anymore, the innocence that they had before going to school for that first day of kindergarten. Isn't the innocence that they start out with something that is beautiful, incredible, and at that moment of letting them go, almost priceless to you?

Think of the "holy" men of the world's various religions. Why are they called holy?

Isn't it usually because somehow they are or have "ascended" above the rest of us? They have somehow transcended the mundane. Generally, their lives are characterized by simplicity, wisdom, deep spiritual understanding, and innocence.

Or consider the Catholic Saints. Aren't their lives also usually characterized by simplicity, wisdom, purity, and innocence? The Catholic church has quite a list of requirements that a person has to meet before the church will bestow the title of "Saint" upon them. And their Saints generally have lead lives that were characterized, in one word, by simple holiness. Many of them also are known by other traits as well, but it's always the

holiness that stands out. They lived lives that somehow reflected Yahweh. They modeled Godliness. They modeled holiness.

So in essence, you could almost equate holiness with Godliness, and they both spring forth from true Innocence. They both exemplify a purity of love that is so pure, innocent, and untarnished, that they are beautiful, like that white color that is beyond white, that spotless mansion, that perfect song, that perfect painting, or that innocent kindergartner.

So just why do the angels in heaven around God's throne cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty"?⁽¹⁾

Are they not affirming to Yahweh His innocent purity of love, that is so pure as to be majestic, beautiful, and beyond compare?

I often had trouble picturing in my mind this God we serve, sitting up there on His throne, listening to all the angels singing this to Him. In my own framework of thinking, this sounded egotistical, arrogant, and not at all "holy." It's like that church that gave one of its most humble members a lapel pin that read "humble", just to honor his humbleness. But as soon as he wore the pin to church one Sunday, they had to take it away from him, because in wearing the pin, he became, "not humble." I always pictured Yahweh this way too, and somehow figured that as soon as He accepted that kind of worship, He somehow was no longer holy.

But as I pondered it more deeply, and considered even the purpose of song, several things struck me.

Sometimes, the song is for the singer, as much as it is for the listener. The angels singing about Yahweh's holiness, are in some ways, reveling in it for their own sake. It's like that kid that is proud of something his dad did, that goes out and brags about his dad to

his buddies, sometimes over and over again, especially if his dad is in earshot. The child is reveling in his father's glory, much as the angels also revel in the glory of Yahweh, to themselves and each other.

By the same token, the child is also building up the father by letting the dad hear exactly what he or she thinks of him, much as the angels do in the presence of Yahweh.

And then it struck me.

Yahweh didn't demand this worship and adoration from His angels. They give it to Him freely, because they love Him for His love, they adore Him for His innocence, and they revel in His beauty and glory. And Yahweh gracefully, gently, and warmly accepts them and their praises, because He deserves to hear it.

Doesn't an innocent child deserve to be affirmed for any actions done out of innocent love? So why not Yahweh too?

Now concerning humans, it's another story.

Yahweh currently gives mankind a choice to worship Him (or not) in His pure innocent holiness, but someday, He will *demand* that every knee bow to Him.⁽²⁾ This would obviously apply only to those that do not already worship Him. Why? It will be a command that only means something to those that have not previously chosen to worship Him. And He has every right to demand it too, because He IS God, and we are not. He is the model of perfection, without impurity or blemish, and we are anything but. He is holy, perfect in truth, love, innocence and purity, and we simply are not. Aside from the fact that the creator has every right to demand worship from his created subjects, it only makes sense for us to defer respect to, give honor to, and pay homage to a king that is far more loving, kind and gentle (traits that some would say spring from innocence) than we could ever hope to be.

But back to the subject at hand: Holiness and Innocence. In Yahweh's innocence, there is nothing, and no one, more perfect in the expression of love, than Yahweh himself. Anything that perfect is by very definition and nature, Holy.

1. Isaiah 6:3 (KJV) - *And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*
 2. Romans 14:11 (KJV) - *For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*
- Philippians 2:10 (KJV) - *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;*

Chapter 6

Innocence and Justice

Justice sometimes stings, you know that?

And here comes the inevitable question again, the one that started this whole discussion. If Yahweh is a God of love, why won't He let just everyone into heaven?

In large part, it's His sense of Justice, that ironically enough, also springs from His Innocence.

Another term that is often used interchangeably with Justice is Fairness.

When a murderer gets a slap on the wrist and no prison time, don't we usually automatically say one of two things? We say, "That's not fair!" or we say, "That's not just!" Or we rephrase it to say that Justice wasn't served, or that the judge himself was not Fair.

Or consider another situation. Think about two brothers, twins let's say, and they are waiting for their mother to split one last cookie from the cookie jar between them. Both of them watch her like a hawk, to make sure that she divides that cookie EXACTLY down the middle. If she doesn't split it exactly but leaves one half larger than the other, and then she gives one brother a choice, chances are that he will take the larger piece, and the other brother will erupt into shouts of, "That's not fair!"

Children have a keenly developed sense of fairness when they come into this world. Now granted, this cookie situation fairness comes out of selfishness, but it's still a fairness issue, and it often transcends that simple selfishness.

Likewise, how many times have you watched kids watching a movie, and when someone in the movie gets done wrong or is treated unfairly, have you seen the kids respond with empathy to the unfairly treated character? They do. They respond.

And as the two brothers we mentioned a moment ago grow older, they dive into comic books that have heroes and villains, good guys and bad. And the child that cheers for the bad guy, we automatically wonder if he needs a psych evaluation, because it isn't normal, and it's sometimes said to be a first sign of a criminal in the making.

And as adults, they flock with their friends to see Superman movies, because he always brings justice to the bad guys, usually someone connected to Luther, a smooth talking, double dealing, man without a conscience. When Luther hatches a new scheme, we know that innocent people are going to be put at risk. We know too that Superman will somehow get hurt. But we always rest in the knowledge that somehow Superman is going to bring justice to Luther in the end. It makes us feel good. It restores our hope, not only in mankind, but in the universe in general.

So it's a sad irony that we grow up teaching our kids that, "Life isn't fair," as though it will somehow help them cope with injustice in their own lives. I've done it myself, told my kids, "Life isn't fair, so deal with it, and move on. Don't let it get you down." And while there is truth to this, it's still a sad irony that we spend so much time teaching our kids to let go of their innate sense of fairness and justice.

But Yahweh's sense of justice and fairness never goes away. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever, the Bible tells us.⁽¹⁾ And He sees the big picture of life in this universe, on a scale that we could never hope to understand.

And herein lies the crux of the matter, the question posed at the beginning of the chapter. Yahweh in His childlike innocence is absolutely fair and just in everything that He

does. He also laid down a set of steps for us to follow in order to live in HIS home after we die. If some people follow them, and others don't, it isn't fair to any of us for Him to just accept everyone into His house anyway.

But beyond that, it isn't fair to HIM, to expect HIM to allow people into HIS eternal home, that would ruin the very purity, beauty, and nature of His home. Remember our discussion of holiness? His heavenly home is so absolutely perfect, so absolutely spotless, and so absolutely pure and majestic, that NONE of us have any right to even set foot there, because we would spoil it just by our mere presence.⁽²⁾ There is no one on Earth good enough to demand entrance into that kind of pure house. And I doubt that once we get a true glimpse of it, we could even make ourselves go in anyway, just like we hesitate to enter a mansion that is incredibly grandiose, clean and spotless, for fear of ruining it somehow.

He has to maintain some boundaries of His own, just like a woman that has been divorced from an alcoholic or abusive husband has to set some personal boundaries with her ex and deny him entrance to her home and personal space.⁽³⁾

When we stand before a pure and holy Yahweh someday, every dirty smudge, every oily fingerprint, and every sinful stain on our lives will stand out in comparison like a beacon for all to see. He is that perfect. He is that beautiful. He is that glorious. We, in ourselves, have no right to expect entrance to heaven. We will know it, and Yahweh will know it. And His sense of fairness and justice will not let us in either.

Think about an elevator that ten people just got on, all preparing to go up twenty floors. If just one person had stepped in fresh dog feces on his way to the elevator, everyone in the elevator would instantly know it. One person's misstep ruins it for everyone. One person's ick, his sin, his anger, his baggage, his anything that is not

completely pure in love and innocence like Yahweh, would ruin heaven. Is that fair to Yahweh? It IS His home, after all.

And this also goes back to a fairness issue for other people.

Just as it isn't fair for the nine people to get stuck in the elevator with the one person with dog doo-doo on his shoes unless he washes it off first, likewise it would not be fair to the other inhabitants of heaven to allow someone into heaven who had not been washed off first, in this case by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross.⁽³⁾ His blood is the only thing pure enough in this universe to get that ick completely off.

Yahweh plays fair. He is absolutely fair in all His dealings. We sometimes think He is not, but then we also don't truly understand the framework and mindset He is working from. If we could see Him as He truly is, in all His innocent glory, see His home as it truly is, in all its majesty, and then also see the big picture of the entire universe like He does, we would also more easily recognize the fairness and justice with which He also operates.

1. Hebrews 13:8 (KJV) - *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*
2. Romans 3:10 (KJV) - *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*
3. Revelation 22:14-15 (NB) - *Blessed are those who wash their robes so they can have access to the tree of life and can enter into the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral, and the murderers, and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood!*

Chapter 7

Innocence and Mercy

But in this absolute sense of justice, Yahweh also has an incredible sense of innocent mercy. But how can this be? How can two seemingly diametrically opposite personality traits co-exist side by side in the same absolutely pure and perfect Yahweh?

But before we explore this question, let's explore some examples of the relationship between Innocence and Mercy first.

Have you ever seen a kid in all his innocence go up to a mangy-looking stray dog on the streets, squat down on his feet to the dog's level, and pet him? Inevitably, the dog wags his tail, and likely as not, attempts to lick the child's face in exuberance. It's easy to picture in your mind, isn't it? It's easy for the child to look past the mud and grime on the dog, or the fact that the dog probably spent the previous night strewing someone's garbage all over the neighborhood. All the child sees is a dog in need of affection, who simply can't help how dirty he is.

And all the dog knows is that someone is bending down to touch him, pet him, and love on him. He isn't thinking about how dirty he is, or how he just spent the previous night strewing garbage all the neighborhood. He is just happy that someone important has noticed him.

Now consider what would happen if that same dog, after being petted and loved on by the boy, turned around and bit the boy? Wouldn't the boy be shocked and surprised? But inevitably, the boy is going to try to pet the dog again, and reassure him that things are OK. But what happens if the dog bites him again? How many times would it take before the child stands up crying, not from being physically hurt, but from being rejected,

wounded in the heart, by a dog that has bit him. All the boy wanted to do was love on the dog, and the dog bit him. OUCH! That hurts, not in the hand, but in the heart!

And it's the innocent love and tenderness that was wounded. It's the mercy that was wounded. They're tied together.

Or how about the story of the Prodigal Son in the Bible?⁽¹⁾ A rather selfish young boy gets tired of waiting for his old man to die so he can claim his inheritance, so he finally goes up to his father and asks for his inheritance early. Frowning I'm sure, the father eventually gives in the son's pestering and gives him his share of the inheritance.

The boy immediately goes out and spends it on foolish living, eventually ending up in the poorhouse, feeding pigs just to make a living (and I suspect to have a little extra to eat by eating some of the pig slop when the owner wasn't watching, I'm sure).

Eventually the boy comes to his senses and heads home, his tail between his legs.

When he arrives home, and asks his father's forgiveness, something happens. His father, who has been waiting daily for him, shows him mercy, and welcomes him back into the family. The father isn't interested in how the son squandered his money. He isn't interested in the decisions that led him to come back home. He's only focused on one fact: his son is home, in a much wiser and more sober state of mind. It's easy for the father to show mercy here.

But let's take a look at the requirements that had to be in place first for this father to extend his mercy.

1. The father had to love the son incredibly deeply, and be willing to put past offenses behind them.⁽²⁾
2. The son had to acknowledge his offenses, ask forgiveness, and stop doing the offensive actions.⁽³⁾

Mercy and love are intrinsically tied up together. And the father in his innocence accepts the son's homecoming and apologies at face value, because he innocently believes that everything is now behind them.

But just for theory's sake, let's ponder what might happen if that same son, after coming home, apologizing, and being accepted back into the family with honor, goes out and squanders more of his father's money, doing the same things he got in trouble for the first time around.

What has he betrayed? Is it his father's love? Yes. Is it his father's mercy? Yes. Is it his father's innocence? YES. Of the three things that he has betrayed, it is the father's innocence that some would say is the most deeply affronted.

Now let's consider how these two scenarios, the boy and the dog, and the prodigal son, relate to Yahweh and His own innate sense of innocent mercy. Let's look at the boy and dog first.

Yahweh loves us deeply. Yahweh wants to "pet" us, and shower love on us, in spite of the fact that we are grimy, dirty, and unkempt when compared to His spotless beauty. His sense of mercy allows Him to see past all that grit and grime to see the beautiful spirit inside us. Most of the time, we don't even know how grungy we are in His eyes. We can't see and aren't even aware of the dirt that He can see on us, kinda like that dog who isn't really even aware of how dirty he must look to the boy (or his mom).

Unfortunately, we also, are all too often like that dog when we then turn around and inevitably snap at the hand of Yahweh that is only trying to love on us. How many times do we do it before He finally pulls His hand back in sadness, with tears of dismay running down His cheeks?

How about the second example?

Yahweh loves us deeply. He daily waits patiently for us to come home to Him in our hearts and spirits.⁽⁴⁾ He misses us and our company. He wants to be near us, and have us near to Him. We are His wayward children, who left home in the Garden of Eden when we, as a race, selfishly wanted more than what He had chosen to give us.

And eventually, some of us do come to our senses, and in our need, we head home to Him with our tails between our legs, to beg Him for mercy and forgiveness.⁽⁵⁾

And what does He do?

He welcomes us, weary and tired as we are, home to Him with open arms and big smiles, promising to give us comfort and rest.⁽⁶⁾ He is happy to see us!

Could He have welcomed us back if we hadn't sincerely asked for forgiveness first, committing to not repeat our offenses? Not a chance. Have you heard the saying, "Home is where the heart is"? We aren't truly home with Him until our heart is home with Him too. And for our hearts to truly be home with Him, we have to acknowledge our dirt and grime, ask forgiveness, and commit to a new way of doing things.

Now back to the little boy and dog. What would have happened if the little boy had decided to take the dog home with him? The moment he walks in through the front door with the dirty dog, mom (we're assuming that she will let him keep the dog for sake of this parable) immediately points him to the bathroom to give the dog a good scrubbing. The dog can't be there, and can't be a part of the new family that wants him, unless he gets cleaned up first. Can he ever lick himself clean enough to pass mom's inspection? Not hardly. He needs someone else to wash him thoroughly, and get all those dirty spots off that he (the dog) can't even reach or see.

It's that way with us as well, when we come home to Yahweh, with our hearts in the right place. After we ask His forgiveness, He immediately washes us. With what? He

washes us with the blood of His own body, the only thing pure enough in this universe to wash away the sin and stench of a life lived in the misery of this pigsty we call human existence.⁽⁷⁾

And what happens when we stray out again into the world, and roll around in the mud again? We come home again, tail between our legs, and ask forgiveness again. He then washes that new dirt away as well. If we are sincere in our apology, He'll wipe that stain away.⁽⁸⁾

But let's face it. We do live in a pigsty in this life. We're going to get dirty, whether we like it or not. We can't help it. Fortunately, in His mercy He knows this, and as we keep coming back to Him in sincerity for our daily, hourly, and sometimes minute by minute baths, He is willing to continue to wash us clean again. Never take it for granted. It's His sense of mercy, grounded in His love, and protected by His innocence, that allows Him to accept us, moment by moment, in our lives.

And as we walk with Him, trying to act more like Him,⁽⁹⁾ and His character begins to rub off on us, we find ourselves getting dirty less and less often. It's a natural progression. We become like those people we hang out with. If we daily hang out in the house of Yahweh in our hearts and minds, eventually He starts to rub off on us. We can't help it; it just happens. By hanging out with Him, our minds are renewed and transformed.⁽¹⁰⁾ (Of course, Yahweh helps us along in this process too.⁽¹¹⁾)

And if we intentionally go back into the filth, we affront His love, His mercy, and His innocence, in horrible ways.⁽¹²⁾ So when we come to our senses, we flee back home in sorrow and anguish, and He in His innocent love and mercy, is willing to wash us once again.

So what's the upshot of all this?

Yahweh is merciful in His love. When we own up to our own filthiness, and sincerely ask Him to forgive us and take us back as His own, He washes us with His own blood, and makes us His family children once again. As we walk with Him, we slowly become more like Him. And in our daily struggles in this pigsty, we constantly go back to Him for washing and help in rising above the filth instead of being drowned/covered in it.

It's His eternally innocent mercy that allows this process to happen.⁽¹³⁾

But what about the question we posed at the beginning of this chapter? How can justice and mercy both be served, when it comes to His relationship with mankind?

His sense of Justice still demands that SOMEONE pay the price and suffer the consequences of our offenses against Him. The dishonor we have each heaped upon Him with the poor choices we have each made concerning this precious thing called life that He gave us, demands that we die. And His mercy recognizes that we utterly can't help ourselves, that we truly have no idea how muddy and grimy we appear to Him, and that we are completely and totally incapable of cleaning ourselves completely up, just like that dog that could never clean itself enough to pass mom's inspection. Yet in the anguish of His heart, Yahweh found a simple way for both His justice and His mercy to find resolution and expression in His love for us.

If we would accept it, He would separate Himself, and part of Himself would come to live among us, to eventually bleed and die for us instead.⁽¹⁴⁾ Those people that asked for sincere forgiveness, like the Prodigal Son, could thus be washed in something pure enough to clean them completely, Yahweh's sense of justice could be satisfied, and through His mercy, He could draw at least some of His creation, those that accepted His justice payment, back into companionship with Him, sparing us.

But that separating process, where He split Himself and sent part of Himself to Earth as a son to live among us for awhile, cost Him dearly. Some might say that it almost cost Him His innocence. But He survived the process, paid the price, and satisfied His own sense of justice, fairness, *and* mercy.

Now consider once again the question that I asked at the beginning of this book, in light of this chapter's discussion too.

Why won't Yahweh let just everyone into heaven?

When our admission to heaven cost Him His own physical life on Earth 2000 years ago, something that His sense of mercy in the face of His justice drove Him to do, do you really expect Him to let someone into heaven who has not acknowledged that cost of His mercy, asked sincere forgiveness, and allowed themselves to be washed by the pure blood He shed that day He died? Do you think that's fair to Him? Do you think that's right?

1. Luke 15
2. Luke 15:20 (KJV) - *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*
3. Luke 15:21 (KJV) - *And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*
4. Romans 15:5 (KJV) - *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:*
5. Hebrews 4:16 (KJV) - *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

- 1 John 1:9 (NB) - *But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.*
6. Matthew 11:28 (KJV) - *Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*
7. 1 John 1:7 (NB) - *But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*
8. 1 John 1:9 (NB) - *But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness.*
9. Colossians 3:12 (NB) - *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others.*
10. Romans 12:2 (NB) - *Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God – what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.*
11. Hebrews 10:16-17 (NB) - *“This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws on their hearts, and I will inscribe them on their minds,” then he says, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no longer.”*
12. Hebrews 10:26 (NB) - *For if we deliberately keep on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, no further sacrifice for sins is left for us,*

13. I Peter 1:3 (NB): *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

14. John 1:14 (NB) - *Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory – the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.*

1 Peter 3:18a (NB) - *Because Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring you to God, by being put to death in the flesh...*

John 3:16-17 (NB) - *For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him.*

Chapter 8

Satan, Sin, and Hell, and Why They Exist

“The Devil made me do it!” we sometimes hear people say. And we snicker. Even I used that excuse once when I disobeyed my mom and got caught. It’s the classic transference of blame. By the way, it didn’t work for me either; I still got spanked.

And yet, there is still a grain of truth to it.

Let me explain.

The purest form of love is a love that is freely given, agreed?

Now Yahweh, the purest being of love in all of the universe, wanted to love and be loved, and experience companionship with something or someone. So He created both the angels and us. And in the midst of that creation process, He faced a terrible dilemma.

In order to be loved in return by a pure love, He had to give His creation the choice of whether or not to love Him. Love isn’t actually love unless it’s given by choice. And by giving us and the angels that choice, He also knew that inevitably, some of us would also choose NOT to love Him, and choose to ignore or even HATE Him instead.

Could you do that?

But Yahweh is the ultimate expression of love incarnate, as we’ve already seen. He IS love: pure, undefiled, and holy. In creating humans to live on the physical dimensional plane, and the angels to live on the spiritual dimensional plane, it was natural to Him to also give them each free will and choice. Pure love is given by choice. So to create us in

the ability to give pure love back to Him, He also gave us the choice to love. It was a natural progression.

It was His character, His innocence, that hoped, believed, and longed for us, his creation, to *choose* to follow and love Him like He loved us. Likewise, His innocent *love* demanded He give His creation choice and free will. So He did.⁽¹⁾

Sooner or later, some free agents with choice will inevitably choose NOT to love their creator. It was almost to be expected. And some so chose.

And by natural progression, it was also to be expected that the strongest created being that chose to Hate Yahweh instead of Love Him, would soon rule ALL beings that chose to ignore or hate Yahweh. In our case, this being just happened to be named Satan (or Lucifer, as some call him). If it hadn't been him leading the rebellion,⁽²⁾ it would have been someone else, but there would have been someone. There just would have been. It was inevitable.

By innocently desiring companionship with, and to be loved by, a rational creature that could choose to give and receive love, thus giving His creation a choice of whether to love Him back or not, Yahweh all but guaranteed that there would eventually be a "public enemy number one" for Him to contend with throughout all created time. And Satan is his name.

But apparently, Satan/Lucifer eventually went one step further. Not only did he choose to not love Yahweh, he wanted to be equal with Yahweh,⁽³⁾ a god himself, preferably in place of Yahweh, where he could demand loyalty and obedience to himself (but not apparently love) from all creation. Satan, once one of the highest, most powerful, and most beautiful of all created beings⁽⁴⁾ (if not *the* highest, most powerful, and most beautiful), got tired of worshiping Yahweh, and decided to try to replace Him instead. And

Yahweh's innocence, innocent love, and decision to allow His followers free will, made it possible for Satan to do this.

And Satan wasn't alone. Apparently a lot of angels⁽⁵⁾ joined his rebellion. They chose not to love Yahweh. So Yahweh had no choice but to banish them from heaven.

Why?

True, pure love, of the kind that Yahweh is and displays, should be responded to with a true, pure love also. Anything less is not true love, and is simple selfishness. After all that Yahweh did for His created beings, angels and humans alike, giving them each life, expression, beauty, and a glorious home to live in, all done in simple, pure, innocent love, love in turn demands that the response to Him be one of thankfulness, love, and worship in return. To do anything less is selfishness and hard-hearted ungratefulness.

So here you suddenly have up to (some theologians say) one third of the angels choosing NOT to respond to Yahweh's love, not to worship Him, and not to follow Him. This is selfishness. This is impure.

So remember our discussion of holiness and purity? It can't tolerate the presence of anything less pure or holy than itself, or it becomes corrupted in itself.

Yahweh, in order to preserve His own character, His own home, and the home of the remaining two thirds of His angels, had no choice but to banish the ungrateful angels out of heaven (a process of which turned into a full-fledged, supernatural war⁽²⁾).

Now you have not just envy and selfishness, but bitter, enraged, putrid hate that develops.

Think about it. A headstrong young schoolboy that casually steals something isn't particularly mad at the storeowner UNTIL the storeowner pounces on him and turns him

over to the police for shoplifting. It's when the consequences are delivered that the hatred truly festers and grows.

So now we have Satan and one third of the former angels that now bitterly HATE Yahweh. They *hate* Him. They hate everything about Him. They hate His creation. They hate us humans because Yahweh created/loves us (and we are different from them). They hate Jews and Christians in particular because the Jews just happened to be the ones that Yahweh chose to bless and send His son-self through to live on Earth, and the Christians are the ones that have chosen to reject Satan and to follow that Christ for themselves.⁽⁶⁾ And they know that eventually Yahweh will discipline them to ultimate doom.⁽⁷⁾ So they hate Him, with a passionate vengeance that can/will never accept redemption or forgiveness. You see, Angels are such passionate beings, that live on the same spiritual plane as Yahweh, that once their choice was made, there was apparently never any going back or second guessing themselves.

And the fallen angels' current sole purpose in existence is to keep as many humans as possible from returning to Yahweh for redemption and washing. Satan and his crowd love making us wallow in misery. They lie and deceive us, every chance they get.⁽⁸⁾ They glory in every life that they screw up and make a mess of. The more wretched we become, the more delighted they are, because we no longer reflect much of anything at all of Yahweh, whose image we were originally created in. The less we reflect of anything good related, the happier they are. They WANT us to be miserable. They WANT us to die. They WANT us to curse Yahweh.⁽⁹⁾ And they want nothing more than to see our souls rot with them for eternity, away from Yahweh's presence. This is their only tool they have left to get back at Yahweh. US. If they can destroy us, and keep us from returning to Yahweh, they can hurt Yahweh's heart, and they do. And they do it because they hate Him.

So now, because of Yahweh's simple innocent desire for love and companionship, you have an epic power struggle going on between Satan, and Yahweh. And we humans are caught in the middle.

Look at it this way. We become three things in this battle.

First, in some ways we are like chess pawns, being played back and forth in a huge game of evil against good.⁽¹⁰⁾ Satan and his fallen/rebel angels (now more commonly known as demons), push us around, use us,⁽¹¹⁾ and in general play us like pawns against Yahweh and each other in order to keep us down, confused, distracted, hurt, bitter, angry, and in general, away from Yahweh's love and innocence. And those of us that have returned to Yahweh, asked forgiveness, been washed by His blood, and have agreed to stand our ground in the battle lines against Satan, are led into battle, sometimes like pawns, but more like willing soldiers,⁽¹²⁾ not pushed, but led. Satan uses and pushes people into battle, with no thought for collateral damage (the more the better, in his eyes. He is the ultimate terrorist in this respect). God in His innocent love and mercy leads us into battle, walks with us each step of the way,⁽¹³⁾ and brings healing and wholeness to those of us that get wounded in the battle.⁽¹⁴⁾

In a similar fashion, we are also the kings and queens of this chess match, with our souls being the prize of the battle.⁽¹⁵⁾ Satan and his dominions already know that they have lost the war. They're just trying to take as many of us humans down with them as they can. God wants us, our souls, to live with Him in His home, for eternity.⁽¹⁶⁾ The Bible tells us this, whereas Satan would rather that us, our souls, perish with him and his hordes away from Yahweh forever. Our souls are the prize of the ongoing war. We are the only things left for Satan to fight with Yahweh over.

But ultimately, we humans are like chess rooks and bishops too, still players and soldiers with choices to make in this battle as well. We *do* still have free will, and decisions to make about the battles we fight. We can choose to align ourselves with Yahweh, or not with Yahweh - which boils down to aligning with Satan, because Satan can, and willingly does, use anyone not walking tightly with Yahweh in their lives.⁽¹⁷⁾ We have to choose our side. We must. To not choose Yahweh, and His innocence, is to choose Satan, and all the evil that he is.⁽¹⁸⁾ There is no middle ground in the end, when Yahweh stands at the door of His home, allowing some souls entrance, and other souls not.⁽¹⁹⁾

Which brings up the most painful topic of this chapter: the lake of fire, more commonly referred to as hell.

Think about what we have talked about so far. It was inevitable for Satan (or someone else) to rise to power once Yahweh granted free will to His creatures. It was inevitable for an epic, multi-thousand year war to arise between Yahweh and Satan. And we know that in the end, Yahweh will win. He just will. He is God, after all, creator and ruler of all.

So what shall He do with the prisoners of war, once the final battle has been fought?

Obviously, He can't allow the rebel angels entrance back into heaven, for the same reason that He kicked them out of heaven in the first place. Nor can He let unrepentant humans in, for reasons we have also already touched on. And after the final battle, Yahweh will once again rule the entire universe, with no more allegiance choices to be made by either us or the angels.

Nor can he let the defeated demons and their human prey to just wander through the universe forever, sowing and wreaking havoc in their wake. Once the final battle has been fought, it's over. All fighting will be done.

So where should He put/send Satan, his fallen/rebel angels, and everyone from Earth that chooses not to accept Yahweh's mercy and peace offer?

Angelic and human souls, once conceived/created, continue to live forever too, created in the image of Yahweh, who is, and always has been, immortal himself.⁽²⁰⁾ It would seem that after time itself ceases to exist, every soul that has ever lived will still exist! And given Yahweh's nature, the giver and creator of life, He won't/can't just snuff these souls out either. He has to put/send them someplace.

Hence: Hell. It's the only place in the universe from where Yahweh *will* one day remove His presence. The innocent child/gentleman that He is, He has to let this place eventually exist. He has no choice in the matter. The instant He gave free will and choice to His creation, He also had to allow for a place to exist for the ones that chose not to follow Him, to live (someplace where He won't be). Fallen angels, humans, and everything else that chooses not to follow Yahweh in their allotted lifespan and time of decision, will someday be sent there.

Thus, hell isn't a place that some people make it out to be, where Yahweh will just maliciously send people who couldn't swallow some list of capricious do's and don't's. He *has* to allow for a place to exist for souls that choose not to live with Him.

But what is this place going to be like?

The Lake of Fire, more commonly known as Hell, will be the only place left in the universe where Yahweh's presence and Spirit will someday no longer be. In the book of Hebrews,⁽²¹⁾ we are told that all things hold together in Him. Elsewhere, we are also told

that He is everywhere at once.⁽²²⁾ Thus, in essence, we are told that His very presence in the universe is what holds it together and gives it form. If He removes His presence from one section of the universe, it will cease to hold together. Physical and dimensional laws will no longer function. Things will fall/fly apart in what can only be described as a hellish firestorm, no pun intended. Energy and matter will collide in uncontrolled fury, and become what the Bible refers to as the “Lake of Fire,”⁽²³⁾ not necessarily because Yahweh wants to create it to be that way, but because it simply WILL *BE* that way because His presence is gone from it; it’s simple laws of physics.

And that’s where every soul that chooses not to accept Yahweh’s merciful peace offer will eventually end up,⁽²³⁾ in the midst of a cataclysmic nuclear firestorm that self-ignites once Yahweh removes His presence from that place and separates it from the rest of the universe.⁽²⁴⁾

But that’s not all. Satan and his hordes will be there too, right alongside the humans they tormented on Earth.⁽²⁵⁾ And their hate for humans will be even more intense than ever. Can you imagine an eternity caught helplessly in the hands of an angry, defeated, and raging Satan? Consider the pure, unrelenting, eternal terror that image provokes...

And imagine the psychological torment human souls will go through as well, over their own choices, once their eyes have been opened to see the true nature of what they refused by not walking with Yahweh while they still had the chance here on earth. Can you imagine the anguish of soul? Can you imagine the remorse and shame? The guilt?⁽²⁶⁾

This “Hell” will be a very real and horrible place,^(23, 25, 26, 27) and the very nature of Yahweh demands that it eventually exist. And it will exist, not necessarily because He created it to exist, or even wants it to exist, but because in His pure and innocent love for us, and in His innocent desire to be loved in return by rational beings, He chose to give us

free will, and will someday allow the full impact of our choice not to walk with Him on Earth, echo into eternity in a place where He simply no longer is....

1. Deuteronomy 30:19 (KJV) - *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:*
2. Revelations 12:7-9 (NB) - *Then war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But the dragon was not strong enough to prevail, so there was no longer any place left in heaven for him and his angels. So that huge dragon – the ancient serpent, the one called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world – was thrown down to the earth, and his angels along with him.*
3. Isaiah 14:13-14 (NB) - *You said to yourself, “I will climb up to the sky. Above the stars of El (Yahweh), I will set up my throne. I will rule on the mountain of assembly on the remote slopes of Zaphon. I will climb up to the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High!”*
4. Ezekiel 28:12-13 (NB) - *“Son of man, sing a lament for the king of Tyre, and say to him, This is what the sovereign Lord says: “‘You were the sealer of perfection, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering, the ruby, topaz, and emerald, the chrysolite, onyx, and jasper, the sapphire, turquoise, and beryl; your settings and mounts were made of gold. On the day you were created they were prepared.”*

5. Revelations 12:9 (NB) - *So that huge dragon – the ancient serpent, the one called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world – was thrown down to the earth, and his angels along with him.*
 6. Revelation 12:17 (NB) - *So the dragon became enraged at the woman and went away to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep God's commandments and hold to the testimony about Jesus.*
 7. Rev. 12:12 (KJV) - *Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*
 8. II Corinthians 11:13-15 (NB) - *For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will correspond to their actions.*
- 1 Peter 5:8 (KJV) - *Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*
9. Job 2:4-5 (NB) - *But Satan answered the Lord, "Skin for skin! Indeed, a man will give up all that he has to save his life! But extend your hand and strike his bone and his flesh, and he will no doubt curse you to your face!"*
 10. Job 1:6-12 (NB) - *Now the day came when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord – and Satan also arrived among them. The Lord said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" And Satan answered the Lord, "From roving about on the earth, and from walking back and forth across it."*

So the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a pure and upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil."

Then Satan answered the Lord, "Is it for nothing that Job fears God? Have you not made a hedge around him and his household and all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his livestock have increased in the land. But extend your hand and strike everything he has, and he will no doubt curse you to your face!"

So the Lord said to Satan, "All right then, everything he has is in your power. Only do not extend your hand against the man himself!" So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

Luke 22: 31-32 (NB) "Simon, Simon, pay attention! Satan has demanded to have you all, to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. When you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

11. *II Corinthians 2:11 (NB) - so that we may not be exploited by Satan (for we are not ignorant of his schemes).*

12. *Ephesians 6:11 (KJV) - Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

II Timothy 2:3-4 (NB) - Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one in military service gets entangled in matters of everyday life; otherwise he will not please the one who recruited him.

13. *Matthew 28:20 (NB) - teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

14. Luke 9:11 (KJV) - *And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spoke unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.*
15. II Timothy 2:26 (KJV) - *And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*
- Malachi 3:16-18 (NB) - *Then those who respected the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord took notice. A scroll was prepared before him in which were recorded the names of those who respected the Lord and honored his name. "They will belong to me," says the Lord who rules over all, "in the day when I prepare my own special property. I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you will see that I make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not.*
16. John 14:2 (KJV) - *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*
17. I Timothy 5:15 (NB) - *For some have already wandered away to follow Satan.*
18. Luke 11:23 (NB) - *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.*
- John 3:18 (NB) - *The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.*
19. Matthew 25:32 (NB) - *All the nations will be assembled before him, and he will separate people one from another like a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.*

20. Revelation 1:8 (NB) - *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God – the one who is, and who was, and who is still to come – the All-Powerful!*
21. Hebrews 1:3a (NB) - *The Son is the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, and he sustains all things by his powerful word,*
22. Psalm 139:8-12 (NB) - *If I were to ascend to heaven, you would be there. If I were to sprawl out in Sheol, there you would be. If I were to fly away on the wings of the dawn, and settle down on the other side of the sea, even there your hand would guide me, your right hand would grab hold of me. If I were to say, “Certainly the darkness will cover me, and the light will turn to night all around me,” even the darkness is not too dark for you to see, and the night is as bright as day; darkness and light are the same to you.*
23. Revelation 20:15 (NB) - *If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, that person was thrown into the lake of fire.*
24. Luke 16:26 (NB) - *Besides all this, a great chasm has been fixed between us, so that those who want to cross over from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’*
25. Matthew 25:41 (KJV) - *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:*
- Revelation 20:10 (NB) - *And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are too, and they will be tormented there day and night forever and ever.*

26. Matthew 13:49-50 (NB) - *It will be this way at the end of the age. Angels will come and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

27. Mark 9:47b-48 (NB) - *It is better to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies and the fire is never quenched.*

Chapter 9

Yahweh's Innocent Character: Reflected in the Family

But just who is Yahweh? And what is the trinity? How do the three personalities or persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit coexist as one Yahweh?⁽¹⁾

Given the nature of who Yahweh is, is there anything in our current world, creation being a reflection of Him, that might shed light on this?

We already know that humankind was created in the image of God. We know that He created us a male and female.⁽²⁾

And therein lies a good clue.

Everything that Yahweh created, He created as a reflection of Him. Every living thing alive somehow reflects something of His character. It was the natural and logical thing for an innocent God to do.

Think of the children again, in their innocence. When they play, what do they play? They play-act and role-play that which is familiar to them. They play house. They play family. They play action games that they see older kids playing. They play what they see their parents doing. They copy EVERYTHING.

Now consider Yahweh, before time was created. He alone existed. There was nothing else. So when it came time for Him to be creative, what did He model His "playtime" after?

Well, if He was the only thing/being in existence, everything He created would naturally somehow reflect Himself, or a part of Himself. It was just the normal and natural thing to do. He was alive, so he created life. He is majestic in beauty, so He created beauty. He feels emotion, so he created the ability to love, and feel emotion. It's likewise with

everything else. He created everything to somehow reflect some part of His character. There was nothing else to model things after.

Incidentally, by way of a side-note, He did not create death to be a natural process of life. It just doesn't make sense for a God of life to willingly create something like death. It is likely instead that He created all living things as vegetarians. Genesis specifically states that plants were given to man and animals as food, and He didn't give us permission to eat animal meat until after the flood, several thousand years after creation.⁽³⁾ He also created mankind to be truly immortal, just like Himself.⁽⁴⁾ Before Adam sinned, there was no death.^(4,5) After Yahweh lifts the curse of sin and restores the universe at the end of time to the way it was in the beginning, there will be no more death, (and carnivorous animals will return to eating plants).⁽⁶⁾ Keep all this in mind as you study the current world we live in, when looking for reflections of Him to study.

Even so, there are still plenty of symbols and object lessons built into the natural, physical world we live in, that still reflect who Yahweh is.

Humans are the one and only thing that the Bible specifically says were created in His image.⁽²⁾ And He created us male and female.

Now look at the picture of marriage, where various scriptures say, "The two shall become one".⁽⁷⁾ A true marriage of two people will produce a unity of mind, soul, and body, that grows and becomes more complete over time. Elderly couples that have been happily married for 50 or 75 years sometimes exhibit this. You can't tell where one person stops and the other person starts. They know each other's thoughts. They know what the other one is going to say or do. They may have different roles to play in their relationship, but they function together as one unit. Consider even the phrase that spouses sometimes

use when referring to each other, that they are each other's "other half", or that they "complete" each other.

I've also seen, though not as often, a son or daughter be included to some degree in a similar unity of mind and soul with his/her parents.

The closest reflection of what Yahweh's true combined and whole character is, can be found in our own family structure, a structure that He Himself instituted.

Think about what we know of Yahweh from the scriptures. He is represented by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Within this godhead, each personality plays a different role⁽⁸⁾, but they are one in unity, having existed together in perfect communion for eternity^(Chapter 1-note #8). God the Father plays more of a father figure role. Jesus Christ the son plays more of an eldest son role. The Holy Spirit plays more of a mother figure role. And together, they act as one. They know each other's thoughts. They can speak for each other. They are each pure and holy, spotless in their perfection. They "complete" each other. And by extension, they are each innocent in their own right.

Wouldn't it be cool if we could attain that sort of unity with our own spouses and children? Something inside us longs for that kind of unity. Where do you think that kind of longing comes from? It comes because our family unit and structure was originally modeled after Yahweh, who has always experienced this kind of unity within Himself. What's more, He has lived with this unity from eternity past except for a few brief moments in time when Jesus hung on the cross, bearing our sin, and the Father had to turn His face away.⁽⁹⁾ (Imagine the anguish of heart Yahweh went through in this one single time of split and separation).

And herein I walk a careful line in exploring the character of Yahweh. Bear with me.

I am NOT calling Yahweh a feminine being. In His overall interactions with us, His combined character is our daddy father,⁽¹⁰⁾ and He plays that role. Someday He will also fill the role of husband/lover to those that love Him.⁽¹¹⁾ To call Him “Mother-Father God,” or anything else feminine, disrespects and offends in the deepest way, His role in the relationship that humankind shares with Him. Jesus Himself consistently calls the Father, “THE FATHER,” and prayed that we would know THE FATHER in the same way that HE knew THE FATHER.^(12,13)

Likewise, every single writer of scripture calls the combined Yahweh by the masculine ”Father,” and by no other gender.⁽¹³⁾

He is our father first, simply because He created us. He loves us as a father would love his children.⁽¹⁴⁾ He disciplines and builds our character as a true father would.⁽¹⁵⁾ He created us in His image. He died for us when we could not save ourselves. In almost all respects, He fulfills the role of father to us.

Likewise, we are also taught in the scripture that those of us humans who have come to Yahweh in repentance, asking forgiveness and to be washed by His blood and made clean, we as a combined unit will someday play the role of the bride of Christ, the personality filling the role of the son inside Yahweh.^(11, 16) Similarly, in the Old Testament, Israel herself was called the bride of Yahweh before she was “divorced” by Him for unfaithfulness.⁽¹⁷⁾ She played that role in her relationship to Yahweh.

In light of these things, that Yahweh Himself established, to call Yahweh a “Goddess”, “Mother God”, or even “Father-Mother God,” is to deeply disrespect Him. His role in His relationship with us, is and always has been, a predominately “male” role.

But our understanding of who He is can be deepened even further in our study of His innocence, by looking at the innocence found in each of His combined, yet distinctly different, personalities.

God the Father's Innocence is displayed in so many of the ways we have already discussed. More specifically, I see His innocence displayed in the justice and fairness issues that we discussed previously. This aspect of Yahweh longs for order, rightness, beauty and harmony in His creation, and peace in His family/house.⁽¹⁸⁾ He is the ultimate father-figure who would sacrifice almost everything to save someone He loved.

God the Son's Innocence is displayed in His desire for mercy for His wayward children, the human race. His innocence led Him to live on Earth among us for a brief period of time, to experience pain and sorrow with us, and to eventually sacrifice His earthly life to satisfy God the Father's innocent desire for justice, ultimately so that we humans might know a better way to live by being reunited in fellowship with the combined Yahweh God.

In His innocent life on Earth, He also walked in a way that honored the personality who played the role of the father in the combined Yahweh. He showed humanity how to live, and in His innocence, He taught us. He believed in us. He showed us how to rise above ourselves, above our faults, and how to live content/full/fulfilled lives of our own, the way Yahweh originally created us to live. He showed us how to walk with Yahweh once again in true communion with Him, and how to return to, and regain, our own innocence. And the physical death He finally died was in complete innocence also. He was innocent of all charges against Him. It had to be that way. He displayed His innocence to the very end (we discussed most of this previously).

God the Holy Spirit's innocence is displayed every single day of our lives as He lives within us, or rather inside those of us who have returned to Him for washing. Our bodies are His home on Earth.⁽¹⁹⁾ We drag His innocence through the mud with us every time we stray from God's innocent fellowship to go play in the mud that this world is so full of, and offers to us. How dare we?

Yet in His innocence, He chooses to remain there, inside us, grieving sometimes,⁽²⁰⁾ believing that we will eventually tire of the mud, or be hurt badly enough by the mud, and turn our eyes once again to the combined Yahweh, filled with shame and desiring to be washed clean yet again. And He, the Holy Spirit, desires so badly to be RIGHT THERE in that eventual moment, to show us the way back home. That's His role in our lives, to teach, nurture and counsel us in our walk with the combined Yahweh.⁽²¹⁾ Not only that, He was also given to us as a downpayment,⁽²²⁾ proof that Christ has accepted our plea for forgiveness, and proof that someday we will be restored to perfection in Christ.

In His combined whole, Yahweh functions perfectly and seamlessly as a single being, a single entity. His internal communion and harmony between His distinctly separate personalities is that complete. And what is even neater, is that while here on Earth, Christ the Son prayed to the God the Father⁽²³⁾ asking that we who have been washed in His blood be able to experience and commune with Him and the Father in that same complete harmony and union. This sounds like innocence to me. It would almost even sound naive in its innocence, if it were not for the fact that someday, we (who have returned to walk with Yahweh) know that we will indeed once again be perfect and complete ourselves⁽²⁴⁾ - and thus able to commune with Him, just as Christ prayed.

1. Genesis 1:1 (NB) - *In the beginning God* (In Hebrew, the word Elohim (for God) is plural) *created the heavens and the earth.*

James 2:19 (NB) - *You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe that – and tremble with fear.*
2. Genesis 1:27 (NB) - *God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.*
3. Genesis 1:29-30 (NB) - *Then God said, “I now give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the entire earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the animals of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to all the creatures that move on the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food.” It was so.*

Genesis 9:3 (NB) - *You may eat any moving thing that lives. As I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.*
4. Genesis 3:2-3 (NB) - *The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit from the trees of the orchard; but concerning the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the orchard God said, ‘You must not eat from it, and you must not touch it, or else you will die.*
5. I Corinthians 15:21-22 (NB) - *For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also came through a man. For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.*
6. Revelation 21:4 (NB) - *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist any more – or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the former things have ceased to exist.”* (Verse is talking about after the curse of sin has been

lifted from the universe: Revelation 22:3a (NB) - *And there will no longer be any curse...*).

Isaiah 65:25 (NB) - *A wolf and a lamb will graze together; a lion, like an ox, will eat straw, and a snake's food will be dirt. They will no longer injure or destroy on my entire royal mountain," says the Lord.*

7. Genesis 2:24 (KJV) - *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

Matthew 19:5 (KJV) - *...For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*

Ephesians 5:31 (KJV) - *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*

8. John 16:13-16 (NB) - *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but will speak whatever he hears, and will tell you what is to come. He will glorify me, because he will receive from me what is mine and will tell it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; that is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what is mine and will tell it to you. In a little while you will see me no longer; again after a little while, you will see me."*

9. Matthew 27:46 (NB) - *At about three o'clock Jesus shouted with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

10. Galations 4:6 (NB) - *And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls “Abba! Father!”* (Abba roughly equates to “Daddy” in Hebrew).

Mark 14:36 (NB) - *He said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you.*

Take this cup away from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Romans 8:15 (NB) - *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, “Abba, Father.”*

11. Hosea 2:6-7 (NB) - *Therefore, I will soon fence her in with thorns; I will wall her in so that she cannot find her way. Then she will pursue her lovers, but she will not catch them; she will seek them, but she will not find them. Then she will say, “I will go back to my husband, because I was better off then than I am now.”* God speaking about Israel, and by extension, Christians who are “grafted into the vine” also (John 15, Romans 11).

Ephesians 5:25-32 (NB) - *Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word, so that he may present the church to himself as glorious – not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless. In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one has ever hated his own body but he feeds it and takes care of it, just as Christ also does the church, for we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This*

mystery is great – but I am actually speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

12. John chapter 17

13. Hebrews 12:9 (NB) - *Besides, we have experienced discipline from our earthly fathers and we respected them; shall we not submit ourselves all the more to the Father of spirits and receive life?*

14. Galatians 4:6 (NB) - *And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls “Abba! Father!”*

15. Hebrews 12:5-6 (NB) - *And have you forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons? “My son, do not scorn the Lord’s discipline or give up when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son he accepts.”*

16. Revelation 21:2 (NB) - *And I saw the holy city – the new Jerusalem – descending out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband.*

Revelation 21:9-10 (NB) - *Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven final plagues came and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb!” So he took me away in the Spirit to a huge, majestic mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.*

Revelation 21:27 (NB) - *but nothing ritually unclean will ever enter into it (New Jerusalem), nor anyone who does what is detestable or practices falsehood, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*

17. Isaiah 50:1 (KJV) - *Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.*

Jeremiah 3:8 (KJV) - *And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.*

Hosea chapter 1

18. 1 Corinthians 14:40 (KJV) - *Let all things be done decently and in order.*

1 Corinthians 1:10 (NB) - *I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to agree together, to end your divisions, and to be united by the same mind and purpose.*

Philippians 1:27 (NB) - *Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that – whether I come and see you or whether I remain absent – I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by contending side by side for the faith of the gospel,*

19. John 14:17 (KJV)- *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

1 Corinthians 3:16 (KJV) - *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

1 Corinthians 6:19 (KJV) *What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*

20. Mark 3:5 (KJV)- *And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, 'Stretch forth thine hand.'* And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

Ephesians 4:30 (KJV)- *And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

Hebrews 3:10 (KJV) - *Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. [17] - But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?*

21. John 14:16-17 (NB) - *Then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate (Counselor) to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he resides with you and will be in you.*

Romans 8:14-16 (NB) - *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery leading again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself bears witness to our spirit that we are God's children.*

John 14:26 (NB) - *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you.*

22. II Corinthians 5:5 (NB) - *Now the one who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a down payment.*

23. John chapter 17

24. Phillipians 1:6 (NB) - *For I am sure of this very thing, that the one who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Phillipians 3:20-21 (NB) - *But our citizenship is in heaven – and we also await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body by means of that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself.*

II Corinthians 3:18 (NB) - *And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

Chapter 10

Mankind's Relationship with God Matures.

While reading a book by another author many years ago, He made the comment that as he read through His Bible one time, straight thru from cover to cover, he was struck by all the different emotions that God displayed. This sparked a train of thought in me that has never died, but instead has grown and blossomed as I have pondered it.

But as a preface to this chapter, I challenge you yourself to do what this other author did, read the Bible straight through, cover to cover, and ponder or meditate on the emotions that Yahweh displays in His interactions with humanity. Scripture is full of them. Yahweh displays almost every pure emotion that we ourselves have ever felt. And He has displayed them, felt them, and reacted to them when appropriate, in much the same ways that we would also feel them and display them. His character does not, and cannot, change, but His emotions apparently can and do. Read about them for yourself. Not only is the Old Testament full of references to Yahweh's different emotions, the New Testament also records lots of different emotions as displayed by Jesus too, one personality in the triune being that Yahweh is.

And in this ongoing display of emotion, something hit me.

As time has gone by, it is almost as though mankind's relationship with Yahweh has been maturing, much as when an innocent child also grows, he displays more and more complex emotions in his relationships with others.

Let's consider this more deeply.

When Yahweh created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, they were perfect, before they chose to disobey Him.⁽¹⁾ They walked and talked with Him, apparently as you

and I would do with each other.⁽²⁾ And Adam and Eve were both naked, without shame, and completely innocent.⁽³⁾ Human and God were both innocent. They were in perfect harmony and union with each other. There was no sadness, no guilt, no deception, and no ick.

Then Eve chose to disobey Yahweh and eat that forbidden fruit.⁽⁴⁾ And I can't help but wonder if this is the thought process that next went through Adam's mind: rather than be separated from Eve whom he knew was now condemned to death by her disobedience, Adam chose to also disobey (thus also condemning himself and all of humanity to having to experience death, hitherto a foreign concept to their world...). Immediately, they likewise felt shame over their actions. Immediately, they both knew they were naked and sought to clothe themselves.⁽⁵⁾ Immediately, they hid from Yahweh, like innocent children in trouble.⁽⁶⁾

And when Yahweh came looking for them to talk with them, can you hear the wounded innocence in His voice when He asked them why they had hid from Him?⁽⁷⁾ Of course He already DID know mentally what they had done, but the innocent *emotions* of bewilderment, shock, hurt, and upset-ness that He was experiencing at their actions demanded that He ask anyway. It was the first time He had experienced them in His relationship with humanity, and vice-a-versa. Jesus himself did this too much later in history, when He asked an emotional, but completely rhetorical, question that He already knew the answer to, while hanging on the cross.⁽⁸⁾

Likewise, it was the first time mankind had disobeyed Yahweh. And they responded like hitherto innocent children, and hid (they knew what the consequences were going to be). So He asked them about it first.

But He talked through it with them, then firmly followed through with the consequences that He had set in place.⁽⁹⁾ You can almost hear the hurt, the anger, the finality, and the sadness with which He spoke as He sent them out of the Garden of Eden to fend for themselves, after clothing them in “skin” of some sort (Animal? Plant? It doesn’t say).⁽¹⁰⁾ Then instead of allowing them to immediately die or immediately killing them outright, as promised as a consequence if they disobeyed Him,⁽⁴⁾ He allowed them to postpone their now imminent physical death by killing a sacrificial lamb instead, to atone for their disobedience. The first physical death thus entered creation, instituted by the very hand of the God who created life in the first place, trapped both by His innocently profound love for His innocent, lost, naïve and helpless children, and by the justice with which He had to mete out the consequences for their choice not to follow His directives. He allowed an animal to be killed so that they could continue to survive, at least for a while, outside the Garden of Eden, no longer as potential immortals, but as physical mortals.

As a side note, think of what it must have cost Yahweh emotionally to tell Adam and Eve to kill a sacrificial animal in order to satisfy the need for justice concerning their disobedience. He had created each animal, and loved it, and something about it reflected who He was (since everything He created reflected something about, or some aspect of, Him). And in order to allow His disobedient children to continue to live, for awhile anyway, justice demanded that He had to allow something else’s life to be destroyed instead. Think of a master artist maneuvered into having to destroy a masterpiece in order to redeem the life of a wayward child. You can’t tell me that Yahweh didn’t feel and experience angry emotions in that moment of the first animal’s death.

And think about Adam and Eve's deep shame in watching that first animal's death too, something necessary to happen in order to escape certain death themselves. They had never seen death before. It was a foreign concept to them (as evidenced even by Eve not comprehending beforehand the deadly consequences (death) of her disobedience).

Thus the first animal sacrificed its life so that Adam and Eve could live. This literal death became symbolical of all animal sacrifices that followed, a practice that ended only after Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God, died an innocent death roughly 4,000 years later, as the final sacrifice to end all sacrifices.

Thus in those first few baby steps of His relationship with mankind, Yahweh experienced the painful emotions of rejection, loss, sadness, and anger. And mankind, in those first few baby steps in his relationship with Yahweh, learned how to feel pain, shame, guilt, and the desire to hide from Yahweh. Yahweh's dance with mankind had begun.

Moving along, let's look next at Yahweh's and Cain's interactions, after Cain killed his brother Abel.

Surprisingly enough, Cain didn't try to hide. Likewise, Yahweh was more to the point, and quite blunt with His words. "Where is Abel? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Why?"⁽¹¹⁾ He focused not on the personal aspect of Cain rejecting Him, but on the action Cain had done. Cain, at the same time, was a lot more belligerent with his answers than his parents had been too.⁽¹²⁾

The whole interaction was different than when Adam and Eve had sinned. With them, Yahweh asked why they had hidden from Him, not, "I see a fruit core lying on the ground over there; why?" As painful as that first murder inevitably was to Him, Yahweh

still dealt with it, immediately, but in a different way than with Cain's parents' original sin. It was more mature almost. Why?

Well, for one, Mankind was also progressing into more complex emotions, and needed a more mature response from Yahweh. The dance between Yahweh and mankind continued.

Then you have a period of about 2,000 years, where mankind grew and thrived and spread across the Earth and began to fill it. And people walked away from Yahweh by the droves, except for a few apparent revivals.⁽¹³⁾ Have you ever wondered why? I mean, for 930 years of that time, Adam was still alive.⁽¹⁴⁾ Everyone knew who He was, and who had created them all. Yet, there were very few individuals who still chose to walk with or be friends with Yahweh. The majority chose to ignore Yahweh, or even to boast about their evil.⁽¹⁵⁾ Mankind was growing more defiant and discovering its independence. Call this period mankind's terrible two's and three's.

A few years after Adam passed away, Methuselah was born and lived over 960 years also,⁽¹⁶⁾ and he died the year of the flood. That gives us roughly 2,000 years. And by the end of this time, ONE family was left that still tried to walk with, and be friends with Yahweh. His name was Noah.⁽¹⁷⁾

Read about and listen to the anguish in Yahweh's voice when He repents of ever having created the human race, in Genesis 6:6-7.⁽¹⁸⁾ Talk about feelings of offended rejection! Everyone was shutting Him out, hurting each other, and just plain making a mess of the harmonious and beautiful world He had created to share with them. You can almost hear an innocence buried deeply in Yahweh's voice, a thinly veiled cry of "Why won't they talk with me anymore? And why do they do nothing but hurt each other? I don't understand!"

So He did the only thing He knew how to do, and the only thing that mankind would understand in its growing up process.

He started over. He wiped the face of the Earth clean,⁽¹⁸⁾ put a stop to the crime and violence, and focused all His attention on saving and taking care of the one weird family that still walked with Him and called Him their friend and God. He upset the checkerboard in righteous anger at mankind's cheating ways, declared the game over, and started a new game.

And yet in upsetting that checkerboard, there is still extreme care, and tenderness almost, given to the family that still walked with Him, and that refused to cheat Him.⁽¹⁷⁾

And mankind grew up some too, learning from this discipline. The dance was progressing.

Then come the teenage years of this dance, when Yahweh picked out one particular nation (Israel) to not just be friends with, but to treat like a beloved son or daughter at first,⁽¹⁹⁾ and later on as a beautiful young virgin, and He loved her with all His heart.⁽²⁰⁾ He ardently pursued her, tenderly took care of her, and bound Himself to her. As their relationship grew, in essence, He even married her. The emotions are all there. And what did she do? Like a wayward teenager feeling her oats, she played with His emotions, played the field, and dated around.

She cheats on Him. Think about it. She *CHEATS* on Him.⁽²¹⁾ How? Read through the Biblical books of Judges, I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, I and II Chronicles, and then Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and most of the other smaller books near the end of the Old Testament. Can you hear, time after time, the teenager Yahweh in love, that can't fathom why the young lady Israel keeps rejecting Him? Yahweh goes through the whole spectrum of emotions in His dance with Israel. He experiences unspeakable joy, union, harmony and

fellowship with her, and bitter hurt, betrayal, deception, and anger when cheated on by her. Her actions eventually lead to His finally divorcing her.⁽²²⁾ The dance continues.

But time heals all wounds, and in His continuing dance with humanity, Yahweh was still working out a plan to make it possible for mankind to once again enjoy direct contact with, and return to fellowship, with Him.

And He still loved Israel, in spite of the way she had rejected Him so many times. He promised her time after time that He would one day restore her to Himself.⁽²³⁾ And then He opened it up for all mankind, not just Jews, to participate in that love relationship with Him, if they would simply accept the sacrifice and gift of life through His son's death.⁽²⁴⁾

So where are we at now emotionally, in our dance with Yahweh?

In many ways, Yahweh now displays the emotions of an experienced and wizened lover, and a gentle groom-to-be. Rather than so ardently pursuing us like a teenager emotionally head over heels in love with us, He is gently woo-ing us back in,⁽²⁵⁾ knocking at the doors of our lives,⁽²⁶⁾ tenderly taking care of us, drawing us ever closer into an intimate dance with Him that will eventually lead us back to perfection and the regaining of our own lost innocence. And He is doing so with an amazing purity and innocence of heart, one that we won't truly fathom and appreciate until we actually enter heaven with Him someday.

And we who love Him are pursuing Him back now too as His more mature fiancé, returning to Him after a long separation, desperate to understand Him and His love for us on its deepest levels, desperate to touch His face, and desperate to eventually be one with Him. We respond to Him, not just with book knowledge, rituals, and lip service, but emotionally with our whole hearts and every fiber of our being. We, that part of mankind

that still loves Yahweh, are now engaged to our creator in this continuing dance, awaiting the wedding night, honeymoon, and the forever after.⁽²⁷⁾

And just by way of clarification, the Old Testament talks about the land of Israel being Yahweh's original bride/lover/wife, with its people being in essence, her soul.⁽²³⁾ The New Testament, on the other hand, refers to the *New Jerusalem* as being the new bride of Christ, with its inhabitants being in essence, its heart and soul. (Chapter 9, note 16)

Yahweh plans to recreate the heavens and earth at the end of time, after the final battle between Him and Satan.⁽²⁸⁾ Both Christians and the remnant of Israel that have accepted Jesus as their messiah and sacrifice will receive a new habitation/body in the form of the New Jerusalem. The old will pass away, and all things will be made new.⁽²⁸⁾ And this combined bride made up of both Jews and non-Jews alike (basically anyone and everyone who returns to Yahweh through Christ's sacrifice), will be the redeemed bride of Yahweh, or more specifically, Christ (one aspect of the greater Yahweh whole).

But as I just implied a minute ago, humanity has also become like a split personality towards Yahweh. He deeply and desperately loves mankind. But mankind has split into Miss Jekyll and Miss Hyde. Half of us love Him and choose to pursue Him, while the other half does not. What do you think this does to Yahweh emotionally?

In some ways, it would appear to me that it almost ties His emotional hands. And there's not much He can do about it until mankind has completely polarized and finished the personality split process. All of mankind has to make a choice about which personality half to land in/be on. And once that personality split is complete, once the two extremes have been reached, the one in desperate and ardent love back with Him, the other in angry and bitter hatred of Him, He can finally put an end to everything.⁽²⁹⁾ He can finally send

the one personality away from Him forever, and He can remarry the other personality who herself has finally grown up in her own love back for Him.

For Yahweh to allow this process to happen, and to even coax it along, speaks of a deep emotional maturity in His dealings with us. And for us to seek His face, and pursue Him, speaks of our deep and desperate desire to be reunited with Him, and of an emotional maturity that Miss Hyde as a whole has not ever previously displayed in her love for Yahweh.

But I also realize that some people will immediately reject out of hand the whole idea of Yahweh's relationship with us growing up and/or maturing. He's already God after all, already knows everything, and does not change. And mankind is fallen, corrupt, and in desperate need of a savior.

These six points are true. But KNOWING something in your head does not always mean that you also know it in your heart. Emotions and knowledge are two completely different beasts. Emotion is intrinsically tied to time. It grows and changes over time. Different emotions play themselves out, and can only be learned about by experience.

And after a man or woman has returned to Yahweh's paths, what next? Do they stay fallen, or do they begin to grow in grace and knowledge of Yahweh?⁽³⁰⁾

Consider Commander Data in the "Star Trek: The Next Generation" series (or to a lesser degree, Spock in the original "Star Trek,") that played on TV many years ago. He knew just about everything about everything. Likewise, his character was set in stone and did not change. But emotions escaped him completely. But that was also his deepest wish, to know and understand emotions. And he learned about them, by going through experiences where he FELT them (especially after receiving his "emotion chip").

When Yahweh created time, and chose to walk inside time alongside humanity, He also chose to grow with us, and to participate in a relationship that grew and matured over time. To love someone is to grow inside. To feel pain and rise above it, is to mature.

I am not however, suggesting that Yahweh has lost any of His innocence in this continuing dance, as children and teenagers so often do. Maybe He's lost some of His naiveté concerning us, but He still retains His completely innocent nature and character. It can happen. I have occasionally even met adults that I would describe this way: they weren't naïve, but their innocent nature was still intact. If it can happen here to a human, it's not hard to imagine it happening to Yahweh. To assume that Yahweh has somehow lost, or even could lose, His innocence through His interactions with mankind, is a faulty assumption.

Read Jeremiah 7:31 sometime if you dare.⁽³¹⁾ Yahweh is lamenting the fact that humanity was inventing ways to do evil, ways that even He, Yahweh, in His supreme all-knowing-ness had never even thought of. Do you understand what this means? His innocent nature was shocked at the ways we thought of to hurt each other. Along with the knowledge of these new ways to commit evil came a loss of naiveté on His part, but His NATURE was not changed. *His* innocence was untouched.

Among other things, it also implies that He is learning from us, and learning from His interactions with us, just as we are in return as well. He has experienced emotion through His interactions with humanity, as we too have grown, and learned from them. And we can see the pattern of our relationship's growth with Him displayed throughout recorded history (HIS-Story).

And this growth process also helps answer another question I once had.

Why did He wait so long into mankind's history (2500+ years) before giving us the Ten Commandments?

That answer is easy, if we look at His relationship with us as a learning process for everyone involved.

His innocent nature has always wanted to give us as much freedom of action and choice as possible, (think optimistic, brand new parent) ever desiring that we would choose the right way to do things, and follow our internal consciences without searing them (which He created in us from the beginning to be our guide⁽³²⁾). We were also a new race, innocent in many ways ourselves, until as we grew, we began experimenting with and discovering ways to do evil.

Unfortunately, we eventually got so out of line, with our consciences so damaged, that He had no choice but to "lay down the law" with us. So he did. And the moment He did so, we were in trouble, condemned, and thus needed His intervention in another way.

But why so many rules?

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1. Genesis 1:31a (NB) - *God saw all that he had made – and it was very good!*
 2. As Evidenced by multiple conversations between God and Adam and Eve in Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 3.
 3. Genesis 2:25 (NB) - *The man and his wife were both naked, but they were not ashamed.*
 4. Genesis 3:2-6 (NB) - *The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit from the trees of the orchard; but concerning the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the orchard God said, 'You must not eat from it, and you must not touch it, or else you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "Surely you will*

not die, for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil.” When the woman saw that the tree produced fruit that was good for food, was attractive to the eye, and was desirable for making one wise, she took some of its fruit and ate it. She also gave some of it to her husband who was with her, and he ate it.

5. Genesis 3:7 (NB) - *Then the eyes of both of them opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.*
6. Genesis 3:8 (NB) - *Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the orchard at the breezy time of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the orchard.*
7. Genesis 3:9-13 (NB) - *But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” The man replied, “I heard you moving about in the orchard, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” And the Lord God said, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it.” So the Lord God said to the woman, “**What is this you have done?**” And the woman replied, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate.” (Bold added for emphasis)*
8. Matthew 27:46 (NB) - *At about three o’clock Jesus shouted with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**” (Bold added for emphasis)*
9. Genesis 3:16-19, 23 (NB) - *To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your labor pains; with pain you will give birth to children. You will want to control*

your husband, but he will dominate you.” But to Adam he said, “Because you obeyed your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ cursed is the ground thanks to you; in painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, but you will eat the grain of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat food until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you will return.” [23] So the Lord God expelled him from the orchard in Eden to cultivate the ground from which he had been taken.

10. Genesis 3:21 (NB) - *The Lord God made garments from skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.*

11. Genesis 4:10 (NB) - *But the Lord said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!*

12. Genesis 4:9 (NB) - *Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” And he replied, “I don’t know! Am I my brother’s guardian?”*

13. Genesis 4:26 (NB) - *And a son was also born to Seth, whom he named Enosh. At that time people began to worship the Lord.*

14. Genesis 5:5 (NB) - *The entire lifetime of Adam was 930 years, and then he died.*

15. Genesis 6:5 (KJV) - *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Genesis 4:23-24 (NB) - *Lamech said to his wives, “Adah and Zillah! Listen to me! You wives of Lamech, hear my words! I have killed a man for wounding*

me, a young man for hurting me. If Cain is to be avenged seven times as much, then Lamech seventy-seven times!”

16. Genesis 5:27 (KJV) - *And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died.*

17. Genesis 6:8-9 (NB) - *But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord. This is the account of Noah. Noah was a godly man; he was blameless among his contemporaries.*

18. Genesis 6:6-7 (NB) - *The Lord regretted that he had made humankind on the earth, and he was highly offended. So the Lord said, “I will wipe humankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – everything from humankind to animals, including creatures that move on the ground and birds of the air, for I regret that I have made them.”*

19. Hosea 11:1 (NB) – *When Israel was a young man, I loved him like a son, and I summoned my son out of Egypt.*

Hosea 2:15b (NB) - There she will sing as she did when she was young, when she came up from the land of Egypt.

20. Amos 5:1-2 (NB) - *Listen to this funeral song I am ready to sing about you, family of Israel: “The virgin Israel has fallen down and will not get up again. She is abandoned on her own land with no one to help her get up.”*

Jeremiah 31:3 (NB) - In a far-off land the Lord will manifest himself to them. He will say to them, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love.

Hosea 2:8 (NB) - *Yet until now she has refused to acknowledge that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the olive oil; and that it was I who lavished on her the silver and gold – which they used in worshiping Baal!*

Jeremiah 2:2 (NB) – *Go and declare in the hearing of the people of Jerusalem: ‘This is what the Lord says: “I have fond memories of you, how devoted you were to me in your early years. I remember how you loved me like a new bride; you followed me through the wilderness, through a land that had never been planted.*

21. Hosea 3:1 (NB) - *The Lord said to me, “Go, show love to your wife again, even though she loves another man and continually commits adultery. Likewise, the Lord loves the Israelites although they turn to other gods and love to offer raisin cakes to idols.”*

Jeremiah 2:20 (NB) - *“Indeed, long ago you threw off my authority and refused to be subject to me. You said, ‘I will not serve you.’ Instead, you gave yourself to other gods on every high hill and under every green tree, like a prostitute sprawls out before her lovers.*

Jeremiah 3:2 (NB) - *“Look up at the hilltops and consider this. You have had sex with other gods on every one of them. You waited for those gods like a thief lying in wait in the desert. You defiled the land by your wicked prostitution to other gods.*

22. Isaiah 50:1 (NB) - *This is what the Lord says: “Where is your mother’s divorce certificate by which I divorced her? Or to which of my creditors did I sell you? Look, you were sold because of your sins; because of your rebellious acts I divorced your mother.*

23. Hosea 2:16 (NB) - *“At that time,” declares the Lord, “you will call, ‘My husband’; you will never again call me, ‘My master.’*

Isaiah 62:4-5 (NB) - *You will no longer be called, “Abandoned,” and your land will no longer be called “Desolate.” Indeed, you will be called “My Delight is in Her,” and your land “Married.” For the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married to him. As a young man marries a young woman, so your sons will marry you. As a bridegroom rejoices over a bride, so your God will rejoice over you.*

24. Romans 1:16 (KJV) - *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Romans 3:29 (KJV) - *Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:*

Isaiah 49:6 (NB) - *He says, “Is it too insignificant a task for you to be my servant, to reestablish the tribes of Jacob, and restore the remnant of Israel? I will make you a light to the nations, so you can bring my deliverance to the remote regions of the earth.”*

25. Hosea 2:14 (NB) - *However, in the future I will allure her; I will lead her back into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her.*
26. Revelation 3:20 (NB) - *Listen! I am standing at the door and knocking! If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into his home and share a meal with him, and he with me.*
27. Revelation 19:7-9 (NB) - *Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory, because the wedding celebration of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. She was permitted to be dressed in bright, clean, fine linen” (for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints). Then the angel said to me, “Write the following: Blessed are those who are invited to the banquet at the wedding celebration of the Lamb!” He also said to me, “These are the true words of God.”*
28. II Peter 3:13 (NB) - *But, according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness truly resides.*
- Revelation 21:1-5 (NB) - *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had ceased to exist, and the sea existed no more. And I saw the holy city – the new Jerusalem – descending out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: “Look! The residence of God is among human beings. He will live among them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist any more – or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the former things have*

*ceased to exist.” **And the one seated on the throne said: “Look! I am making all things new!”*** (Bold added for emphasis)

29. Revelation 6:10-11 (NB) - *They cried out with a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Master, holy and true, before you judge those who live on the earth and avenge our blood?” Each of them was given a long white robe and they were told to rest for a little longer, until the full number was reached of both their fellow servants and their brothers who were going to be killed just as they had been.*
30. II Peter 1:2 (NB) – *May grace and peace be lavished on you as you grow in the rich knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord!*
31. Jeremiah 7:31 (NB) - *They have also built places of worship in a place called Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom so that they can sacrifice their sons and daughters by fire. That is something I never commanded them to do! Indeed, it never even entered my mind to command such a thing!*
32. II Timothy 1:3 (NB) - *I am thankful to God, whom I have served with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I remember you in my prayers as I do constantly night and day.*
- Genesis 20:6a (NB) - *Then in the dream God replied to him, “Yes, I know that you have done this with a clear conscience.*
- Malachi 2:16 (NB) - *“I hate divorce,” says the Lord God of Israel, “and the one who is guilty of violence,” says the Lord who rules over all. “Pay attention to your conscience, and do not be unfaithful.”*

Chapter 11

The Purpose of the Old Testament Law

So if Yahweh is so innocent, why did He give us such a big list of do's and don't's? That's the new question of the hour.

I believe it was the Roman orator Tacitus that said something to the effect that, "The more corrupt a society is, the more laws it will have."

When we as a race lost the moral footing and foundation we had through our communion with the God of perfect love, we automatically had to have more and more laws to keep our actions and societies in line. If we were truly able to live by the first law that was implicitly given to Adam and Eve/mankind by Yahweh, "Love and obey me," that's all the law we would need. To love and obey Yahweh would translate into us wanting to live lives that honored Him, and each other too.

But we lost sight of that mooring, and thus Yahweh instituted a more detailed breakdown in the Ten Commandments,⁽¹⁾ all of which Jesus summed up in two commands: "Love the Lord your God with your heart, soul, and mind" (the original law from the very beginning), and "Love your neighbor as yourself."⁽²⁾ As time went on, more detailed laws had to be implemented in order to cover growing gray areas.

Imagine it this way. An innocent child goes out and builds this really cool sandbox (or creates a really cool universe). Then he invites all his neighborhood buddies to come over to play in it with him (or creates a race of beings called mankind to play/live in it with Him.) The trouble begins when all his so-called buddies get rowdy, begin to take playing in the sandbox for granted day after day, forget the sandbox owner, argue with him and each other, fight with and hurt each other, and in general just make a mess of things. At

some point, the little child who built the sand box needs to take his sandbox back, institute some fair rules of play, and kick everyone out of the sandbox who won't follow them. If they had simply respected his rightful place in life as the sandbox owner, and treated each other with the same respect, he wouldn't have had to do anything at all.

Is the picture becoming clearer?

Thus we have an innocent Yahweh, whose very character demands that He "lay down the law" after mankind quit respecting Him, so that everyone playing in HIS sandbox could play safely and nicely with each other and Him. If we can't follow the rules, out we go, end of story.

The trouble is, in order to play in His sandbox, we have to keep EVERY SINGLE ONE of the rules in order to stay. Otherwise it's hell, pun intended. Which means that His sandbox is soon quickly empty because NO ONE is capable of keeping every single moral law that Yahweh has laid down for playing in His sandbox.⁽³⁾ The very law that was meant to let us all play together nicely with each other and with Yahweh, now condemns us and becomes our downfall.⁽⁴⁾

Fortunately, the Biblical books of Romans and Hebrews deal extensively with the fact that true Christians in the New Testament era, are no longer bound or condemned by the Old Testament Law, the Ten Commandments, and their extended list of rules and regulations that Yahweh originally gave the people of Israel to live by. Christ died to free us from their condemnation (being kicked permanently out of the sandbox).⁽⁵⁾ Yet the apostle Paul still makes it clear that we are expected to abide by some of them.⁽⁶⁾ But which ones? What gives? This doesn't sound like simplicity. It sounds like a confusing mess, instituted by a Yahweh who is supposed to bring life, freedom, simplicity, clarity, and love to our lives and sandboxes.

To start making sense of this, let's discuss the law given to us in the Old Testament of the Bible a little deeper.

The law came in three parts, as found in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. First you have the moral code, summed up by the Ten Commandments, you have the law covering the whole animal sacrifice system, and then you have the civil code that Yahweh gave the nation of Israel as a society to live by. These included a system of capital punishment, marriage and divorce, how to conduct matters of civil dispute, and more.

The moral code applied to each and every individual, while the civil code applied more to the conduct of proper relationships between individuals and the healthy functioning of their society as a whole. Obviously, there is some overlap between the two, but this rough breakdown can still be applied. The sacrificial law had a completely different purpose, and was set up by Yahweh to emphasize to Israel that sin brings death, and only by death can it be paid for⁽⁷⁾ (or excommunication from the sandbox for breaking its rules).

Now let's look at our question again of which ones we should still honor, in light of the various divisions of code.

On the surface, from mankind's standpoint, the purpose of the overall law was simple. Overall, it gave the people of Israel a structure to build their society within. And under this law, the nation of Israel flourished. They were healthier than their neighbors, and they lived longer.⁽⁸⁾ They had fewer raw-meat related illnesses and diseases, and fewer STD's than their neighbors.⁽⁹⁾ They had a viable economic system that outlasted multiple gentile empires, outlasting even several that subjugated them.

And when the nation finally fell, much of their civil code also fell into relative obscurity. And when Christ died for us as the ultimate and final sacrifice, there was no

more need for the sacrificial law either.⁽¹⁰⁾ But the moral code stayed with us, because it applied to individuals. As individuals ourselves, this is the Apostle Paul still expected us to obey. But why? Let's discuss this further.

Aside from the simple fact that any group of people, where each member of that group follows the Ten Commandments, is going to function better as a group, there's a deeper purpose to the moral law that Yahweh gave us. Going past the surface to a deeper level, the apostle Paul in the New Testament quite explicitly says that the purpose of the law in general was to show man that he is sinful.⁽¹¹⁾ Furthermore, it revealed man's need for Yahweh. Man could never be perfect, as Yahweh is perfect. It revealed that Mankind needed a savior, someone to plead his case before Yahweh the Father, appeal to Yahweh's mercy, and create a way for Mankind to be reconciled with his creator.^(11, 12) Without the law, man wouldn't know he even needed to be saved, or that he was in imminent danger of being kicked out of Yahweh's sandbox forever.

And by taking this logic one step further, we find that the very character of Yahweh is revealed in the moral code that He gave Israel, and by extension, us. How so? Well let's consider some of the Ten Commandments⁽¹⁾ first.

1. "You shall have no other gods before me." What is revealed here? We could say here that either Yahweh is exposed as petty and arrogant, OR, we can assume that in His simple thought system of justice and fairness, if He gave us life as our creator, and let us play in His sandbox, it's only fair for us to honor Him in return, above everything else. I see His simple senses of Justice and Fairness revealed here.

2. “You shall create no idols, of either me or anything else to worship,” (rough paraphrase). Aside from its obvious connections back to item number one, we can also deduce that anything we could try to come up with to put into stone a representation of what and who Yahweh is, would be completely lacking. As we discussed before in our ant conversation, Yahweh is beyond anything that we can truly and completely comprehend. There are more facets to His character than we could ever hope to get a complete handle on. To distill Him down to simple physical stone, wood, metal, plastic or whatever, would box Him in, stereotype Him instantly, and do Him horrible dis-service. So even though at His core He is simple in His innocence and purity, even His purity is still something beyond our complete comprehension. The best we can hope for, as Paul so eloquently says, is to see a pale reflection of Him through a dark glass.⁽¹³⁾ We don’t dare try to condense Yahweh down to simple stone. He is greater than any physical form (box) we could ever put Him in. He doesn’t even want us to try.

3. “You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain.” What does this reveal? To me it says, loud and clear, that Yahweh has feelings. If we use His name as a curse word, or even casually without meaning, it hurts Him! He has feelings! And as before, in His simple system of justice and fairness, He gave us life, not just once, but twice, and the least we could do is honor His name.

4. “Keep the Sabbath Day Holy.” Without too much effort, I can safely assume from this that Yahweh is not a workaholic. He is balanced in His life. He rests. He expects us to do the same. And furthermore, He’d like us to spend a little time with Him each week. I am again reminded of His feelings, and His need for our companionship. If He created us, and gave us life, it’s only fair that we give Him a little of our time back to Him each week. The ideas of Justice and Fairness also again come to mind.

5. “Honor your Father and Mother.” In a physical sense, our Fathers and Mothers each also gave us life, just as Yahweh gave Adam and Eve life. It’s only fair that we thus give them time, honor, and respect too, because they gave us life also. This command is a reflection of the first several commands, but just directed to our more immediate earthly families who gave us life, just as He originally gave us all life. Fairness and Justice again come to mind.

6. “You shall not Murder.” You could almost rephrase this one to read, “Live in peace with each other,” (it does indeed say this elsewhere⁽¹⁴⁾). Therefore, Yahweh by nature, is not typically a violent Yahweh. He values each individual life and its worth, and does not capriciously take away life. He loves every single one of us. He also expects us to act the same way.

On the other hand though, He *is* still the owner of the sandbox, and has every right to kick people that break His rules, out of it, at any time. He also allowed the Old Testament government of Israel to exercise this right for capital offenses. We do not have that right individually. We didn't create the sandbox. Justice and Fairness again come to mind.

7. "You shall not commit adultery." Boy is this one a can of worms in today's society. But what does it reveal about Yahweh's character? For starters, it reveals Yahweh's loyal and faithful nature. Once He commits to something or someone, He is loyal to them. He does not desert them for something or someone better. Likewise, He loves deeply. And when betrayed, He hurts deeply.

8. "You shall not steal." This one seems a no-brainer for society today, because no one likes a thief. But what can we find out about Yahweh's character from it? Well, for one, it tells me that Yahweh is protective of those things that He calls His own. He loves His own. He will not allow Satan or anyone else steal from His glory, nor will He give it away.⁽¹⁵⁾ His rightful place in this sandbox universe is as its creator. He will not allow theft from His home, from his glory, or from His fold. Once a person's soul title transfers into His hand, nothing can steal it back.⁽¹⁶⁾ Theft also implies unfairness, and Yahweh ALWAYS plays fair in HIS purity and Holiness.

9. “You shall not lie.” This one’s easy, simply because it is spelled out in other places in scripture also. Yahweh is truth. Yahweh is truthful. Yahweh cannot, and does not, lie. Truth sets people free. Lies bring bondage and chains. Yahweh is all about life, and freedom, not bondage and shackles.⁽¹⁷⁾

10. “You shall not envy.” Fairness immediately comes to mind again. Envy is also the first step to lies and theft. Yahweh is truthful, owns everything in this sandbox as its creator, and is protective of His possessions. He has no need for envy. Thus, nor do we. Satan envied Yahweh, and this led first to his rebellion against Yahweh, and secondly to his utter downfall. Envy corrupts character, and rots the soul. Yahweh has no use for it. There is nothing that He envies. There is nothing better, higher, or greater than Him.⁽¹⁸⁾

So now, even though we have been set free from the *condemnation* of the law through Christ’s personal sacrifice for us⁽¹⁹⁾, the moral code contained within the law still serves an incredibly important function for us. Not only is it still the best rulebook to follow for playing in Yahweh’s sandbox, it also reveals to us, and reminds us of, who Yahweh is. Likewise, if we want to live lives that honor Him, in thankfulness for His mercy shone us through Christ, we will choose to live in a way that honors Him. What’s cool is that once the Holy Spirit of Christ moves into our lives, His own desire to please the Father automatically rubs off on us.⁽²⁰⁾

In Asia, I'm told that there is a saying that basically says, "The sincerest form of flattery (worship), is imitation." The rules reflect His character. They tell us who He is. By honoring them, we honor Him. By honoring them, we become more like Him. By honoring them, we worship Him, because they reflect Him! Without them, we would be lost, in more ways than one.

So even though we are no longer prisoners under threat of death from a system of rules and regulations, and have received mercy, we still honor the moral code that Yahweh gave us, not just because they are the only true basis for a functional society, and not just because He still expects us to live by the sandbox rules, but because we CHOOSE to obey them in honor⁽²¹⁾ and reverence of Him and the character they reveal and thereby bring forth in us as well.

1. Exodus chapter 20, Deuteronomy chapter 5
2. Mark 12:29-31 (NB) - *Jesus answered, "The most important is: 'Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*
3. Romans 3:23 (NB) - *For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;*
Romans 3:10 (NB) - *just as it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one,*
4. Romans 7:10b (NB) - *So I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life brought death!*

5. Romans 5:8-9 (NB) - *But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by his blood, we will be saved through him from God's wrath.*
6. Romans 6:15 (NB) - *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Absolutely not!*
7. Romans 6:23 (NB) - *For the payoff of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
8. Exodus 20:12 (KJV) - *Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*
 Ephesians 6:2 (KJV) - *Honor thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)*
9. Exodus 15:26 (NB) - *He said, "If you will diligently obey the Lord your God, and do what is right in his sight, and pay attention to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, then all the diseases that I brought on the Egyptians I will not bring on you, for I, the Lord, am your healer."*
10. I John 4:10 (NB) - *In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.*
11. Romans 3:20 (NB) - *For no one is declared righteous before him by the works of the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.*
 Galatians 3:24 (KJV) - *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

12. 1 John 2:1 (KJV) - *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

13. I Corinthians 13:12 (KJV) - *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

14. Colossians 3:15 (NB) - *Let the peace of Christ be in control in your heart (for you were in fact called as one body to this peace), and be thankful.*

I Peter 3:10-11 (NB) - *For the one who wants to love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from uttering deceit. And he must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.*

II Corinthians 13:11 (NB) - *Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice, set things right, be encouraged, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you.*

15. Isaiah 42:8 (NB) - *I am the Lord! That is my name! I will not share my glory with anyone else, or the praise due me with idols.*

16. John 10:28 (NB) - *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them from my hand.*

17. John 8:32 (KJV) - *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

John 8:36 (KJV) - *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

Galatians 5:1 (KJV) - *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NB) - *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise shared in their humanity, so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death.*

II Corinthians 3:17 (NB) - *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom.*

18. Deuteronomy 4:35 (NB) - *You have been taught that the Lord alone is God – there is no other besides him.*

Deuteronomy 4:39 (NB) - *Today realize and carefully consider that the Lord is God in heaven above and on earth below – there is no other!*

Isaiah 45:5-6 (NB) - *I am the Lord, I have no peer, there is no God but me. I arm you for battle, even though you do not recognize me. I do this so people will recognize from east to west that there is no God but me; I am the Lord, I have no peer.*

Isaiah 46:9 (KJV) - *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,*

19. John 5:24 (NB) - *I tell you the solemn truth, the one who hears my message and believes the one who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned, but has crossed over from death to life.*

20. Hebrews 10:15-16 (NB) - *And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us, for after saying, “This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws on their hearts and I will inscribe them on their minds,”*

II Corinthians 3:18 (NB) - *And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*

21. I Timothy 1:17 (KJV) - *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

I Timothy 6:16 (NB) - *He alone possesses immortality and lives in unapproachable light, whom no human has ever seen or is able to see. To him be honor and eternal power! Amen.*

Chapter 12

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

So what does all this knowledge about the character of our God Yahweh mean? Should it influence me somehow? How did it impact me, the author, and how should it impact you, the reader?

I began to ponder this “Innocence of God” idea in early 2006, over a year ago for me, after a conversation with a friend, as I previously mentioned. I was single at the time, and living in the mountains of Idaho, trying to build a youth ranch after an emotionally devastating (to me) divorce. Yahweh had told me several years before, in the midst of my divorce, in a voice so clear it was almost audible, to build Him a children’s home (something I had always dreamed of doing anyway), and He showed me the property to do it on. So I moved to the property, started paperwork, started talking about the project, and in the middle of it all, began to heal. I also began to prepare the property to host a youth ranch that I believed Yahweh wanted me to build.

Several years later, and within six months after this “Innocence of God” conversation that started it all, I met and married a single mother with seven children. Between these seven fatherless children, and the one I already had from my previous marriage, we suddenly had a youth ranch ☺. It was really cool. Read about some of how it all came together in my newsletters if you like at <http://www.bighouseministries.com/>.

And then came the learning curve. Daddy Tim had to do some growing up and maturing, emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically. It wasn’t all fun and games. I learned about patience. I learned about loving and grieving over hurting children that fought me every step of the way. I learned about nurturing, caring for, and facilitating

healing for wounded children whose innocence and purity had been robbed from them. I learned about a deeper love, compassion, justice, and mercy.

I often cried out to Yahweh for help and patience during this time.

And I also found myself occasionally looking to Yahweh's character for ideas on how to respond in each of these new situations facing me. It was more than simply, "What would Jesus do?" It was an in-depth soul searching that really wanted to understand the character of Yahweh, because I recognized that if I could develop the character in me that Yahweh displayed, I knew that the actions that I wanted to display towards my children would come easy to me. I was more interested in developing the character in me that produced correct and wise actions/decisions, than in studying good actions and choices and then forcing myself to do them with gritted teeth (and boy howdy have I gritted my teeth over the past year a few times).

Likewise, I also knew that to develop the leadership qualities that I needed to have to run a youth ranch, I needed to learn from the best, from Yahweh Himself.

So between struggling to understand Yahweh's innocence on a deeper level for myself, my desire to understand His character better so I could be a better husband and father, and my desire to grow in leadership, I really delved into this "Innocence of God" concept. I began to explore it, and write about it as I went, praying the whole time, discovering new and deeper truths about Yahweh and His relationships with us, every time I sat down to write. I enjoyed that aspect of writing throughout this whole manuscript.

And I found that in my own personal life, in my daily walk as a human man, there were things that suddenly challenged my thinking. I started to notice how offensive to Yahweh some of my hitherto casual actions, thoughts and words were. I started to see and recognize much faster and more deeply both Yahweh's and Satan's fingerprints in my life

and the world around me. And finally, I began to feel convicted enough to change some things.

For instance, it's hard to watch a movie anymore without thinking about Yahweh's innocence, and how this or that aspect of the movie is offensive to Him. Likewise, it's hard to let my children listen to music that is, at best, just brain junk-food (and at worst, just plain offensive to Him), when I recognize their awesome potential, just as Yahweh must do about me and my own choices of pastimes and what I feed my mind with. We discussed a few more of these things back in Chapter three.

Or on another note, it's also hard to pass a bum on the street and not think about how Yahweh in His innocence must feel about that person (picture a small child innocently offering to share his ice cream cone with that person). It's also hard to stay angry at someone when I think my rights have been violated, when I compare my thoughts, feelings and actions to what the innocent Christ the Son went through while here on Earth Himself.

And I also found myself wanting to share what I have discovered, with my friends, with people that I respect, and with you, my reader.

I have even, more than once recently, in my counseling of other people, gone back to something I have written about God's Innocence, and used that to encourage them somehow. In my own possible naiveté, I can't help but think that if people could just understand for themselves what Yahweh has revealed to me in my own meditations about Himself, if they could just get a handle themselves on who Yahweh is, and on His innocence, it would make so much difference to them in their own world.

And what about things from Yahweh's viewpoint?

What is the look that crosses His face when I disappoint Him? What does He think about when I intentionally disobey something that He has said, something that was

innocently intended to keep me out of trouble? What does it do to His Spirit when I disrespect or even ignore talking to Him each day? We know that our actions can grieve Him, and deeply.⁽¹⁾ So how do my actions impact *Him*?

Look at all of history, and Yahweh's repeated attempts to make contact with us. Think about the innocence with which He has continued to reach out to us and try to draw us back into friendship with Him. What should our response to this be?⁽²⁾

How long will He continue to try to draw us back to Himself before He finally gives up and ends the whole thing?

But I also recognize that Satan wants us to view Yahweh as a capricious, dictator-ish, brute of a being, not interested in truly loving us. Satan doesn't want us to know the truth about our creator. He does, and will, actively and aggressively distort the truth, and wage battle for your mind and soul. If you are serious about knowing and pursuing the truth about the innocence of Yahweh, protect your thoughts and think clearly. Ask Yahweh to reveal Himself to you.

And what about your friends? Don't they deserve to know that Yahweh loves them too, and that if they don't respond to Him immediately, they will be separated from Him forever, helpless in Satan's grip?

But be prepared too, to make some decisions. You can't look at Yahweh for very long, and not be faced with decisions about your own personal actions, your thought life, and your interactions with the world around you. You will have choices to make, and I pray that they are good ones.

1. Ephesians 4:30 (NB) - *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

2. Romans 12:1-2 (NB) - *Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice – alive, holy, and pleasing to God – **which is your reasonable service.** Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God – what is good and well-pleasing and perfect. (Bold added for emphasis).*

Conclusion of the Matter

In exploring some of these different aspects of Yahweh's character as they relate to His innocence, I truly hope you have gained new insight and understanding into who Yahweh is. He is innocent in His purity and actions towards us. Everything He does is influenced deeply by His simple, yet mature, honest innocence and love.

So the next time He doesn't make sense to you, consider His innocence as you explore your feelings and responses, and then look at things again, from His shoes this time, through eyes of Innocence. Things take on a whole new light and perspective. And therein, we can begin to understand Him better. And hopefully in that understanding, you can draw into a closer, more trusting walk with Him, a walk that He intensely, honestly, and innocently desires to share with you. You can trust Him. He loves you. What better place to be, than at His side, in His shadow, and under His wing, even when things don't make sense?

So ponder these things, and talk with Him about them. Ask Yahweh to reveal Himself to you because you want to know and understand Him better. Come to Him and humbly ask permission to return to His side, and walk in His paths. Ask His forgiveness and let Jesus Christ wash your soul clean. Acknowledge His emotions. Acknowledge your screw-ups when you know you've disappointed Him, and then quit doing them; it hurts Him when you don't (picture the face of an innocent child when you hurt Him).⁽¹⁾

And then ask Him how you can speak up for Him too. You will find few pleasures in life that match this thrill, once you become excited about truly knowing and understanding Yahweh, this creator that adores you in simple and pure, innocent love.

1. Hosea 14:1-3 (NB) - *Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for your sin has been your downfall! Return to the Lord and repent! Say to him: "Completely forgive our iniquity; accept our penitential prayer, that we may offer the praise of our lips as sacrificial bulls. Assyria cannot save us; we will not ride warhorses. We will never again say, 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made. For only you will show compassion to Orphan Israel!"*

Acts 2:37- 38 (NB) - *Now when they heard this, they were acutely distressed and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "What should we do, brothers?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Acts 16:30-31 (NB) - *Then he brought them outside and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household."*

Jeremiah 29:11-14b (NB) - *For I know what I have planned for you,' says the Lord. 'I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope. When you call out to me and come to me in prayer, I will hear your prayers. When you seek me in prayer and worship, you will find me available to you. If you seek me with all your heart and soul, I will make myself available to you,' says the Lord.*

II Chronicles 7:14 (NB) - *if my people, who belong to me, humble themselves, pray, seek to please me, and repudiate their sinful practices, then I will respond from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.*

About the Author

T. Russell Benedict grew up in Boise, Idaho, the oldest of four, in a family that was very “low income”. Nevertheless, they played together, prayed together, lived in South America for two years together while his dad helped build a mission hospital, and just in general enjoyed life together. He asked Yahweh to be his savior while a young boy, and grew up in church, but walked away from Yahweh as a late teenager after the death of a friend. It took Yahweh several years of gentle patience and persistent, consistent love to draw T. Russell back to Himself, a place that this author hasn’t strayed too far from ever since.

After working in various careers, moving a lot, occasionally attending college to further a degree, and playing music for different churches, he eventually married a single mother with one boy and moved back to Boise, Idaho to build a family. This began seven years of character building in the midst of anguish of heart and the birth of a daughter. After an unhappy divorce, he moved to the mountains to build a youth ranch, and to heal.

After several years of quiet healing, while focusing on the youth ranch project, Yahweh replaced the family that life took away with a new one, this time with seven kids. In essence, Yahweh gave him a youth ranch of his own, complete with eight kids.

This ushered in the next phase of life for T. Russell, one of raising eight wounded children as his own, being active in his local church, writing books, and trying to build a children’s camp/youth ranch and prayer retreat center where other people could also retreat from the chaos of their world to seek the face of Yahweh, and to find peace, healing, and comfort in their creator’s arms, while hiding in the shadows of the mountain heights.

See <http://www.timbenedict.net> for more information about the author and his current plans, dreams, and activities.